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Genesis

Book of Genesis

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Now the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good, and He separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day,” and the darkness He called “night.”

And there was evening, and there was morning — the first day.

And God said, “Let there be an expanse between the waters, to separate the waters from the waters.” So God made the expanse and separated the waters beneath it from the waters above. And it was so. God called the expanse “sky.”

And there was evening, and there was morning — the second day.

And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered into one place, so that the dry land may appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land “earth,” and the gathering of waters He called “seas.” And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth vegetation: seed-bearing plants and fruit trees, each bearing fruit with seed according to its kind.” And it was so. The earth produced vegetation: seed-bearing plants according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

And there was evening, and there was morning — the third day.

And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to distinguish between the day and the night, and let them be signs to mark the seasons and days and years. And let them serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth.” And it was so.

God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night. And He made the stars as well.

God set these lights in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth, to preside over the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

And there was evening, and there was morning — the fourth day.

And God said, “Let the waters teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the sky.” So God created the great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters teemed according to their kinds, and every winged bird after its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters of the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.”

And there was evening, and there was morning — the fifth day.

And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, land crawlers, and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that crawls upon the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness, to rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, and over all the earth itself and every creature that crawls upon it.”

> So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that crawls upon the earth.”

Then God said, “Behold, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit contains seed. They will be yours for food. And to every beast of the earth and every bird of the air and every creature that crawls upon the earth — everything that has the breath of life in it — I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.

And God looked upon all that He had made, and indeed, it was very good.

And there was evening, and there was morning — the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. And by the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing; so on that day He rested from all His work.

Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on that day He rested from all the work of creation that He had accomplished.

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made them.

Now no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth, nor had any plant of the field sprouted, for the LORD God had not yet sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground. But springs welled up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground.

Then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.

And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, where He placed the man He had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God gave growth to every tree that is pleasing to the eye and good for food. And in the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it branched into four headwaters:

> The name of the first river is the Pishon; it winds through the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is pure, and bdellium and onyx are found there.
>
> The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the whole land of Cush.

The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Assyria.

And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

Then the LORD God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it.

And the LORD God commanded him, "You may eat freely from every tree of the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; for in the day that you eat of it, you will surely die."

The LORD God also said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make for him a suitable helper."

And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and He brought them to the man to see what he would name each one. And whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found.

So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep, and while he slept, He took one of the man's ribs and closed up the area with flesh. And from the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man, He made a woman and brought her to him. And the man said:

> "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for out of man she was taken."

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

And the man and his wife were both naked, and they were not ashamed.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field that the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"

The woman answered the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden, but about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You must not eat of it or touch it, or you will die.'"

"You will not surely die," the serpent told the woman. "For God knows that in the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eyes, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom, she took the fruit and ate it. She also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate it.

And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; so they sewed together fig leaves and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his wife heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the breeze of the day, and they hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

But the LORD God called out to the man, "Where are you?"

"I heard Your voice in the garden," he replied, "and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."

"Who told you that you were naked?" asked the LORD God. "Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

And the man answered, "The woman whom You gave me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

"The serpent deceived me," she replied, "and I ate."

So the LORD God said to the serpent:

> "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and every beast of the field! On your belly will you go, and dust you will eat, all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

To the woman He said:

> "I will sharply increase your pain in childbirth; in pain you will bring forth children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

And to Adam He said:

> "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat, cursed is the ground because of you; through toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it will yield for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your bread, until you return to the ground — because out of it were you taken. For dust you are, and to dust you shall return."

And Adam named his wife Eve, because she would be the mother of all the living.

And the LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and He clothed them.

Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil. And now, lest he reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever..."

Therefore the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. So He drove out the man and stationed cherubim on the east side of the Garden of Eden, along with a whirling sword of flame to guard the way to the tree of life.

And Adam had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain.

"With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man," she said.

Later she gave birth to Cain's brother Abel.

Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, while Cain was a tiller of the soil. So in the course of time, Cain brought some of the fruit of the soil as an offering to the LORD, while Abel brought the best portions of the firstborn of his flock.

And the LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but He had no regard for Cain and his offering. So Cain became very angry, and his countenance fell.

"Why are you angry," said the LORD to Cain, "and why has your countenance fallen? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you refuse to do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires you, but you must master it."

Then Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

And the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”

“I do not know!” he answered. “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

“What have you done?” replied the LORD. “The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground. Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it will no longer yield its produce to you. You will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.”

But Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, this day You have driven me from the face of the earth, and from Your face I will be hidden; I will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”

“Not so!” replied the LORD. “If anyone slays Cain, then Cain will be avenged sevenfold.” And the LORD placed a mark on Cain, so that no one who found him would kill him.

So Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

And Cain had relations with his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch. Then Cain built a city and named it after his son Enoch.

Now to Enoch was born Irad, and Irad was the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael was the father of Methusael, and Methusael was the father of Lamech. And Lamech married two women, one named Adah and the other Zillah.

Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and raise livestock. And his brother’s name was Jubal; he was the father of all who play the harp and flute.

And Zillah gave birth to Tubal-cain, a forger of every implement of bronze and iron. And the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

Then Lamech said to his wives:

> “Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; wives of Lamech, listen to my speech. For I have slain a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain is avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.”

And Adam again had relations with his wife, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, “God has granted me another seed in place of Abel, since Cain killed him.”

And to Seth also a son was born, and he called him Enosh.

At that time men began to call upon the name of the LORD.

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, He made him in His own likeness. Male and female He created them, and He blessed them. And in the day they were created, He called them “man.”

When Adam was 130 years old, he had a son in his own likeness, after his own image; and he named him Seth. And after he had become the father of Seth, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. So Adam lived a total of 930 years, and then he died.

When Seth was 105 years old, he became the father of Enosh. And after he had become the father of Enosh, Seth lived 807 years and had other sons and daughters. So Seth lived a total of 912 years, and then he died.

When Enosh was 90 years old, he became the father of Kenan. And after he had become the father of Kenan, Enosh lived 815 years and had other sons and daughters. So Enosh lived a total of 905 years, and then he died.

When Kenan was 70 years old, he became the father of Mahalalel. And after he had become the father of Mahalalel, Kenan lived 840 years and had other sons and daughters. So Kenan lived a total of 910 years, and then he died.

When Mahalalel was 65 years old, he became the father of Jared. And after he had become the father of Jared, Mahalalel lived 830 years and had other sons and daughters. So Mahalalel lived a total of 895 years, and then he died.

When Jared was 162 years old, he became the father of Enoch. And after he had become the father of Enoch, Jared lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. So Jared lived a total of 962 years, and then he died.

When Enoch was 65 years old, he became the father of Methuselah. And after he had become the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. So Enoch lived a total of 365 years.

Enoch walked with God, and then he was no more, because God had taken him away.

When Methuselah was 187 years old, he became the father of Lamech. And after he had become the father of Lamech, Methuselah lived 782 years and had other sons and daughters. So Methuselah lived a total of 969 years, and then he died.

When Lamech was 182 years old, he had a son. And he named him Noah, saying, “May this one comfort us in the labor and toil of our hands caused by the ground that the LORD has cursed.” And after he had become the father of Noah, Lamech lived 595 years and had other sons and daughters. So Lamech lived a total of 777 years, and then he died.

After Noah was 500 years old, he became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Now when men began to multiply on the face of the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they took as wives whomever they chose.

So the LORD said, “My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days shall be 120 years.”

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and afterward as well— when the sons of God had relations with the daughters of men. And they bore them children who became the mighty men of old, men of renown.

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was altogether evil all the time. And the LORD regretted that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, “I will blot out man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth — every man and beast and crawling creature and bird of the air — for I am grieved that I have made them.”

Noah, however, found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and full of violence. And God looked upon the earth and saw that it was corrupt; for all living creatures on the earth had corrupted their ways.

Then God said to Noah, “The end of all living creatures has come before Me, because through them the earth is full of violence. Now behold, I will destroy both them and the earth.

Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; make rooms in the ark and coat it with pitch inside and out. And this is how you are to build it: The ark is to be 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high. You are to make a roof for the ark, finish its walls a cubit from the top, place a door in the side of the ark, and build lower, middle, and upper decks.

And behold, I will bring floodwaters upon the earth to destroy every creature under the heavens that has the breath of life. Everything on the earth will perish. But I will establish My covenant with you, and you will enter the ark — you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you.

And you are to bring two of every living creature into the ark — male and female — to keep them alive with you. Two of every kind of bird and animal and crawling creature will come to you to be kept alive. You are also to take for yourself every kind of food that is eaten and gather it as food for yourselves and for the animals.”

So Noah did everything precisely as God had commanded him.

Then the LORD said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and all your family, because I have found you righteous in this generation. You are to take with you seven pairs of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate; a pair of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate; and seven pairs of every kind of bird of the air, male and female, to preserve their offspring on the face of all the earth. For seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living thing I have made.”

And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him.

Now Noah was 600 years old when the floodwaters came upon the earth. And Noah and his wife, with his sons and their wives, entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood. The clean and unclean animals, the birds, and everything that crawls along the ground came to Noah to enter the ark, two by two, male and female, as God had commanded Noah.

And after seven days the floodwaters came upon the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, on the seventeenth day of the second month, all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And the rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights.

On that very day Noah entered the ark, along with his sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and his wife, and the three wives of his sons — they and every kind of wild animal, livestock, crawling creature, bird, and winged creature. They came to Noah to enter the ark, two by two of every creature with the breath of life. And they entered, the male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD shut him in.

For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and the waters rose and lifted the ark high above the earth. So the waters continued to surge and rise greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the waters. Finally, the waters completely prevailed upon the earth, so that all the high mountains under all the heavens were covered.

The waters rose and covered the mountaintops to a depth of fifteen cubits. And every living thing that moved upon the earth perished — birds, livestock, animals, every creature that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind. Of all that was on dry land, everything that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. And every living thing on the face of the earth was destroyed — man and livestock, crawling creatures and birds of the air; they were blotted out from the earth, and only Noah and those with him in the ark remained.

And the waters prevailed upon the earth for 150 days.

But God remembered Noah and all the animals and livestock that were with him in the ark. And God sent a wind over the earth, and the waters began to subside. The springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens were closed, and the rain from the sky was restrained. The waters receded steadily from the earth, and after 150 days the waters had gone down.

On the seventeenth day of the seventh month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. And the waters continued to recede until the tenth month, and on the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains became visible.

After forty days Noah opened the window he had made in the ark and sent out a raven. It kept flying back and forth until the waters had dried up from the earth.

Then Noah sent out a dove to see if the waters had receded from the surface of the ground. But the dove found no place to rest her foot, and she returned to him in the ark, because the waters were still covering the surface of all the earth. So he reached out his hand and brought her back inside the ark.

Noah waited seven more days and again sent out the dove from the ark. And behold, the dove returned to him in the evening with a freshly plucked olive leaf in her beak. So Noah knew that the waters had receded from the earth.

And Noah waited seven more days and sent out the dove again, but this time she did not return to him.

In Noah’s six hundred and first year, on the first day of the first month, the waters had dried up from the earth. So Noah removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry. By the twenty-seventh day of the second month, the earth was fully dry.

Then God said to Noah, “Come out of the ark, you and your wife, along with your sons and their wives.

Bring out all the living creatures that are with you— birds, livestock, and everything that crawls upon the ground— so that they can spread out over the earth and be fruitful and multiply upon it."

So Noah came out, along with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives. Every living creature, every creeping thing, and every bird — everything that moves upon the earth — came out of the ark, kind by kind.

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD. And taking from every kind of clean animal and clean bird, he offered burnt offerings on the altar. When the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, He said in His heart, "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from his youth. And never again will I destroy all living creatures as I have done.

> As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall never cease."

And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The fear and dread of you will fall on every living creature on the earth, every bird of the air, every creature that crawls on the ground, and all the fish of the sea. They are delivered into your hand. Everything that lives and moves will be food for you; just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you all things. But you must not eat meat with its lifeblood still in it. And surely I will require the life of any man or beast by whose hand your lifeblood is shed. I will demand an accounting from anyone who takes the life of his fellow man:

> Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man his blood will be shed; for in His own image God has made mankind. But as for you, be fruitful and multiply; spread out across the earth and multiply upon it."

Then God said to Noah and his sons with him, "Behold, I now establish My covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that was with you — the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth— every living thing that came out of the ark. And I establish My covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth."

And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between Me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set My rainbow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth.

Whenever I form clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember My covenant between Me and you and every living creature of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. And whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of every kind that is on the earth."

So God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between Me and every creature on the earth."

The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham was the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah, and from them the whole earth was populated.

Now Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. But when he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and uncovered himself inside his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside.

Then Shem and Japheth took a garment and placed it across their shoulders, and walking backward, they covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned away so that they did not see their father's nakedness.

When Noah awoke from his drunkenness and learned what his youngest son had done to him, he said,

> "Cursed be Canaan! A servant of servants shall he be to his brothers."

He also declared:

> "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the servant of Shem. May God expand the territory of Japheth; may he dwell in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be his servant."

After the flood, Noah lived 350 years. So Noah lived a total of 950 years, and then he died.

This is the account of Noah's sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, who also had sons after the flood.

The sons of Japheth:
Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

The sons of Gomer:
Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

And the sons of Javan:
Elishah, Tarshish, the Kittites, and the Rodanites. From these, the maritime peoples separated into their territories, according to their languages, by clans within their nations.

The sons of Ham:
Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.

The sons of Cush:
Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca.

And the sons of Raamah:
Sheba and Dedan.

Cush was the father of Nimrod, who began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; so it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD." His kingdom began in Babylon, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went forth into Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, and Resen, which is between Nineveh and the great city of Calah.

Mizraim was the father of the Ludites, the Anamites, the Lehabites, the Naphtuhites, the Pathrusites, the Casluhites (from whom the Philistines came), and the Caphtorites.

And Canaan was the father of Sidon his firstborn, and of the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites.

Later the Canaanite clans were scattered, and the borders of Canaan extended from Sidon toward Gerar as far as Gaza, and then toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha.

These are the sons of Ham according to their clans, languages, lands, and nations.

And sons were also born to Shem, the older brother of Japheth; Shem was the forefather of all the sons of Eber.

The sons of Shem:
Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram.

The sons of Aram:
Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

Arphaxad was the father of Shelah, and Shelah was the father of Eber.

Two sons were born to Eber: One was named Peleg, because in his days the earth was divided, and his brother was named Joktan.

And Joktan was the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, Obal, Abimael, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were sons of Joktan. Their territory extended from Mesha to Sephar, in the eastern hill country.

These are the sons of Shem, according to their clans, languages, lands, and nations.

All these are the clans of Noah's sons, according to their generations and nations. From these the nations of the earth spread out after the flood.

Now the whole world had one language and a common form of speech. And as people journeyed eastward, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.

And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." So they used brick instead of stone, and tar instead of mortar.

"Come," they said, "let us build for ourselves a city with a tower that reaches to the heavens, that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of all the earth."

Then the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the sons of men were building. And the LORD said, "If they have begun to do this as one people speaking the same language, then nothing they devise will be beyond them. Come, let Us go down and confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech."

So the LORD scattered them from there over the face of all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it is called Babel, for there the LORD confused the language of the whole world, and from that place the LORD scattered them over the face of all the earth.

This is the account of Shem. Two years after the flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father of Arphaxad. And after he had become the father of Arphaxad, Shem lived 500 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Arphaxad was 35 years old, he became the father of Shelah. And after he had become the father of Shelah, Arphaxad lived 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Shelah was 30 years old, he became the father of Eber. And after he had become the father of Eber, Shelah lived 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Eber was 34 years old, he became the father of Peleg. And after he had become the father of Peleg, Eber lived 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Peleg was 30 years old, he became the father of Reu. And after he had become the father of Reu, Peleg lived 209 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Reu was 32 years old, he became the father of Serug. And after he had become the father of Serug, Reu lived 207 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Serug was 30 years old, he became the father of Nahor. And after he had become the father of Nahor, Serug lived 200 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Nahor was 29 years old, he became the father of Terah. And after he had become the father of Terah, Nahor lived 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Terah was 70 years old, he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

This is the account of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran. And Haran became the father of Lot. During his father Terah's lifetime, Haran died in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans.

And Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. Abram's wife was named Sarai, and Nahor's wife was named Milcah; she was the daughter of Haran, who was the father of both Milcah and Iscah. But Sarai was barren; she had no children.

And Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai the wife of Abram, and they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans for the land of Canaan. But when they arrived in Haran, they settled there. Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Haran.

Then the LORD said to Abram, "Leave your country, your kindred, and your father's household, and go to the land I will show you.

> I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you; and all the families of the earth will be blessed through you."

So Abram departed, as the LORD had directed him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. And Abram took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all the possessions and people they had acquired in Haran, and set out for the land of Canaan.

When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the Oak of Moreh at Shechem. And at that time the Canaanites were in the land.

Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I will give this land to your offspring." So Abram built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

From there Abram moved on to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There he built an altar to the LORD, and he called on the name of the LORD.

And Abram journeyed on toward the Negev.

Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe. As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "Look, I know that you are a beautiful woman, and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will

let you live. Please say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake, and on account of you my life will be spared."

So when Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. When Pharaoh's officials saw Sarai, they commended her to him, and she was taken into the palace of Pharaoh. He treated Abram well on her account, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, menservants and maidservants, and camels.

The LORD, however, afflicted Pharaoh and his household with severe plagues because of Abram's wife Sarai. So Pharaoh summoned Abram and asked, "What have you done to me? Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her as my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!"

Then Pharaoh gave his men orders concerning Abram, and they sent him away with his wife and all his possessions.

So Abram went up out of Egypt into the Negev— he and his wife and all his possessions— and Lot was with him. And Abram had become extremely wealthy in livestock and silver and gold.

From the Negev he journeyed from place to place toward Bethel, until he came to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had formerly been pitched, to the site where he had built the altar. And there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

Now Lot, who was traveling with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. But the land was unable to support both of them while they stayed together, for they had so many possessions that they were unable to coexist. And there was discord between the herdsmen of Abram and the herdsmen of Lot. At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were also living in the land.

So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no contention between you and me, or between your herdsmen and my herdsmen. After all, we are kinsmen. Is not the whole land before you? Now separate yourself from me. If you go to the left, I will go to the right; if you go to the right, I will go to the left."

And Lot looked out and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan, all the way to Zoar, was well watered like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) So Lot chose the whole plain of the Jordan for himself and set out toward the east. And Abram and Lot parted company.

Abram lived in the land of Canaan, but Lot settled in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked, sinning greatly against the LORD.

After Lot had departed, the LORD said to Abram, "Now lift up your eyes from the place where you are, and look to the north and south and east and west, for all the land that you see, I will give to you and your offspring forever.

I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if one could count the dust of the earth, then your offspring could be counted. Get up and walk around the land, through its length and breadth, for I will give it to you."

So Abram moved his tent and went to live near the Oaks of Mamre at Hebron, where he built an altar to the LORD.

In those days Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim went to war against Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar).

The latter five came as allies to the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). For twelve years they had been subject to Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

In the fourteenth year, Chedorlaomer and the kings allied with him went out and defeated the Rephaites in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzites in Ham, the Emites in Shaveh-kiriathaim, and the Horites in the area of Mount Seir, as far as El-paran, which is near the desert. Then they turned back to invade En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and they conquered the whole territory of the Amalekites, as well as the Amorites who lived in Hazazon-tamar.

Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) marched out and arrayed themselves for battle in the Valley of Siddim against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar— four kings against five.

Now the Valley of Siddim was full of tar pits, and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some men fell into the pits, but the survivors fled to the hill country.

The four kings seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food, and they went on their way. They also carried off Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, since Lot was living in Sodom.

Then an escapee came and reported this to Abram the Hebrew. Now Abram was living near the Oaks of Mamre the Amorite, a brother of Eshcol and Aner, all of whom were bound by treaty to Abram. And when Abram heard that his relative had been captured, he mobilized the 318 trained men born in his household, and they set out in pursuit as far as Dan.

During the night, Abram divided his forces and routed Chedorlaomer's army, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. He retrieved all the goods, as well as his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the rest of the people.

After Abram returned from defeating Chedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine — since he was priest of God Most High — and he blessed Abram and said:

> "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand."

Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything.

The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the people, but take the goods for yourself."

But Abram replied to the king of Sodom, “I have raised my hand to the LORD God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, that I will not accept even a thread, or a strap of a sandal, or anything that belongs to you, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’ I will accept nothing but what my men have eaten and the share for the men who went with me— Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre. They may take their portion.”

After these events, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

> “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.”

But Abram replied, “O Lord GOD, what can You give me, since I remain childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” Abram continued, “Behold, You have given me no offspring, so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

Then the word of the LORD came to Abram, saying, “This one will not be your heir, but one who comes from your own body will be your heir.” And the LORD took him outside and said, “Now look to the heavens and count the stars, if you are able.” Then He told him, “So shall your offspring be.”

Abram believed the LORD, and it was credited to him as righteousness.

The LORD also told him, “I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.”

But Abram replied, “Lord GOD, how can I know that I will possess it?”

And the LORD said to him, “Bring Me a heifer, a goat, and a ram, each three years old, along with a turtledove and a young pigeon.”

So Abram brought all these to Him, split each of them down the middle, and laid the halves opposite each other. The birds, however, he did not cut in half. And the birds of prey descended on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away. As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and suddenly great terror and darkness overwhelmed him.

Then the LORD said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will judge the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will depart with many possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a ripe old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, behold, a smoking firepot and a flaming torch appeared and passed between the halves of the carcasses. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I have given this land — from the river of Egypt to the great River Euphrates — the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.”

Now Abram’s wife Sarai had borne him no children, but she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, “Look now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Please go to my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family by her.”

And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. So after he had lived in Canaan for ten years, his wife Sarai took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to Abram to be his wife. And he slept with Hagar, and she conceived. But when Hagar realized that she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress.

Then Sarai said to Abram, “May the wrong done to me be upon you! I delivered my servant into your arms, and ever since she saw that she was pregnant, she has treated me with contempt. May the LORD judge between you and me.”

“Here,” said Abram, “your servant is in your hands. Do whatever you want with her.” Then Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that she fled from her.

Now the angel of the LORD found Hagar by a spring of water in the desert — the spring along the road to Shur. “Hagar, servant of Sarai,” he said, “where have you come from, and where are you going?”

“I am running away from my mistress Sarai,” she replied.

So the angel of the LORD told her, “Return to your mistress and submit to her authority.” Then the angel added, “I will greatly multiply your offspring so that they will be too numerous to count.”

The angel of the LORD proceeded:

> “Behold, you have conceived and will bear a son. And you shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard your cry of affliction. He will be a wild donkey of a man, and his hand will be against everyone, and everyone’s hand against him; he will live in hostility toward all his brothers.”

So Hagar gave this name to the LORD who had spoken to her: “You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “Here I have seen the One who sees me!” Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi. It is located between Kadesh and Bered.

And Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty. Walk before Me and be blameless. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly.”

Then Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, “As for Me, this is My covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram, but your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.

I will make you exceedingly fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will descend from you.

I will establish My covenant as an everlasting covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

And to you and your descendants I will give the land where you are residing— all the land of Canaan— as an eternal possession; and I will be their God.”

God also said to Abraham, “You must keep My covenant— you and your descendants in the generations after you. This is My covenant with you and your descendants after you, which you are to keep: Every male among you must be circumcised. You are to cir-

cumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and this will be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.

Generation after generation, every male must be circumcised when he is eight days old, including those born in your household and those purchased from a foreigner — even those who are not your offspring. Whether they are born in your household or purchased, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh will be an everlasting covenant.

But if any male is not circumcised, he will be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."

Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, do not call her Sarai, for her name is to be Sarah. And I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will descend from her."

Abraham fell facedown. Then he laughed and said to himself, "Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah give birth at the age of ninety?" And Abraham said to God, "O that Ishmael might live under Your blessing!"

But God replied, "Your wife Sarah will indeed bear you a son, and you are to name him Isaac. I will establish My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. As for Ishmael, I have heard you, and I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. He will become the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. But I will establish My covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this time next year."

When He had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.

On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or purchased with his money— every male among the members of Abraham's household— and he circumcised them, just as God had told him.

So Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, and his son Ishmael was thirteen; Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised on the same day. And all the men of Abraham's household — both servants born in his household and those purchased from foreigners— were circumcised with him.

Then the LORD appeared to Abraham by the Oaks of Mamre in the heat of the day, while he was sitting at the entrance of his tent. And Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

"My lord," said Abraham, "if I have found favor in your sight, please do not pass your servant by. Let a little water be brought, that you may wash your feet and rest yourselves under the tree. And I will bring a bit of bread so that you may refresh yourselves. This is why you have passed your servant's way. After that, you may continue on your way."

"Yes," they replied, "you may do as you have said."

So Abraham hurried into the tent and said to Sarah, "Quick! Prepare three seahs of fine flour, knead it, and bake some bread."

Meanwhile, Abraham ran to the herd, selected a tender and choice calf, and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. Then Abraham brought curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and he set them before the men and stood by them under the tree as they ate.

"Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked.

"There, in the tent," he replied.

Then the LORD said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year, and your wife Sarah will have a son!"

Now Sarah was behind him, listening at the entrance to the tent. And Abraham and Sarah were already old and well along in years; Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. So she laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?"

And the LORD asked Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Can I really bear a child when I am old?' Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you — in about a year — and Sarah will have a son."

But Sarah was afraid, so she denied it and said, "I did not laugh."

"No," replied the LORD, "but you did laugh."

When the men got up to leave, they looked out over Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them off.

And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and through him all the nations of the earth will be blessed. For I have chosen him, so that he will command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, in order that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has promised."

Then the LORD said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great. Because their sin is so grievous, I will go down to see if their actions fully justify the outcry that has reached Me. If not, I will find out."

And the two men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD.

Abraham stepped forward and said, "Will You really sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous ones in the city? Will You really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous ones who are there? Far be it from You to do such a thing — to kill the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Will not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?"

So the LORD replied, "If I find fifty righteous ones within the city of Sodom, on their account I will spare the whole place."

Then Abraham answered, "Now that I have ventured to speak to the Lord— though I am but dust and ashes— suppose the fifty righteous ones lack five. Will You destroy the whole city for the lack of five?"

He replied, "If I find forty-five there, I will not destroy it."

Once again Abraham spoke to the LORD, "Suppose forty are found there?"

He answered, "On account of the forty, I will not do it."

Then Abraham said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak further. Suppose thirty are found there?"

He replied, “If I find thirty there, I will not do it.”

And Abraham said, “Now that I have ventured to speak to the Lord, suppose twenty are found there?”

He answered, “On account of the twenty, I will not destroy it.”

Finally, Abraham said, “May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak once more. Suppose ten are found there?”

And He answered, “On account of the ten, I will not destroy it.”

When the LORD had finished speaking with Abraham, He departed, and Abraham returned home.

Now the two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When Lot saw them, he got up to meet them, bowed facedown, and said, “My lords, please turn aside into the house of your servant; wash your feet and spend the night. Then you can rise early and go on your way.”

“No,” they answered, “we will spend the night in the square.”

But Lot insisted so strongly that they followed him into his house. He prepared a feast for them and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

Before they had gone to bed, all the men of the city of Sodom, both young and old, surrounded the house. They called out to Lot, saying, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Send them out to us so we can have relations with them!”

Lot went outside to meet them, shutting the door behind him. “Please, my brothers,” he pleaded, “don’t do such a wicked thing! Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them to you, and you can do to them as you please. But do not do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof.”

“Get out of the way!” they replied. And they declared, “This one came here as a foreigner, and he is already acting like a judge! Now we will treat you worse than them.” And they pressed in on Lot and moved in to break down the door.

But the men inside reached out, pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. And they struck the men at the entrance, young and old, with blindness, so that they wearied themselves trying to find the door.

Then the two men said to Lot, “Do you have anyone else here — a son-in-law, your sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of here, because we are about to destroy this place. For the outcry to the LORD against its people is so great that He has sent us to destroy it.”

So Lot went out and spoke to the sons-in-law who were pledged in marriage to his daughters. “Get up,” he said. “Get out of this place, for the LORD is about to destroy the city!” But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.

At daybreak the angels hurried Lot along, saying, “Get up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away in the punishment of the city.” But when Lot hesitated, the men grabbed his hand and the hands of his wife and his two daughters. And they led them safely out of the city, because of the LORD’s compassion for them.

As soon as the men had brought them out, one of them said, “Run for your lives! Do not look back, and do not stop anywhere on the plain! Flee to the mountains, or you will be swept away!”

But Lot replied, “No, my lords, please! Your servant has indeed found favor in your sight, and you have shown me great kindness by sparing my life. But I cannot run to the mountains; the disaster will overtake me, and I will die. Look, there is a town nearby where I can flee, and it is a small place. Please let me flee there — is it not a small place? Then my life will be saved.”

“Very well,” he answered, “I will grant this request as well, and will not demolish the town you indicate. Hurry! Run there quickly, for I cannot do anything until you reach it.” That is why the town was called Zoar.

And by the time the sun had risen over the land, Lot had reached Zoar.

Then the LORD rained down sulfur and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah — from the LORD out of the heavens. Thus He destroyed these cities and the entire plain, including all the inhabitants of the cities and everything that grew on the ground.

But Lot’s wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

Early the next morning, Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood before the LORD. He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and all the land of the plain, and he saw the smoke rising from the land like smoke from a furnace.

So when God destroyed the cities of the plain, He remembered Abraham, and He brought Lot out of the catastrophe that destroyed the cities where he had lived.

Lot and his two daughters left Zoar and settled in the mountains — for he was afraid to stay in Zoar — where they lived in a cave.

One day the older daughter said to the younger, “Our father is old, and there is no man in the land to sleep with us, as is the custom over all the earth. Come, let us get our father drunk with wine so we can sleep with him and preserve his line.”

So that night they got their father drunk with wine, and the firstborn went in and slept with her father; he was not aware when she lay down or when she got up.

The next day the older daughter said to the younger, “Look, I slept with my father last night. Let us get him drunk with wine again tonight so you can go in and sleep with him and we can preserve our father’s line.”

So again that night they got their father drunk with wine, and the younger daughter went in and slept with him; he was not aware when she lay down or when she got up.

Thus both of Lot’s daughters became pregnant by their father. The older daughter gave birth to a son and named him Moab. He is the father of the Moabites of today. The younger daughter also gave birth to a son, and she named him Ben-ammi. He is the father of the Ammonites of today.

Now Abraham journeyed from there to the region of the Negev and settled between Kadesh and Shur. While he was staying in Gerar, Abraham said of his wife Sarah, “She is my sister.” So Abimelech king of Gerar had Sarah brought to him.

One night, however, God came to Abimelech in a dream and told him, “You are as good as dead because

of the woman you have taken, for she is a married woman."

Now Abimelech had not gone near her, so he replied, "Lord, would You destroy a nation even though it is innocent? Didn't Abraham tell me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' I have done this in the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands."

Then God said to Abimelech in the dream, "Yes, I know that you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept you from sinning against Me. That is why I did not let you touch her. Now return the man's wife, for he is a prophet; he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not restore her, be aware that you will surely die — you and all who belong to you."

Early the next morning Abimelech got up and summoned all his servants; and when he described to them all that had happened, the men were terrified.

Then Abimelech called Abraham and asked, "What have you done to us? How have I sinned against you, that you have brought such tremendous guilt upon me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that should not be done." Abimelech also asked Abraham, "What prompted you to do such a thing?"

Abraham replied, "I thought to myself, 'Surely there is no fear of God in this place. They will kill me on account of my wife.' Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father — though not the daughter of my mother — and she became my wife. So when God had me journey from my father's house, I said to Sarah, 'This is how you can show your loyalty to me: Wherever we go, say of me, "He is my brother."'"

So Abimelech brought sheep and cattle, menservants and maidservants, and he gave them to Abraham and restored his wife Sarah to him. And Abimelech said, "Look, my land is before you. Settle wherever you please." And he said to Sarah, "See, I am giving your brother a thousand pieces of silver. It is your vindication before all who are with you; you are completely cleared."

Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maidservants, so that they could again bear children — for on account of Abraham's wife Sarah, the LORD had completely closed all the wombs in Abimelech's household.

Now the LORD attended to Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what He had promised. So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised.

And Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore to him. When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God had commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

Then Sarah said, "God has made me laugh, and everyone who hears of this will laugh with me." She added, "Who would have told Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

So the child grew and was weaned, and Abraham held a great feast on the day Isaac was weaned.

But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking her son, and she said to Abraham, "Expel the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac!"

Now this matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son Ishmael. But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to everything that Sarah tells you, for through Isaac your offspring will be reckoned. But I will also make a nation of the slave woman's son, because he is your offspring."

Early in the morning, Abraham got up, took bread and a skin of water, put them on Hagar's shoulders, and sent her away with the boy. She left and wandered in the Wilderness of Beersheba. When the water in the skin was gone, she left the boy under one of the bushes. Then she went off and sat down nearby, about a bowshot away, for she said, "I cannot bear to watch the boy die!" And as she sat nearby, she lifted up her voice and wept.

Then God heard the voice of the boy, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, "What is wrong, Hagar? Do not be afraid, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he lies. Get up, lift up the boy, and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation." Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

And God was with the boy, and he grew up and settled in the wilderness and became a great archer. And while he was dwelling in the Wilderness of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

At that time Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his army said to Abraham, "God is with you in all that you do. Now, therefore, swear to me here before God that you will not deal falsely with me or my children or descendants. Show to me and to the country in which you reside the same kindness that I have shown to you."

And Abraham replied, "I swear it."

But when Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well that Abimelech's servants had seized, Abimelech replied, "I do not know who has done this. You did not tell me, so I have not heard about it until today."

So Abraham brought sheep and cattle and gave them to Abimelech, and the two men made a covenant. Abraham separated seven ewe lambs from the flock, and Abimelech asked him, "Why have you set apart these seven ewe lambs?"

He replied, "You are to accept the seven ewe lambs from my hand as my witness that I dug this well." So that place was called Beersheba, because it was there that the two of them swore an oath. After they had made the covenant at Beersheba, Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his army got up and returned to the land of the Philistines.

And Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called upon the name of the LORD, the Eternal God. And Abraham resided in the land of the Philistines for a long time.

Some time later God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he answered.

"Take your son," God said, "your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. Offer

him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you."

So Abraham got up early the next morning, saddled his donkey, and took along two of his servants and his son Isaac. He split the wood for a burnt offering and set out for the place God had designated.

On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. "Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told his servants. "The boy and I will go over there to worship, and then we will return to you."

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac. He himself carried the fire and the sacrificial knife, and the two of them walked on together.

Then Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!"

"Here I am, my son," he replied.

"The fire and the wood are here," said Isaac, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Abraham answered, "God Himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two walked on together.

When they arrived at the place God had designated, Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood. He bound his son Isaac and placed him on the altar, atop the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.

Just then the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham, Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

"Do not lay a hand on the boy or do anything to him," said the angel, "for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your only son from me."

Then Abraham looked up and saw behind him a ram in a thicket, caught by its horns. So he went and took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering in place of his son. And Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. So to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time, saying, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will multiply your descendants like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will possess the gates of their enemies. And through your offspring all nations of the earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

Abraham went back to his servants, and they got up and set out together for Beersheba. And Abraham settled in Beersheba.

Some time later, Abraham was told, "Milcah has also borne sons to your brother Nahor: Uz the firstborn, his brother Buz, Kemuel (the father of Aram), Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel."

And Bethuel became the father of Rebekah. Milcah bore these eight sons to Abraham's brother Nahor. Moreover, Nahor's concubine, whose name was Reumah, bore Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

Now Sarah lived to be 127 years old. She died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went out to mourn and to weep for her.

Then Abraham got up from beside his dead wife and said to the Hittites, "I am a foreigner and an outsider among you. Give me a burial site among you so that I can bury my dead."

The Hittites replied to Abraham, "Listen to us, sir. You are God's chosen one among us. Bury your dead in the finest of our tombs. None of us will withhold his tomb for burying your dead."

Then Abraham rose and bowed down before the people of the land, the Hittites. "If you are willing for me to bury my dead," he said to them, "listen to me, and approach Ephron son of Zohar on my behalf to sell me the cave of Machpelah that belongs to him; it is at the end of his field. Let him sell it to me in your presence for full price, so that I may have a burial site."

Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth. So in the presence of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of his city, Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham, "No, my lord. Listen to me. I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. I give it to you in the presence of my people. Bury your dead."

Again Abraham bowed down before the people of the land and said to Ephron in their presence, "If you will please listen to me, I will pay you the price of the field. Accept it from me, so that I may bury my dead there."

Ephron answered Abraham, "Listen to me, my lord. The land is worth four hundred shekels of silver, but what is that between you and me? Bury your dead."

Abraham agreed to Ephron's terms and weighed out for him the price he had named in the hearing of the Hittites: four hundred shekels of silver, according to the standard of the merchants.

So Ephron's field at Machpelah near Mamre, the cave that was in it, and all the trees within the boundaries of the field were deeded over to Abraham's possession in the presence of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of his city. After this, Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave of the field at Machpelah near Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. So the field and its cave were deeded by the Hittites to Abraham as a burial site.

By now Abraham was old and well along in years, and the LORD had blessed him in every way. So Abraham instructed the chief servant of his household, who managed all he owned, "Place your hand under my thigh, and I will have you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I am dwelling, but will go to my country and my kindred to take a wife for my son Isaac."

The servant asked him, "What if the woman is unwilling to follow me to this land? Shall I then take your son back to the land from which you came?"

Abraham replied, "Make sure that you do not take my son back there. The LORD, the God of heaven, who brought me from my father's house and my native land, who spoke to me and promised me on oath, saying, 'To your offspring I will give this land'— He will send His angel before you so that you can take a wife for my son from there. And if the woman is unwilling to follow you, then you are released from this oath of mine. Only do not take my son back there."

So the servant placed his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham and swore an oath to him concerning this matter.

Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed with all manner of good things from his master in hand. And he set out for Nahor's hometown in Aram-naharaim. As evening approached, he made the camels kneel down near the well outside the town at the time when the women went out to draw water.

"O LORD, God of my master Abraham," he prayed, "please grant me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. Here I am, standing beside the spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. Now may it happen that the girl to whom I say, 'Please let down your jar that I may drink,' and who responds, 'Drink, and I will water your camels as well'— let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. By this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master."

Before the servant had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor. Now the girl was very beautiful, a virgin who had not had relations with any man. She went down to the spring, filled her jar, and came up again.

So the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please let me have a little water from your jar."

"Drink, my lord," she replied, and she quickly lowered her jar to her hands and gave him a drink.

After she had given him a drink, she said, "I will also draw water for your camels, until they have had enough to drink." And she quickly emptied her jar into the trough and ran back to the well to draw water, until she had drawn water for all his camels.

Meanwhile, the man watched her silently to see whether or not the LORD had made his journey a success.

And after the camels had finished drinking, he took out a gold ring weighing a beka, and two gold bracelets for her wrists weighing ten shekels. "Whose daughter are you?" he asked. "Please tell me, is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?"

She replied, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son that Milcah bore to Nahor." Then she added, "We have plenty of straw and feed, as well as a place for you to spend the night."

Then the man bowed down and worshiped the LORD, saying, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not withheld His kindness and faithfulness from my master. As for me, the LORD has led me on the journey to the house of my master's relatives."

The girl ran and told her mother's household about these things. Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban, and he rushed out to the man at the spring. As soon as he saw the ring, and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and heard Rebekah's words, "The man said this to me," he went and found the man standing by the camels near the spring.

"Come, you who are blessed by the LORD," said Laban. "Why are you standing out here? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels." So the man came to the house, and the camels were unloaded. Straw and feed were brought to the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of his companions.

Then a meal was set before the man, but he said, "I will not eat until I have told you what I came to say."

So Laban said, "Please speak."

"I am Abraham's servant," he replied. "The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become rich. He has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold, menservants and maidservants, camels and donkeys. My master's wife Sarah has borne him a son in her old age, and my master has given him everything he owns.

My master made me swear an oath and said, 'You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites in whose land I dwell, but you shall go to my father's house and to my kindred to take a wife for my son.'

Then I asked my master, 'What if the woman will not come back with me?'

And he told me, 'The LORD, before whom I have walked, will send His angel with you and make your journey a success, so that you may take a wife for my son from my kindred and from my father's house. And when you go to my kindred, if they refuse to give her to you, then you will be released from my oath.'

So when I came to the spring today, I prayed: O LORD, God of my master Abraham, if only You would make my journey a success! Here I am, standing beside this spring. Now if a maiden comes out to draw water and I say to her, 'Please let me drink a little water from your jar,' and she replies, 'Drink, and I will draw water for your camels as well,' may she be the woman the LORD has appointed for my master's son.

And before I had finished praying in my heart, there was Rebekah coming out with her jar on her shoulder, and she went down to the spring and drew water. So I said to her, 'Please give me a drink.'

She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder and said, 'Drink, and I will water your camels as well.' So I drank, and she also watered the camels.

Then I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?'

She replied, 'The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him.' So I put the ring on her nose and the bracelets on her wrists. Then I bowed down and worshiped the LORD; and I blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who led me on the right road to take the granddaughter of my master's brother for his son.

Now if you will show kindness and faithfulness to my master, tell me; but if not, let me know, so that I may go elsewhere."

Laban and Bethuel answered, "This is from the LORD; we have no choice in the matter. Rebekah is here before you. Take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master's son, just as the LORD has decreed."

When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed down to the ground before the LORD. Then he brought out jewels of silver and gold, and articles of clothing, and he gave them to Rebekah. He also gave precious gifts to her brother and her mother. Then he and the men with him ate and drank and spent the night there.

When they got up the next morning, he said, “Send me on my way to my master.”

But her brother and mother said, “Let the girl remain with us ten days or so. After that, she may go.”

But he replied, “Do not delay me, since the LORD has made my journey a success. Send me on my way so that I may go to my master.”

So they said, “We will call the girl and ask her opinion.”

They called Rebekah and asked her, “Will you go with this man?”

“I will go,” she replied.

So they sent their sister Rebekah on her way, along with her nurse and Abraham’s servant and his men. And they blessed Rebekah and said to her,

> “Our sister, may you become the mother of thousands upon thousands. May your offspring possess the gates of their enemies.”

Then Rebekah and her servant girls got ready, mounted the camels, and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left.

Now Isaac had just returned from Beer-lahai-roi, for he was living in the Negev. Early in the evening, Isaac went out to the field to meditate, and looking up, he saw the camels approaching.

And when Rebekah looked up and saw Isaac, she got down from her camel and asked the servant, “Who is that man in the field coming to meet us?”

“It is my master,” the servant answered. So she took her veil and covered herself. Then the servant told Isaac all that he had done.

And Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah and took Rebekah as his wife. And Isaac loved her and was comforted after his mother’s death.

Now Abraham had taken another wife, named Keturah, and she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.

Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were the Asshurites, the Letushites, and the Leummites.

The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah.

All these were descendants of Keturah.

Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac. But while he was still alive, Abraham gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them away from his son Isaac to the land of the east.

Abraham lived a total of 175 years. And at a ripe old age he breathed his last and died, old and contented, and was gathered to his people.

His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite. This was the field that Abraham had bought from the Hittites. Abraham was buried there with his wife Sarah.

After Abraham’s death, God blessed his son Isaac, who lived near Beer-lahai-roi.

This is the account of Abraham’s son Ishmael, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah’s maidservant, bore to Abraham. These are the names of the sons of Ishmael in the order of their birth: Nebaioth the firstborn of Ishmael, then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah.

These were the sons of Ishmael, and these were their names by their villages and encampments — twelve princes of their tribes. Ishmael lived a total of 137 years. Then he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people.

Ishmael’s descendants settled from Havilah to Shur, which is near the border of Egypt as you go toward Asshur. And they lived in hostility toward all their brothers.

This is the account of Abraham’s son Isaac. Abraham became the father of Isaac, and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan-aram and the sister of Laban the Aramean.

Later, Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. And the LORD heard his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived.

But the children inside her struggled with each other, and she said, “Why is this happening to me?” So Rebekah went to inquire of the LORD, and He declared to her:

> “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.”

When her time came to give birth, there were indeed twins in her womb. The first one came out red, covered with hair like a fur coat; so they named him Esau. After this, his brother came out grasping Esau’s heel; so he was named Jacob. And Isaac was sixty years old when the twins were born.

When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man who stayed at home. Because Isaac had a taste for wild game, he loved Esau; but Rebekah loved Jacob.

One day, while Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the field and was famished. He said to Jacob, “Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am famished.” (That is why he was also called Edom.)

“First sell me your birthright,” Jacob replied.

“Look,” said Esau, “I am about to die, so what good is a birthright to me?”

“Swear to me first,” Jacob said.

So Esau swore to Jacob and sold him the birthright. Then Jacob gave some bread and lentil stew to Esau, who ate and drank and then got up and went away. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Now there was another famine in the land, subsequent to the one that had occurred in Abraham’s time. And Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines at Gerar.

The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, “Do not go down to Egypt. Settle in the land where I tell you. Stay in this land as a foreigner, and I will be with you and bless you. For I will give all these lands to you and your offspring, and I will confirm the oath that I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky, and I will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations of the earth will be blessed, because Abraham listened to My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.”

So Isaac settled in Gerar. But when the men of that place asked about his wife, he said, “She is my sister.”

For he was afraid to say, “She is my wife,” since he thought to himself, “The men of this place will kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is so beautiful.”

When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from the window and was surprised to see Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. Abimelech sent for Isaac and said, “So she is really your wife! How could you say, ‘She is my sister’?”

Isaac replied, “Because I thought I might die on account of her.”

“What is this you have done to us?” asked Abimelech. “One of the people could easily have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.” So Abimelech warned all the people, saying, “Whoever harms this man or his wife will surely be put to death.”

Now Isaac sowed seed in the land, and that very year he reaped a hundredfold. And the LORD blessed him, and he became richer and richer, until he was exceedingly wealthy. He owned so many flocks and herds and servants that the Philistines envied him. So the Philistines took dirt and stopped up all the wells that his father’s servants had dug in the days of his father Abraham.

Then Abimelech said to Isaac, “Depart from us, for you are much too powerful for us.”

So Isaac left that place and encamped in the Valley of Gerar and settled there. Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the days of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died. And he gave these wells the same names his father had given them.

Then Isaac’s servants dug in the valley and found a well of fresh water there. But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac’s herdsmen and said, “The water is ours!” So he named the well Esek, because they contended with him.

Then they dug another well and quarreled over that one also; so he named it Sitnah.

He moved on from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. He named it Rehoboth and said, “At last the LORD has made room for us, and we will be fruitful in the land.”

From there Isaac went up to Beersheba, and that night the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for the sake of My servant Abraham.”

So Isaac built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD, and he pitched his tent there. His servants also dug a well there.

Later, Abimelech came to Isaac from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his adviser and Phicol the commander of his army.

“Why have you come to me?” Isaac asked them. “You hated me and sent me away.”

“We can plainly see that the LORD has been with you,” they replied. “We recommend that there should now be an oath between us and you. Let us make a covenant with you that you will not harm us, just as we have not harmed you but have done only good to you, sending you on your way in peace. And now you are blessed by the LORD.”

So Isaac prepared a feast for them, and they ate and drank. And they got up early the next morning and swore an oath to each other. Then Isaac sent them on their way, and they left him in peace.

On that same day, Isaac’s servants came and told him about the well they had dug. “We have found water!” they told him. So he called it Shibah, and to this day the name of the city is Beersheba.

When Esau was forty years old, he took as his wives Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite and Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. And they brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called his older son Esau and said to him, “My son.”

“Here I am,” Esau replied.

“Look,” said Isaac, “I am now old, and I do not know the day of my death. Take your weapons — your quiver and bow — and go out into the field to hunt some game for me. Then prepare a tasty dish that I love and bring it to me to eat, so that I may bless you before I die.”

Now Rebekah was listening to what Isaac told his son Esau. So when Esau went into the field to hunt game and bring it back, Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “Behold, I overheard your father saying to your brother Esau, ‘Bring me some game and prepare me a tasty dish to eat, so that I may bless you in the presence of the LORD before I die.’

Now, my son, listen to my voice and do exactly as I tell you. Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so that I can make them into a tasty dish for your father— the kind he loves. Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may bless you before he dies.”

Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, “Look, my brother Esau is a hairy man, but I am smooth-skinned. What if my father touches me? Then I would be revealed to him as a deceiver, and I would bring upon myself a curse rather than a blessing.”

His mother replied, “Your curse be on me, my son. Just obey my voice and go get them for me.”

So Jacob went and got two goats and brought them to his mother, who made the tasty food his father loved. And Rebekah took the finest clothes in the house that belonged to her older son Esau, and she put them on her younger son Jacob. She also put the skins of the young goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. Then she handed her son Jacob the tasty food and bread she had made.

So Jacob went to his father and said, “My father.”

“Here I am!” he answered. “Which one are you, my son?”

Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau, your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may bless me.”

But Isaac asked his son, “How did you ever find it so quickly, my son?”

“Because the LORD your God brought it to me,” he replied.

Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Please come closer so I can touch you, my son. Are you really my son Esau, or not?”

So Jacob came close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” Isaac did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he blessed him.

Again he asked, “Are you really my son Esau?”

And he replied, “I am.”

“Serve me,” said Isaac, “and let me eat some of my son’s game, so that I may bless you.”

Jacob brought it to him, and he ate; then he brought him wine, and he drank.

Then his father Isaac said to him, “Please come near and kiss me, my son.”

So he came near and kissed him. When Isaac smelled his clothing, he blessed him and said:

> “Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed. May God give to you the dew of heaven and the richness of the earth — an abundance of grain and new wine. May peoples serve you and nations bow down to you. May you be the master of your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed, and those who bless you be blessed.”

As soon as Isaac had finished blessing him and Jacob had left his father’s presence, his brother Esau returned from the hunt. He too made some tasty food, brought it to his father, and said to him, “My father, sit up and eat of your son’s game, so that you may bless me.”

But his father Isaac replied, “Who are you?”

“I am Esau, your firstborn son,” he answered.

Isaac began to tremble violently and said, “Who was it, then, who hunted the game and brought it to me? Before you came in, I ate it all and blessed him — and indeed, he will be blessed!”

When Esau heard his father’s words, he let out a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, “Bless me too, O my father!”

But Isaac replied, “Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing.”

So Esau declared, “Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has cheated me twice. He took my birthright, and now he has taken my blessing.” Then he asked, “Haven’t you saved a blessing for me?”

But Isaac answered Esau: “Look, I have made him your master and given him all his relatives as servants; I have sustained him with grain and new wine. What is left that I can do for you, my son?”

Esau said to his father, “Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, O my father!” Then Esau wept aloud.

His father Isaac answered him:

> “Behold, your dwelling place shall be away from the richness of the land, away from the dew of heaven above. You shall live by the sword and serve your brother. But when you rebel, you will tear his yoke from your neck.”

Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. And Esau said in his heart, “The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob.”

When the words of her older son Esau were relayed to Rebekah, she sent for her younger son Jacob and told him, “Look, your brother Esau is consoling himself by plotting to kill you. So now, my son, obey my voice and flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran. Stay with him for a while, until your brother’s fury subsides — until your brother’s rage against you wanes and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will send for you and bring you back from there. Why should I lose both of you in one day?”

Then Rebekah said to Isaac, “I am weary of my life because of these Hittite women. If Jacob takes a Hittite wife from among them, what good is my life?”

So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him. “Do not take a wife from the Canaanite women,” he commanded. “Go at once to Paddan-aram, to the house of your mother’s father Bethuel, and take a wife from among the daughters of Laban, your mother’s brother. May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, so that you may become a company of peoples. And may He give the blessing of Abraham to you and your descendants, so that you may possess the land where you dwell as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham.”

So Isaac sent Jacob to Paddan-aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, who was the mother of Jacob and Esau.

Now Esau learned that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him to Paddan-aram to take a wife there, commanding him, “Do not marry a Canaanite woman,” and that Jacob had obeyed his father and mother and gone to Paddan-aram.

And seeing that his father Isaac disapproved of the Canaanite women, Esau went to Ishmael and married Mahalath, the sister of Nebaioth and daughter of Abraham’s son Ishmael, in addition to the wives he already had.

Meanwhile Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. On reaching a certain place, he spent the night there because the sun had set. And taking one of the stones from that place, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep.

And Jacob had a dream about a ladder that rested on the earth with its top reaching up to heaven, and God’s angels were going up and down the ladder. And there at the top the LORD was standing and saying, “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you now lie. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and east and north and south. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. Look, I am with you, and I will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

When Jacob woke up, he said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was unaware of it.” And he was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven!”

Early the next morning, Jacob took the stone that he had placed under his head, and he set it up as a pillar. He poured oil on top of it, and he called that place Bethel, though previously the city had been named Luz.

Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and watch over me on this journey, and if He will provide me with food to eat and clothes to wear, so that I may return safely to my father’s house, then the LORD will be my God. And this stone I have set up as a pillar

will be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give You a tenth."

Jacob resumed his journey and came to the land of the people of the east. He looked and saw a well in the field, and near it lay three flocks of sheep, because the sheep were watered from this well. And a large stone covered the mouth of the well. When all the flocks had been gathered there, the shepherds would roll away the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep. Then they would return the stone to its place over the mouth of the well.

"My brothers," Jacob asked the shepherds, "where are you from?"

"We are from Haran," they answered.

"Do you know Laban the grandson of Nahor?" Jacob asked.

"We know him," they replied.

"Is he well?" Jacob inquired.

"Yes," they answered, "and here comes his daughter Rachel with his sheep."

"Look," said Jacob, "it is still broad daylight; it is not yet time to gather the livestock. Water the sheep and take them back to pasture."

But they replied, "We cannot, until all the flocks have been gathered and the stone has been rolled away from the mouth of the well. Then we will water the sheep."

While he was still speaking with them, Rachel arrived with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. As soon as Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of his mother's brother Laban, with Laban's sheep, he went up and rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well and watered his uncle's sheep. Then Jacob kissed Rachel and wept aloud. He told Rachel that he was Rebekah's son, a relative of her father, and she ran and told her father.

When Laban heard the news about his sister's son Jacob, he ran out to meet him. He embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his home, where Jacob told him all that had happened.

Then Laban declared, "You are indeed my own flesh and blood."

After Jacob had stayed with him a month, Laban said to him, "Just because you are my relative, should you work for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be."

Now Laban had two daughters; the older was named Leah, and the younger was named Rachel. Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel was shapely and beautiful. Since Jacob loved Rachel, he answered, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel."

Laban replied, "Better that I give her to you than to another. Stay here with me." So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, yet it seemed but a few days because of his love for her.

Finally Jacob said to Laban, "Grant me my wife, for my time is complete, and I want to sleep with her."

So Laban invited all the men of that place and prepared a feast. But when evening came, Laban took his daughter Leah and gave her to Jacob, and he slept with her. And Laban gave his servant girl Zilpah to his daughter Leah as her maidservant.

When morning came, there was Leah! "What have you done to me?" Jacob said to Laban. "Wasn't it for Rachel that I served you? Why have you deceived me?"

Laban replied, "It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older. Finish this week's celebration, and we will give you the younger one in return for another seven years of work."

And Jacob did just that. He finished the week's celebration, and Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife. Laban also gave his servant girl Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maidservant.

Jacob slept with Rachel as well, and indeed, he loved Rachel more than Leah. So he worked for Laban another seven years.

When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. And Leah conceived and gave birth to a son, and she named him Reuben, for she said, "The LORD has seen my affliction. Surely my husband will love me now."

Again she conceived and gave birth to a son, and she said, "Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has given me this son as well." So she named him Simeon.

Once again Leah conceived and gave birth to a son, and she said, "Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." So he was named Levi.

And once more she conceived and gave birth to a son and said, "This time I will praise the LORD." So she named him Judah. Then Leah stopped having children.

When Rachel saw that she was not bearing any children for Jacob, she envied her sister. "Give me children, or I will die!" she said to Jacob.

Jacob became angry with Rachel and said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld children from you?"

Then she said, "Here is my maidservant Bilhah. Sleep with her, that she may bear children for me, so that through her I too can build a family."

So Rachel gave Jacob her servant Bilhah as a wife, and he slept with her, and Bilhah conceived and bore him a son. Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me; He has heard my plea and given me a son." So she named him Dan.

And Rachel's servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. Then Rachel said, "In my great struggles, I have wrestled with my sister and won." So she named him Naphtali.

When Leah saw that she had stopped having children, she gave her servant Zilpah to Jacob as a wife. And Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son. Then Leah said, "How fortunate!" So she named him Gad.

When Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son, Leah said, "How happy I am! For the women call me happy." So she named him Asher.

Now during the wheat harvest, Reuben went out and found some mandrakes in the field. When he brought them to his mother, Rachel begged Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes."

But Leah replied, "Is it not enough that you have taken away my husband? Now you want to take my son's mandrakes as well?"

"Very well," said Rachel, "he may sleep with you tonight in exchange for your son's mandrakes."

When Jacob came in from the field that evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, “You must come with me, for I have hired you with my son’s mandrakes.” So he slept with her that night.

And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore a fifth son to Jacob. Then Leah said, “God has rewarded me for giving my maidservant to my husband.” So she named him Issachar.

Again Leah conceived and bore a sixth son to Jacob. “God has given me a good gift,” she said. “This time my husband will honor me, because I have borne him six sons.” And she named him Zebulun.

After that, Leah gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah.

Then God remembered Rachel. He listened to her and opened her womb, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. “God has taken away my shame,” she said. She named him Joseph, and said, “May the LORD add to me another son.”

Now after Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, “Send me on my way so I can return to my homeland. Give me my wives and children for whom I have served you, that I may go on my way. You know how hard I have worked for you.”

But Laban replied, “If I have found favor in your eyes, please stay. I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you.” And he added, “Name your wages, and I will pay them.”

Then Jacob answered, “You know how I have served you and how your livestock have thrived under my care. Indeed, you had very little before my arrival, but now your wealth has increased many times over. The LORD has blessed you wherever I set foot. But now, when may I also provide for my own household?”

“What can I give you?” Laban asked.

“You do not need to give me anything,” Jacob replied. “If you do this one thing for me, I will keep on shepherding and keeping your flocks. Let me go through all your flocks today and remove from them every speckled or spotted sheep, every dark-colored lamb, and every spotted or speckled goat. These will be my wages. So my honesty will testify for me when you come to check on my wages in the future. If I have any goats that are not speckled or spotted, or any lambs that are not dark-colored, they will be considered stolen.”

“Agreed,” said Laban. “Let it be as you have said.”

That very day Laban removed all the streaked or spotted male goats and every speckled or spotted female goat— every one that had any white on it— and every dark-colored lamb, and he placed them under the care of his sons. Then he put a three-day journey between himself and Jacob, while Jacob was shepherding the rest of Laban’s flocks.

Jacob, however, took fresh branches of poplar, almond, and plane trees, and peeled the bark, exposing the white inner wood of the branches. Then he set the peeled branches in the watering troughs in front of the flocks coming in to drink. So when the flocks were in heat and came to drink, they mated in front of the branches. And they bore young that were streaked or speckled or spotted. Jacob set apart the young, but made the rest face the streaked dark-colored sheep in Laban’s flocks. Then he set his own stock apart and did not put them with Laban’s animals.

Whenever the stronger females of the flock were in heat, Jacob would place the branches in the troughs, in full view of the animals, so that they would breed in front of the branches. But if the animals were weak, he did not set out the branches. So the weaker animals went to Laban and the stronger ones to Jacob.

Thus Jacob became exceedingly prosperous. He owned large flocks, maidservants and menservants, and camels and donkeys.

Now Jacob heard that Laban’s sons were saying, “Jacob has taken away all that belonged to our father and built all this wealth at our father’s expense.” And Jacob saw from the countenance of Laban that his attitude toward him had changed.

Then the LORD said to Jacob, “Go back to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you.”

So Jacob sent word and called Rachel and Leah to the field where his flocks were, and he told them, “I can see from your father’s countenance that his attitude toward me has changed; but the God of my father has been with me. You know that I have served your father with all my strength. And although he has cheated me and changed my wages ten times, God has not allowed him to harm me. If he said, ‘The speckled will be your wages,’ then the whole flock bore speckled offspring. If he said, ‘The streaked will be your wages,’ then the whole flock bore streaked offspring. Thus God has taken away your father’s livestock and given them to me.

When the flocks were breeding, I saw in a dream that the streaked, spotted, and speckled males were mating with the females. In that dream the angel of God said to me, ‘Jacob!’

And I replied, ‘Here I am.’

‘Look up,’ he said, ‘and see that all the males that are mating with the flock are streaked, spotted, or speckled; for I have seen all that Laban has done to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and made a solemn vow to Me. Now get up, leave this land at once, and return to your native land.’”

And Rachel and Leah replied, “Do we have any portion or inheritance left in our father’s house? Are we not regarded by him as outsiders? Not only has he sold us, but he has certainly squandered what was paid for us. Surely all the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children. So do whatever God has told you.”

Then Jacob got up and put his children and his wives on camels, and he drove all his livestock before him, along with all the possessions he had acquired in Paddan-aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land in Canaan.

Now while Laban was out shearing his sheep, Rachel stole her father’s household idols. Moreover, Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean by not telling him that he was running away. So he fled with all his possessions, crossed the Euphrates, and headed for the hill country of Gilead.

On the third day Laban was informed that Jacob had fled. So he took his relatives with him, pursued

Jacob for seven days, and overtook him in the hill country of Gilead. But that night God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream and warned him, “Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.”

Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country of Gilead when Laban overtook him, and Laban and his relatives camped there as well. Then Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done? You have deceived me and carried off my daughters like captives of war! Why did you run away secretly and deceive me, without even telling me? I would have sent you away with joy and singing, with tambourines and harps. But you did not even let me kiss my grandchildren and my daughters goodbye . Now you have done a foolish thing.

I have power to do you great harm, but last night the God of your father said to me, ‘Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.’ Now you have gone off because you long for your father’s house. But why have you stolen my gods?”

“I was afraid,” Jacob answered, “for I thought you would take your daughters from me by force. If you find your gods with anyone here, he shall not live! In the presence of our relatives, see for yourself if anything is yours, and take it back.” For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the idols.

So Laban went into Jacob’s tent, then Leah’s tent, and then the tents of the two maidservants, but he found nothing. Then he left Leah’s tent and entered Rachel’s tent. Now Rachel had taken Laban’s household idols, put them in the saddlebag of her camel, and was sitting on them. And Laban searched everything in the tent but found nothing.

Rachel said to her father, “Sir, do not be angry that I cannot stand up before you; for I am having my period.” So Laban searched but could not find the household idols.

Then Jacob became incensed and challenged Laban. “What is my crime?” he said. “For what sin of mine have you so hotly pursued me? You have searched all my goods! Have you found anything that belongs to you? Put it here before my brothers and yours, that they may judge between the two of us.

I have been with you for twenty years now. Your sheep and goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten the rams of your flock. I did not bring you anything torn by wild beasts; I bore the loss myself. And you demanded payment from me for what was stolen by day or night. As it was, the heat consumed me by day and the frost by night, and sleep fled from my eyes.

Thus for twenty years I have served in your household— fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flocks— and you have changed my wages ten times! If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, surely by now you would have sent me away empty-handed. But God has seen my affliction and the toil of my hands, and last night He rendered judgment.”

But Laban answered Jacob, “These daughters are my daughters, these sons are my sons, and these flocks are my flocks! Everything you see is mine! Yet what can I do today about these daughters of mine or the children they have borne? Come now, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it serve as a witness between you and me.”

So Jacob picked out a stone and set it up as a pillar, and he said to his relatives, “Gather some stones.” So they took stones and made a mound, and there by the mound they ate. Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha, and Jacob called it Galeed.

Then Laban declared, “This mound is a witness between you and me this day.”

Therefore the place was called Galeed. It was also called Mizpah, because Laban said, “May the LORD keep watch between you and me when we are absent from each other. If you mistreat my daughters or take other wives, although no one is with us, remember that God is a witness between you and me.”

Laban also said to Jacob, “Here is the mound, and here is the pillar I have set up between you and me. This mound is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I will not go past this mound to harm you, and you will not go past this mound and pillar to harm me. May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us.”

So Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac.

Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain and invited his relatives to eat a meal. And after they had eaten, they spent the night on the mountain. Early the next morning, Laban got up and kissed his grandchildren and daughters and blessed them. Then he left to return home.

Jacob also went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, “This is the camp of God.” So he named that place Mahanaim.

Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. He instructed them, “You are to say to my master Esau, ‘Your servant Jacob says: I have been staying with Laban and have remained there until now. I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, menservants, and maidservants. I have sent this message to inform my master, so that I may find favor in your sight.’”

When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said, “We went to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to meet you— he and four hundred men with him.”

In great fear and distress, Jacob divided his people into two camps, as well as the flocks and herds and camels. He thought, “If Esau comes and attacks one camp, then the other camp can escape.”

Then Jacob declared, “O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, the LORD who told me, ‘Go back to your country and to your kindred, and I will make you prosper,’ I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness You have shown Your servant. Indeed, with only my staff I came across the Jordan, but now I have become two camps. Please deliver me from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid that he may come and attack me and the mothers and children with me. But You have said, ‘I will surely make you prosper, and I will make your offspring like the sand of the sea, too numerous to count.’”

Jacob spent the night there, and from what he had brought with him, he selected a gift for his brother Esau: 200 female goats, 20 male goats, 200 ewes, 20 rams, 30 milk camels with their young, 40 cows, 10

bulls, 20 female donkeys, and 10 male donkeys. He entrusted them to his servants in separate herds and told them, “Go on ahead of me, and keep some distance between the herds.”

He instructed the one in the lead, “When my brother Esau meets you and asks, ‘To whom do you belong, where are you going, and whose animals are these before you?’ then you are to say, ‘They belong to your servant Jacob. They are a gift, sent to my lord Esau. And behold, Jacob is behind us.’”

He also instructed the second, the third, and all those following behind the herds: “When you meet Esau, you are to say the same thing to him. You are also to say, ‘Look, your servant Jacob is right behind us.’” For he thought, “I will appease Esau with the gift that is going before me. After that I can face him, and perhaps he will accept me.”

So Jacob’s gifts went on before him, while he spent the night in the camp.

During the night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants, and his eleven sons, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream, along with all his possessions.

So Jacob was left all alone, and there a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower Jacob, he struck the socket of Jacob’s hip and dislocated it as they wrestled. Then the man said, “Let me go, for it is daybreak.”

But Jacob replied, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”

“What is your name?” the man asked.

“Jacob,” he replied.

Then the man said, “Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men, and you have prevailed.”

And Jacob requested, “Please tell me your name.”

But he replied, “Why do you ask my name?” Then he blessed Jacob there.

So Jacob named the place Peniel, saying, “Indeed, I have seen God face to face, and yet my life was spared.”

The sun rose above him as he passed by Penuel, and he was limping because of his hip. Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip, because the socket of Jacob’s hip was struck near that tendon.

Now Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming toward him with four hundred men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants. He put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph at the rear. But Jacob himself went on ahead and bowed to the ground seven times as he approached his brother.

Esau, however, ran to him and embraced him, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. And they both wept.

When Esau looked up and saw the women and children, he asked, “Who are these with you?”

Jacob answered, “These are the children God has graciously given your servant.” Then the maidservants and their children approached and bowed down. Leah and her children also approached and bowed down, and then Joseph and Rachel approached and bowed down.

“What do you mean by sending this whole company to meet me?” asked Esau.

“To find favor in your sight, my lord,” Jacob answered.

“I already have plenty, my brother,” Esau replied. “Keep what belongs to you.”

But Jacob insisted, “No, please! If I have found favor in your sight, then receive this gift from my hand. For indeed, I have seen your face, and it is like seeing the face of God, since you have received me favorably. Please accept my gift that was brought to you, because God has been gracious to me and I have all I need.” So Jacob pressed him until he accepted.

Then Esau said, “Let us be on our way, and I will go ahead of you.”

But Jacob replied, “My lord knows that the children are frail, and I must care for sheep and cattle that are nursing their young. If they are driven hard for even a day, all the animals will die. Please let my lord go ahead of his servant. I will continue on slowly, at a comfortable pace for the livestock and children, until I come to my lord at Seir.”

“Let me leave some of my people with you,” Esau said.

But Jacob replied, “Why do that? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord.”

So that day Esau started on his way back to Seir, but Jacob went on to Succoth, where he built a house for himself and shelters for his livestock; that is why the place was called Succoth.

After Jacob had come from Paddan-aram, he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in the land of Canaan, and he camped just outside the city. And the plot of ground where he pitched his tent, he purchased from the sons of Hamor, Shechem’s father, for a hundred pieces of silver. There he set up an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.

Now Dinah, the daughter Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daughters of the land. When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the region, saw her, he took her and lay with her by force. And his soul was drawn to Dinah, the daughter of Jacob. He loved the young girl and spoke to her tenderly. So Shechem told his father Hamor, “Get me this girl as a wife.”

Jacob heard that Shechem had defiled his daughter Dinah, but since his sons were with his livestock in the field, he remained silent about it until they returned. Meanwhile, Shechem’s father Hamor came to speak with Jacob. When Jacob’s sons heard what had happened, they returned from the field. They were filled with grief and fury, because Shechem had committed an outrage in Israel by lying with Jacob’s daughter — a thing that should not be done.

But Hamor said to them, “My son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him as his wife. Intermarry with us; give us your daughters and take our daughters for yourselves. You may settle among us, and the land will be open to you. Live here, move about freely, and acquire your own property.”

Then Shechem said to Dinah’s father and brothers, “Grant me this favor, and I will give you whatever you ask. Demand a high dowry and an expensive gift, and

I will give you whatever you ask. Only give me the girl as my wife!"

But because Shechem had defiled their sister Dinah, Jacob's sons answered him and his father Hamor deceitfully. "We cannot do such a thing," they said. "To give our sister to an uncircumcised man would be a disgrace to us. We will consent to this on one condition, that you become circumcised like us — every one of your males. Then we will give you our daughters and take your daughters for ourselves. We will dwell among you and become one people. But if you will not agree to be circumcised, then we will take our sister and go."

Their offer seemed good to Hamor and his son Shechem. The young man, who was the most respected of all his father's household, did not hesitate to fulfill this request, because he was delighted with Jacob's daughter.

So Hamor and his son Shechem went to the gate of their city and addressed the men of their city: "These men are at peace with us. Let them live and trade in our land; indeed, it is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters in marriage and give our daughters to them. But only on this condition will the men agree to dwell with us and be one people: if all our men are circumcised as they are. Will not their livestock, their possessions, and all their animals become ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will dwell among us."

All the men who went out of the city gate listened to Hamor and his son Shechem, and every male of the city was circumcised.

Three days later, while they were still in pain, two of Jacob's sons (Dinah's brothers Simeon and Levi) took their swords, went into the unsuspecting city, and slaughtered every male. They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with their swords, took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went away.

Jacob's other sons came upon the slaughter and looted the city, because their sister had been defiled. They took their flocks and herds and donkeys, and everything else in the city or in the field. They carried off all their possessions and women and children, and they plundered everything in their houses.

Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble upon me by making me a stench to the Canaanites and Perizzites, the people of this land. We are few in number; if they unite against me and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed."

But they replied, "Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute?"

Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and settle there. Build an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau."

So Jacob told his household and all who were with him, "Get rid of the foreign gods that are among you. Purify yourselves and change your garments. Then let us arise and go to Bethel. I will build an altar there to God, who answered me in my day of distress. He has been with me wherever I have gone."

So they gave Jacob all their foreign gods and all their earrings, and Jacob buried them under the oak near Shechem.

As they set out, a terror from God fell over the surrounding cities, so that they did not pursue Jacob's sons. So Jacob and everyone with him arrived in Luz (that is, Bethel) in the land of Canaan. There Jacob built an altar, and he called that place El-bethel, because it was there that God had revealed Himself to Jacob as he fled from his brother.

Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died and was buried under the oak below Bethel. So Jacob named it Allon-bacuth.

After Jacob had returned from Paddan-aram, God appeared to him again and blessed him. And God said to him, "Though your name is Jacob, you will no longer be called Jacob. Instead, your name will be Israel." So God named him Israel.

And God told him, "I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation — even a company of nations — shall come from you, and kings shall descend from you. The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you."

Then God went up from the place where He had spoken with him.

So Jacob set up a pillar in the place where God had spoken with him— a stone marker— and he poured out a drink offering on it and anointed it with oil. Jacob called the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.

Later, they set out from Bethel, and while they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth, and her labor was difficult. During her severe labor, the midwife said to her, "Do not be afraid, for you are having another son."

And with her last breath— for she was dying— she named him Ben-oni. But his father called him Benjamin.

So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). Jacob set up a pillar on her grave; it marks Rachel's tomb to this day.

Israel again set out and pitched his tent beyond the Tower of Eder. While Israel was living in that region, Reuben went in and slept with his father's concubine Bilhah, and Israel heard about it.

Jacob had twelve sons:

The sons of Leah were Reuben the firstborn of Jacob, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun.

The sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin.

The sons of Rachel's maidservant Bilhah were Dan and Naphtali.

And the sons of Leah's maidservant Zilpah were Gad and Asher.

These are the sons of Jacob, who were born to him in Paddan-aram.

Jacob returned to his father Isaac at Mamre, near Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had stayed.

And Isaac lived 180 years. Then he breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people, old and full of years. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

This is the account of Esau (that is, Edom). Esau took his wives from the daughters of Canaan: Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite, Oholibamah daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite, and Basemath daughter of Ishmael and sister of Nebaioth. And Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau, Basemath gave birth to Reuel, and Oholibamah gave birth to Jeush, Jalam, and

Korah. These were the sons of Esau, who were born to him in the land of Canaan.

Later, Esau took his wives and sons and daughters and all the people of his household, along with his livestock, all his other animals, and all the property he had acquired in Canaan, and he moved to a land far away from his brother Jacob. For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together; the land where they stayed could not support them because of their livestock. So Esau (that is, Edom) settled in the area of Mount Seir.

This is the account of Esau, the father of the Edomites, in the area of Mount Seir.

These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz son of Esau's wife Adah, and Reuel son of Esau's wife Basemath.

The sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. Additionally, Timna, a concubine of Esau's son Eliphaz, gave birth to Amalek. These are the grandsons of Esau's wife Adah.

These are the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. They are the grandsons of Esau's wife Basemath.

These are the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah (daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon) whom she bore to Esau: Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

These are the chiefs among the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz the firstborn of Esau: Chiefs Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, Korah, Gatam, and Amalek. They are the chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom, and they are the grandsons of Adah.

These are the sons of Esau's son Reuel: Chiefs Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. They are the chiefs descended from Reuel in the land of Edom, and they are the grandsons of Esau's wife Basemath.

These are the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah: Chiefs Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. They are the chiefs descended from Esau's wife Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah.

All these are the sons of Esau (that is, Edom), and they were their chiefs.

These are the sons of Seir the Horite, who were living in the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. They are the chiefs of the Horites, the descendants of Seir in the land of Edom.

The sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam. Timna was Lotan's sister.

These are the sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam.

These are the sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah. (This is the Anah who found the hot springs in the wilderness as he was pasturing the donkeys of his father Zibeon.)

These are the children of Anah: Dishon and Oholibamah daughter of Anah.

These are the sons of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran.

These are the sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan.

These are the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran.

These are the chiefs of the Horites: Chiefs Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. They are the chiefs of the Horites, according to their divisions in the land of Seir.

These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the Israelites:

Bela son of Beor reigned in Edom; the name of his city was Dinhabah.

When Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah from Bozrah reigned in his place.

When Jobab died, Husham from the land of the Temanites reigned in his place.

When Husham died, Hadad son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab, reigned in his place. And the name of his city was Avith.

When Hadad died, Samlah from Masrekah reigned in his place.

When Samlah died, Shaul from Rehoboth on the Euphrates reigned in his place.

When Shaul died, Baal-hanan son of Achbor reigned in his place.

When Baal-hanan son of Achbor died, Hadad reigned in his place. His city was named Pau, and his wife's name was Mehetabel daughter of Matred, the daughter of Me-zahab.

These are the names of Esau's chiefs, according to their families and regions, by their names: Chiefs Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, Magdiel, and Iram. These were the chiefs of Edom, according to their settlements in the land they possessed. Esau was the father of the Edomites.

Now Jacob lived in the land where his father had resided, the land of Canaan.

This is the account of Jacob. When Joseph was seventeen years old, he was tending the flock with his brothers, the sons of his father's wives Bilhah and Zilpah, and he brought their father a bad report about them.

Now Israel loved Joseph more than his other sons, because Joseph had been born to him in his old age; so he made him a robe of many colors. When Joseph's brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain in the field, and suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to mine."

"Do you intend to reign over us?" his brothers asked. "Will you actually rule us?" So they hated him even more because of his dream and his statements.

Then Joseph had another dream and told it to his brothers. "Look," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

He told his father and brothers, but his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream that you have had? Will your mother and brothers and I actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept in mind what he had said.

Some time later, Joseph's brothers had gone to pasture their father's flocks near Shechem. Israel said to him, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flocks at Shechem? Get ready; I am sending you to them."

"I am ready," Joseph replied.

Then Israel told him, "Go now and see how your brothers and the flocks are faring, and bring word back to me."

So he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron. And when Joseph arrived in Shechem, a man found him wandering in the field and asked, "What are you looking for?"

"I am looking for my brothers," Joseph replied. "Can you please tell me where they are pasturing their flocks?"

"They have moved on from here," the man answered. "I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph set out after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

Now Joseph's brothers saw him in the distance, and before he arrived, they plotted to kill him. "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to one another. "Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits. We can say that a vicious animal has devoured him. Then we shall see what becomes of his dreams!"

When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue Joseph from their hands. "Let us not take his life," he said. "Do not shed his blood. Throw him into this pit in the wilderness, but do not lay a hand on him." Reuben said this so that he could rescue Joseph from their hands and return him to his father.

So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe — the robe of many colors he was wearing — and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, with no water in it.

And as they sat down to eat a meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were carrying spices, balm, and myrrh on their way down to Egypt.

Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay a hand on him; for he is our brother, our own flesh." And they agreed. So when the Midianite traders passed by, his brothers pulled Joseph out of the pit and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes, returned to his brothers, and said, "The boy is gone! What am I going to do?"

Then they took Joseph's robe, slaughtered a young goat, and dipped the robe in its blood. They sent the robe of many colors to their father and said, "We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe or not."

His father recognized it and said, "It is my son's robe! A vicious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!" Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth around his waist, and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and daughters tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "No, " he said. "I will go down to Sheol mourning for my son." So his father wept for him.

Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard.

About that time, Judah left his brothers and settled near a man named Hirah, an Adullamite. There Judah saw the daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua, and he took her as a wife and slept with her. So she conceived and gave birth to a son, and Judah named him Er. Again she conceived and gave birth to a son, and she named him Onan. Then she gave birth to another son and named him Shelah; it was at Chezib that she gave birth to him.

Now Judah acquired a wife for Er, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; so the LORD put him to death. Then Judah said to Onan, "Sleep with your brother's wife. Perform your duty as her brother-in-law and raise up offspring for your brother."

But Onan knew that the offspring would not belong to him; so whenever he would sleep with his brother's wife, he would spill his seed on the ground so that he would not produce offspring for his brother. What he did was wicked in the sight of the LORD, so He put Onan to death as well.

Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Live as a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up." For he thought, "He may die too, like his brothers." So Tamar went to live in her father's house.

After a long time Judah's wife, the daughter of Shua, died. When Judah had finished mourning, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah. When Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep," she removed her widow's garments, covered her face with a veil to disguise herself, and sat at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the way to Timnah. For she saw that although Shelah had grown up, she had not been given to him as a wife.

When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute because she had covered her face. Not realizing that she was his daughter-in-law, he went over to her and said, "Come now, let me sleep with you."

"What will you give me for sleeping with you?" she inquired.

"I will send you a young goat from my flock," Judah answered.

But she replied, "Only if you leave me something as a pledge until you send it."

"What pledge should I give you?" he asked.

She answered, "Your seal and your cord, and the staff in your hand." So he gave them to her and slept with her, and she became pregnant by him. Then Tamar got up and departed. And she removed her veil and put on her widow's garments again.

Now when Judah sent his friend Hirah the Adullamite with the young goat to collect the items he had left with the woman, he could not find her. He asked the men of that place, "Where is the shrine prostitute who was beside the road at Enaim?"

"No shrine prostitute has been here," they answered.

So Hirah returned to Judah and said, "I could not find her, and furthermore, the men of that place said, 'No shrine prostitute has been here.'"

"Let her keep the items," Judah replied. "Otherwise we will become a laughingstock. After all, I did send her this young goat, but you could not find her."

About three months later, Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has prostituted herself, and now she is pregnant."

"Bring her out!" Judah replied. "Let her be burned to death!"

As she was being brought out, Tamar sent a message to her father-in-law: "I am pregnant by the man to whom these items belong." And she added, "Please examine them. Whose seal and cord and staff are these?"

Judah recognized the items and said, "She is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he did not have relations with her again.

When the time came for Tamar to give birth, there were twins in her womb. And as she was giving birth, one of them put out his hand; so the midwife took a scarlet thread and tied it around his wrist. "This one came out first," she announced. But when he pulled his hand back and his brother came out, she said, "You have broken out first!" So he was named Perez. Then his brother came out with the scarlet thread around his wrist, and he was named Zerah.

Meanwhile, Joseph had been taken down to Egypt, where an Egyptian named Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there. And the LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, serving in the household of his Egyptian master.

When his master saw that the LORD was with him and made him prosper in all he did, Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal attendant.

Potiphar put him in charge of his household and entrusted him with everything he owned. From the time that he put Joseph in charge of his household and all he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's household on account of him. The LORD's blessing was on everything he owned, both in his house and in his field. So Potiphar left all that he owned in Joseph's care; he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.

Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, and after some time his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph and said, "Sleep with me."

But he refused. "Look," he said to his master's wife, "with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in his house, and he has entrusted everything he owns to my care. No one in this house is greater than I am. He has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. So how could I do such a great evil and sin against God?"

Although Potiphar's wife spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be near her. One day, however, Joseph went into the house to attend to his work, and not a single household servant was inside. She grabbed Joseph by his cloak and said, "Sleep with me!" But leaving his cloak in her hand, he escaped and ran outside.

When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, she called her household servants. "Look," she said, "this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us. He came to me so he could sleep with me, but I screamed as loud as I could. When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house."

So Potiphar's wife kept Joseph's cloak beside her until his master came home. Then she told him the same story: "The Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me, but when I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house."

When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is what your slave did to me," he burned with anger. So Joseph's master took him and had him thrown into the prison where the king's prisoners were confined.

While Joseph was there in the prison, the LORD was with him and extended kindness to him, granting him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. And the warden put all the prisoners under Joseph's care, so that he was responsible for all that was done in the prison. The warden did not concern himself with anything under Joseph's care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

Some time later, the king's cupbearer and baker offended their master, the king of Egypt. Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, and imprisoned them in the house of the captain of the guard, the same prison where Joseph was confined. The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he became their personal attendant.

After they had been in custody for some time, both of these men — the Egyptian king's cupbearer and baker, who were being held in the prison — had a dream on the same night, and each dream had its own meaning.

When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were distraught. So he asked the officials of Pharaoh who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why are your faces so downcast today?"

"We both had dreams," they replied, "but there is no one to interpret them."

Then Joseph said to them, "Don't interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."

So the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream: "In my dream there was a vine before me, and on the vine were three branches. As it budded, its blossoms opened and its clusters ripened into grapes. Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, squeezed them into his cup, and placed the cup in his hand."

Joseph replied, "This is the interpretation: The three branches are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore your position. You will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you did when you were his cupbearer. But when it goes well for you, please remember me and show me kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh, that he might bring me out of this prison. For I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing for which they should have put me in this dungeon."

When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable, he said to Joseph, "I too had a dream: There were three baskets of white bread on my head. In the top basket were all sorts of baked goods for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head."

Joseph replied, “This is the interpretation: The three baskets are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and hang you on a tree. Then the birds will eat the flesh of your body.”

On the third day, which was Pharaoh’s birthday, he held a feast for all his officials, and in their presence he lifted up the heads of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker. Pharaoh restored the chief cupbearer to his position, so that he once again placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand. But Pharaoh hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had described to them in his interpretation.

The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot all about him.

After two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing beside the Nile, when seven cows, sleek and well-fed, came up from the river and began to graze among the reeds. After them, seven other cows, sickly and thin, came up from the Nile and stood beside the well-fed cows on the bank of the river. And the cows that were sickly and thin devoured the seven sleek, well-fed cows.

Then Pharaoh woke up, but he fell back asleep and dreamed a second time: Seven heads of grain, plump and ripe, came up on one stalk. After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted, thin and scorched by the east wind. And the thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven plump, ripe ones. Then Pharaoh awoke and realized it was a dream.

In the morning his spirit was troubled, so he summoned all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.

Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, “Today I recall my failures. Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he put me and the chief baker in the custody of the captain of the guard. One night both the chief baker and I had dreams, and each dream had its own meaning. Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams and he interpreted them for us individually. And it happened to us just as he had interpreted: I was restored to my position, and the other man was hanged.”

So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, who was quickly brought out of the dungeon. After he had shaved and changed his clothes, he went in before Pharaoh.

Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.”

“I myself cannot do it,” Joseph replied, “but God will give Pharaoh a sound answer.”

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph: “In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile, when seven cows, well-fed and sleek, came up from the river and began to graze among the reeds. After them, seven other cows — sickly, ugly, and thin— came up. I have never seen such ugly cows in all the land of Egypt! Then the thin, ugly cows devoured the seven well-fed cows that were there first. When they had devoured them, however, no one could tell that they had done so; their appearance was as ugly as it had been before. Then I awoke.

In my dream I also saw seven heads of grain, plump and ripe, growing on a single stalk. After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted— withered, thin, and scorched by the east wind. And the thin heads of grain swallowed the seven plump ones.

I told this dream to the magicians, but no one could explain it to me.”

At this, Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what He is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven ripe heads of grain are seven years. The dreams have the same meaning. Moreover, the seven thin, ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind — they are seven years of famine.

It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do. Behold, seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in the land of Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will devastate the land. The abundance in the land will not be remembered, since the famine that follows it will be so severe.

Moreover, because the dream was given to Pharaoh in two versions, the matter has been decreed by God, and He will carry it out shortly.

Now, therefore, Pharaoh should look for a discerning and wise man and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh take action and appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. Under the authority of Pharaoh, let them collect all the excess food from these good years, that they may come and lay up the grain to be preserved as food in the cities. This food will be a reserve for the land during the seven years of famine to come upon the land of Egypt. Then the country will not perish in the famine.”

This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his officials. So Pharaoh asked them, “Can we find anyone like this man, in whom the Spirit of God abides?”

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one as discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my house, and all my people are to obey your commands. Only with regard to the throne will I be greater than you.”

Pharaoh also told Joseph, “I hereby place you over all the land of Egypt.” Then Pharaoh removed the signet ring from his finger, put it on Joseph’s finger, clothed him in garments of fine linen, and placed a gold chain around his neck. He had Joseph ride in his second chariot, with men calling out before him, “Bow the knee!” So he placed him over all the land of Egypt.

And Pharaoh declared to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, but without your permission, no one in all the land of Egypt shall lift his hand or foot.”

Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-paneah, and he gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, to be his wife. And Joseph took charge of all the land of Egypt.

Now Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph left

Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout the land of Egypt.

During the seven years of abundance, the land brought forth bountifully. During those seven years, Joseph collected all the excess food in the land of Egypt and stored it in the cities. In every city he laid up the food from the fields around it. So Joseph stored up grain in such abundance, like the sand of the sea, that he stopped keeping track of it; for it was beyond measure.

Before the years of famine arrived, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, saying, "God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's household." And the second son he named Ephraim, saying, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

When the seven years of abundance in the land of Egypt came to an end, the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. And although there was famine in every country, there was food throughout the land of Egypt. When extreme hunger came to all the land of Egypt and the people cried out to Pharaoh for food, he told all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph and do whatever he tells you."

When the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened up all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians; for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. And every nation came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth.

When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why are you staring at one another?"

"Look," he added, "I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die."

So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, "I am afraid that harm might befall him."

So the sons of Israel were among those who came to buy grain, since the famine had also spread to the land of Canaan.

Now Joseph was the ruler of the land; he was the one who sold grain to all its people. So when his brothers arrived, they bowed down before him with their faces to the ground. And when Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he treated them as strangers and spoke harshly to them. "Where have you come from?" he asked.

"From the land of Canaan," they replied. "We are here to buy food."

Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. Joseph remembered his dreams about them and said, "You are spies! You have come to see if our land is vulnerable."

"Not so, my lord," they replied. "Your servants have come to buy food. We are all sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies."

"No," he told them. "You have come to see if our land is vulnerable."

But they answered, "Your servants are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more."

Then Joseph declared, "Just as I said, you are spies! And this is how you will be tested: As surely as Pharaoh lives, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be confined so that the truth of your words may be tested. If they are untrue, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!"

So Joseph imprisoned them for three days, and on the third day he said to them, "I fear God. So do this and you will live: If you are honest, leave one of your brothers in custody while the rest of you go and take back grain to relieve the hunger of your households. Then bring your youngest brother to me so that your words can be verified, that you may not die."

And to this they consented.

Then they said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw his anguish when he pleaded with us, but we would not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us."

And Reuben responded, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you would not listen. Now we must account for his blood!"

They did not realize that Joseph understood them, since there was an interpreter between them. And he turned away from them and wept. When he turned back and spoke to them, he took Simeon from them and had him bound before their eyes.

Then Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to return each man's silver to his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey. This order was carried out, and they loaded the grain on their donkeys and departed.

At the place where they lodged for the night, one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey, and he saw his silver in the mouth of the sack. "My silver has been returned!" he said to his brothers. "It is here in my sack."

Their hearts sank, and trembling, they turned to one another and said, "What is this that God has done to us?"

When they reached their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they described to him all that had happened to them: "The man who is lord of the land spoke harshly to us and accused us of spying on the country.

But we told him, 'We are honest men, not spies. We are twelve brothers, sons of one father. One is no more, and the youngest is now with our father in the land of Canaan.'

Then the man who is lord of the land said to us, 'This is how I will know whether you are honest: Leave one brother with me, take food to relieve the hunger of your households, and go. But bring your youngest brother back to me so I will know that you are not spies but honest men. Then I will give your brother back to you, and you can trade in the land.'"

As they began emptying their sacks, there in each man's sack was his bag of silver! And when they and their father saw the bags of silver, they were dismayed.

Their father Jacob said to them, "You have deprived me of my sons. Joseph is gone and Simeon is no more. Now you want to take Benjamin. Everything is going against me!"

Then Reuben said to his father, “You may kill my two sons if I fail to bring him back to you. Put him in my care, and I will return him.”

But Jacob replied, “My son will not go down there with you, for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If any harm comes to him on your journey, you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.”

Now the famine was still severe in the land. So when Jacob’s sons had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, “Go back and buy us a little more food.”

But Judah replied, “The man solemnly warned us, ‘You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.’ If you will send our brother with us, we will go down and buy food for you. But if you will not send him, we will not go; for the man told us, ‘You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.’”

“Why did you bring this trouble upon me?” Israel asked. “Why did you tell the man you had another brother?”

They replied, “The man questioned us in detail about ourselves and our family: ‘Is your father still alive? Do you have another brother?’ And we answered him accordingly. How could we possibly know that he would say, ‘Bring your brother here’?”

And Judah said to his father Israel, “Send the boy with me, and we will go at once, so that we may live and not die— neither we, nor you, nor our children. I will guarantee his safety. You may hold me personally responsible. If I do not bring him back and set him before you, then may I bear the guilt before you all my life. If we had not delayed, we could have come and gone twice by now.”

Then their father Israel said to them, “If it must be so, then do this: Put some of the best products of the land in your packs and carry them down as a gift for the man — a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachios and almonds. Take double the silver with you so that you may return the silver that was put back into the mouths of your sacks. Perhaps it was a mistake. Take your brother as well, and return to the man at once. May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, that he may release your other brother along with Benjamin. As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved.”

So the men took these gifts, along with double the amount of silver, and Benjamin as well. Then they hurried down to Egypt and stood before Joseph.

When Joseph saw Benjamin with his brothers, he said to the steward of his house, “Take these men to my house. Slaughter an animal and prepare it, for they shall dine with me at noon.” The man did as Joseph had commanded and took the brothers to Joseph’s house.

But the brothers were frightened that they had been taken to Joseph’s house. “We have been brought here because of the silver that was returned in our bags the first time,” they said. “They intend to overpower us and take us as slaves, along with our donkeys.”

So they approached Joseph’s steward and spoke to him at the entrance to the house. “Please, sir,” they said, “we really did come down here the first time to buy food. But when we came to the place we lodged for the night, we opened our sacks and, behold, each of us found his silver in the mouth of his sack! It was the full amount of our silver, and we have brought it back with us. We have brought additional silver with us to buy food. We do not know who put our silver in our sacks.”

“It is fine,” said the steward. “Do not be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, gave you the treasure that was in your sacks. I received your silver.” Then he brought Simeon out to them. And the steward took the men into Joseph’s house, gave them water to wash their feet, and provided food for their donkeys.

Since the brothers had been told that they were going to eat a meal there, they prepared their gift for Joseph’s arrival at noon. When Joseph came home, they presented him with the gifts they had brought, and they bowed to the ground before him.

He asked if they were well, and then he asked, “How is your elderly father you told me about? Is he still alive?”

“Your servant our father is well,” they answered. “He is still alive.” And they bowed down to honor him.

When Joseph looked up and saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother’s son, he asked, “Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?” Then he declared, “May God be gracious to you, my son.”

Joseph hurried out because he was moved to tears for his brother, and he went to a private room to weep. Then he washed his face and came back out. Regaining his composure, he said, “Serve the meal.”

They separately served Joseph, his brothers, and the Egyptians. They ate separately because the Egyptians would not eat with the Hebrews, since that was detestable to them. They were seated before Joseph in order by age, from the firstborn to the youngest, and the men looked at one another in astonishment. When the portions were served to them from Joseph’s table, Benjamin’s portion was five times larger than any of the others. So they feasted and drank freely with Joseph.

Then Joseph instructed his steward: “Fill the men’s sacks with as much food as they can carry, and put each one’s silver in the mouth of his sack. Put my cup, the silver one, in the mouth of the youngest one’s sack, along with the silver for his grain.”

So the steward did as Joseph had instructed.

At daybreak, the men were sent on their way with their donkeys. They had not gone far from the city when Joseph told his steward, “Pursue the men at once, and when you overtake them, ask, ‘Why have you repaid good with evil? Is this not the cup my master drinks from and uses for divination? What you have done is wicked!’”

When the steward overtook them, he relayed these words to them.

“Why does my lord say these things?” they asked. “Your servants could not possibly do such a thing. We even brought back to you from the land of Canaan the silver we found in the mouths of our sacks. Why would we steal silver or gold from your master’s house? If any of your servants is found to have it, he must die, and the rest will become slaves of my lord.”

“As you say,” replied the steward. “But only the one who is found with the cup will be my slave, and the rest of you shall be free of blame.”

So each one quickly lowered his sack to the ground and opened it. The steward searched, beginning with

the oldest and ending with the youngest — and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Then they all tore their clothes, loaded their donkeys, and returned to the city.

When Judah and his brothers arrived at Joseph's house, he was still there, and they fell to the ground before him.

"What is this deed you have done?" Joseph declared. "Do you not know that a man like me can surely divine the truth?"

"What can we say to my lord?" Judah replied. "How can we plead? How can we justify ourselves? God has exposed the iniquity of your servants. We are now my lord's slaves— both we and the one who was found with the cup."

But Joseph replied, "Far be it from me to do this. The man who was found with the cup will be my slave. The rest of you may return to your father in peace."

Then Judah approached Joseph and said, "Sir, please let your servant speak personally to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, for you are equal to Pharaoh himself. My lord asked his servants, 'Do you have a father or a brother?'

And we answered, 'We have an elderly father and a younger brother, the child of his old age. The boy's brother is dead. He is the only one of his mother's sons left, and his father loves him.'

Then you told your servants, 'Bring him down to me so that I can see him for myself.'

So we said to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father. If he were to leave, his father would die.'

But you said to your servants, 'Unless your younger brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again.'

Now when we returned to your servant my father, we relayed your words to him.

Then our father said, 'Go back and buy us some food.'

But we answered, 'We cannot go down there unless our younger brother goes with us. So if our younger brother is not with us, we cannot see the man.'

And your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons. When one of them was gone, I said: "Surely he has been torn to pieces." And I have not seen him since. Now if you also take this one from me and harm comes to him, you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.'

So if the boy is not with us when I return to your servant, and if my father, whose life is wrapped up in the boy's life, sees that the boy is not with us, he will die. Then your servants will have brought the gray hair of your servant our father down to Sheol in sorrow. Indeed, your servant guaranteed the boy's safety to my father, saying, 'If I do not return him to you, I will bear the guilt before you, my father, all my life.'

Now please let your servant stay here as my lord's slave in place of the boy. Let him return with his brothers. For how can I go back to my father without the boy? I could not bear to see the misery that would overwhelm him."

Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Send everyone away from me!"

So none of them were with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. But he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household soon heard of it.

Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?"

But they were unable to answer him, because they were terrified in his presence.

Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come near me." And they did so.

"I am Joseph, your brother," he said, "the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed or angry with yourselves that you sold me into this place, because it was to save lives that God sent me before you. For the famine has covered the land these two years, and there will be five more years without plowing or harvesting. God sent me before you to preserve you as a remnant on the earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. Therefore it was not you who sent me here, but God, who has made me a father to Pharaoh — lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

Now return quickly to my father and tell him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me without delay. You shall settle in the land of Goshen and be near me— you and your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and everything you own. And there I will provide for you, because there will be five more years of famine. Otherwise, you and your household and everything you own will come to destitution.'

Behold! You and my brother Benjamin can see that I, Joseph, am the one speaking with you. Tell my father about all my splendor in Egypt and everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly."

Then Joseph threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin wept as they embraced. Joseph kissed each of his brothers as he wept over them. And afterward his brothers talked with him.

When the news reached Pharaoh's house that Joseph's brothers had come, Pharaoh and his servants were pleased.

Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Tell your brothers, 'Do as follows: Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan. Then bring your father and your families and return to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you shall eat from the fat of the land.' You are also directed to tell them: 'Take wagons from the land of Egypt for your young children and your wives, and bring your father and come back. But pay no regard to your belongings, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.'"

So the sons of Israel did as they were told. Joseph gave them wagons as Pharaoh had instructed, and he also gave them provisions for their journey. He gave new garments to each of them, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels of silver and five sets of clothes. And he sent to his father the following: ten donkeys loaded with the best of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and provisions for his father's journey.

Then Joseph sent his brothers on their way, and as they were leaving, he said to them, "Do not quarrel on the way!"

So the brothers went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. "Joseph is still alive," they said, "and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt!"

But Jacob was stunned, for he did not believe them. However, when they relayed all that Joseph had told them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob was revived.

"Enough!" declared Israel. "My son Joseph is still alive! I will go to see him before I die."

So Israel set out with all that he had, and when he came to Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. And that night God spoke to Israel in a vision: "Jacob, Jacob!" He said.

"Here I am," replied Jacob.

"I am God," He said, "the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will surely bring you back. And Joseph's own hands will close your eyes."

Then Jacob departed from Beersheba, and the sons of Israel took their father Jacob in the wagons Pharaoh had sent to carry him, along with their children and wives. They also took the livestock and possessions they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and Jacob and all his offspring went to Egypt.

Jacob took with him to Egypt his sons and grandsons, and his daughters and granddaughters — all his offspring.

Now these are the names of the sons of Israel (Jacob and his descendants) who went to Egypt: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn.

The sons of Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman.

The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

The sons of Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah; but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan.

The sons of Perez: Hezron and Hamul.

The sons of Issachar: Tola, Puvah, Job, and Shimron.

The sons of Zebulun: Sered, Elon, and Jahleel.

These are the sons of Leah born to Jacob in Paddan-aram, in addition to his daughter Dinah. The total number of sons and daughters was thirty-three.

The sons of Gad: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli.

The children of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, and their sister Serah.

The sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel.

These are the sons of Jacob born to Zilpah — whom Laban gave to his daughter Leah — sixteen in all.

The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin.

Manasseh and Ephraim were born to Joseph in the land of Egypt by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On.

The sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard.

These are the sons of Rachel born to Jacob — fourteen in all.

The son of Dan: Hushim.

The sons of Naphtali: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem.

These are the sons of Jacob born to Bilhah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Rachel — seven in all.

All those belonging to Jacob who came to Egypt— his direct descendants, besides the wives of Jacob's sons — numbered sixty-six persons. And with the two sons who had been born to Joseph in Egypt, the members of Jacob's family who went to Egypt were seventy in all.

Now Jacob had sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to get directions to Goshen. When Jacob's family arrived in the land of Goshen, Joseph prepared his chariot and went there to meet his father Israel. Joseph presented himself to him, embraced him, and wept profusely.

Then Israel said to Joseph, "Finally I can die, now that I have seen your face and know that you are still alive!"

Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and inform Pharaoh: 'My brothers and my father's household from the land of Canaan have come to me. The men are shepherds; they raise livestock, and they have brought their flocks and herds and all that they own.'

When Pharaoh summons you and asks, 'What is your occupation?' you are to say, 'Your servants have raised livestock ever since our youth — both we and our fathers.' Then you will be allowed to settle in the land of Goshen, since all shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians."

So Joseph went and told Pharaoh: "My father and my brothers, with their flocks and herds and all they own, have come from the land of Canaan and are now in Goshen."

And he chose five of his brothers and presented them before Pharaoh.

"What is your occupation?" Pharaoh asked Joseph's brothers.

"Your servants are shepherds," they replied, "both we and our fathers."

Then they said to Pharaoh, "We have come to live in the land for a time, because there is no pasture for the flocks of your servants, since the famine in the land of Canaan has been severe. So now, please allow your servants to settle in the land of Goshen."

Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Now that your father and brothers have come to you, the land of Egypt is before you; settle your father and brothers in the best part of the land. They may dwell in the land of Goshen. And if you know of any talented men among them, put them in charge of my own livestock."

Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and presented him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

"How many years have you lived?" Pharaoh asked.

"My travels have lasted 130 years," Jacob replied. "My years have been few and hard, and they have not matched the years of the travels of my fathers."

Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh and departed from his presence.

So Joseph settled his father and brothers in the land of Egypt and gave them property in the best part of the land, the district of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. Joseph also provided his father and brothers

and all his father's household with food for their families.

There was no food, however, in all that region, because the famine was so severe; the lands of Egypt and Canaan had been exhausted by the famine. Joseph collected all the money to be found in the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan in exchange for the grain they were buying, and he brought it into Pharaoh's palace. When the money from the lands of Egypt and Canaan was gone, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, "Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes? For our funds have run out!"

"Then bring me your livestock," said Joseph. "Since the money is gone, I will sell you food in exchange for your livestock." So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and he gave them food in exchange for their horses, their flocks and herds, and their donkeys. Throughout that year he provided them with food in exchange for all their livestock.

When that year was over, they came to him the second year and said, "We cannot hide from our lord that our money is gone and all our livestock belongs to you. There is nothing left for our lord except our bodies and our land. Why should we perish before your eyes—we and our land as well? Purchase us and our land in exchange for food. Then we, along with our land, will be slaves to Pharaoh. Give us seed that we may live and not die, and that the land may not become desolate."

So Joseph acquired for Pharaoh all the land in Egypt; the Egyptians, one and all, sold their fields because the famine was so severe upon them. The land became Pharaoh's, and Joseph reduced the people to servitude from one end of Egypt to the other. However, he did not acquire the priests' portion of the land, for it had been given to them by Pharaoh. They ate the rations that Pharaoh supplied; so they did not sell their land.

Then Joseph said to the people, "Now that I have acquired you and your land for Pharaoh this day, here is seed for you to sow in the land. At harvest time, you are to give a fifth of it to Pharaoh, and four-fifths will be yours as seed for the field and food for yourselves and your households and children."

"You have saved our lives," they said. "We have found favor in our lord's eyes, and we will be Pharaoh's servants." So Joseph established a law that a fifth of the produce belongs to Pharaoh, and it is in effect in the land of Egypt to this day. Only the priests' land does not belong to Pharaoh.

Now the Israelites settled in the land of Egypt, in the region of Goshen. They acquired property there and became fruitful and increased greatly in number. And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years, and the length of his life was 147 years.

When the time drew near for Israel to die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "If I have found favor in your eyes, put your hand under my thigh and promise to show me kindness and faithfulness. Do not bury me in Egypt, but when I lie down with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me with them."

Joseph answered, "I will do as you have requested."

"Swear to me," Jacob said.

So Joseph swore to him, and Israel bowed in worship at the head of his bed.

Some time later Joseph was told, "Your father is ill." So he set out with his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. When Jacob was told, "Your son Joseph has come to you," Israel rallied his strength and sat up in bed.

Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and there He blessed me and told me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you; I will make you a multitude of peoples, and will give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.'

And now your two sons born to you in Egypt before I came to you here shall be reckoned as mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine. Any children born to you after them shall be yours, and they shall be called by the names of their brothers in the territory they inherit.

Now as for me, when I was returning from Paddan, to my sorrow Rachel died along the way in the land of Canaan, some distance from Ephrath. So I buried her there beside the road to Ephrath" (that is, Bethlehem).

When Israel saw the sons of Joseph, he asked, "Who are these?"

Joseph said to his father, "They are the sons God has given me in this place."

So Jacob said, "Please bring them to me, that I may bless them."

Now Israel's eyesight was poor because of old age; he could hardly see. Joseph brought his sons to him, and his father kissed them and embraced them.

"I never expected to see your face again," Israel said to Joseph, "but now God has let me see your children as well."

Then Joseph removed his sons from his father's knees and bowed facedown.

And Joseph took both of them— with Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand— and brought them close to him. But Israel stretched out his right hand and put it on the head of Ephraim, the younger; and crossing his hands, he put his left on Manasseh's head, although Manasseh was the firstborn. Then he blessed Joseph and said:

> "May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all harm— may He bless these boys. And may they be called by my name and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and may they grow into a multitude upon the earth."

When Joseph saw that his father had placed his right hand on Ephraim's head, he was displeased and took his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's. "Not so, my father!" Joseph said. "This one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head."

But his father refused. "I know, my son, I know!" he said. "He too shall become a people, and he too shall be great; nevertheless, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations."

So that day Jacob blessed them and said:

"By you shall Israel pronounce this blessing: 'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.'"

So he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

Then Israel said to Joseph, "Look, I am about to die, but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers. And to you, as one who is above your brothers, I give the ridge of land that I took from the Amorites with my sword and bow."

Then Jacob called for his sons and said, "Gather around so that I can tell you what will happen to you in the days to come:

Come together and listen, O sons of Jacob; listen to your father Israel. Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, excelling in honor, excelling in power. Uncontrolled as the waters, you will no longer excel, because you went up to your father's bed, onto my couch, and defiled it. Simeon and Levi are brothers; their swords are weapons of violence. May I never enter their council; may I never join their assembly. For they kill men in their anger, and hamstring oxen on a whim. Cursed be their anger, for it is strong, and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will disperse them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel. Judah, your brothers shall praise you. Your hand shall be on the necks of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down to you. Judah is a young lion— my son, you return from the prey. Like a lion he crouches and lies down; like a lioness, who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes and the allegiance of the nations is his. He ties his donkey to the vine, his colt to the choicest branch. He washes his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth are whiter than milk. Zebulun shall dwell by the seashore and become a harbor for ships; his border shall extend to Sidon. Issachar is a strong donkey, lying down between the sheepfolds. He saw that his resting place was good and that his land was pleasant, so he bent his shoulder to the burden and submitted to labor as a servant. Dan shall provide justice for his people as one of the tribes of Israel. He will be a snake by the road, a viper in the path that bites the horse's heels so that its rider tumbles backward. I await Your salvation, O LORD. Gad will be attacked by raiders, but he will attack their heels. Asher's food will be rich; he shall provide royal delicacies. Naphtali is a doe set free that bears beautiful fawns. Joseph is a fruitful vine— a fruitful vine by a spring, whose branches scale the wall. The archers attacked him with bitterness; they aimed at him in hostility. Yet he steadied his bow, and his strong arms were tempered by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob, in the name of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel, by the God of your father who helps you, and by the Almighty who blesses you, with blessings of the heavens above, with blessings of the depths below, with blessings of the breasts and womb. The blessings of your father have surpassed the blessings of the ancient mountains and the bounty of the everlasting hills. May they rest on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the prince of his brothers. Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he devours the prey, in the evening he divides the plunder."

These are the tribes of Israel, twelve in all, and this was what their father said to them. He blessed them, and he blessed each one with a suitable blessing.

Then Jacob instructed them, "I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite. The cave is in the field of Machpelah near Mamre, in the land of Canaan. This is the field Abraham purchased from Ephron the Hittite as a burial site. There Abraham and his wife Sarah are buried, there Isaac and his wife Rebekah are buried, and there I buried Leah. The field and the cave that is in it were purchased from the Hittites."

When Jacob had finished instructing his sons, he pulled his feet into the bed and breathed his last, and he was gathered to his people.

Then Joseph fell upon his father's face, wept over him, and kissed him.

And Joseph directed the physicians in his service to embalm his father Israel. So they embalmed him, taking the forty days required to complete the embalming. And the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days.

When the days of mourning had passed, Joseph said to Pharaoh's court, "If I have found favor in your eyes, please tell Pharaoh that my father made me swear an oath when he said, 'I am about to die. You must bury me in the tomb that I dug for myself in the land of Canaan.' Now let me go and bury my father, and then return."

Pharaoh replied, "Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear to do."

Then Joseph went to bury his father, and all the servants of Pharaoh accompanied him — the elders of Pharaoh's household and all the elders of the land of Egypt — along with all of Joseph's household, and his brothers, and his father's household. Only their children and flocks and herds were left in Goshen.

Chariots and horsemen alike went up with him, and it was an exceedingly large procession. When they reached the threshing floor of Atad, which is across the Jordan, they lamented and wailed loudly, and Joseph mourned for his father seven days.

When the Canaanites of the land saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, "This is a solemn ceremony of mourning by the Egyptians." Thus the place across the Jordan is called Abel-mizraim.

So Jacob's sons did as he had charged them. They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave at Machpelah in the field near Mamre, which Abraham had purchased from Ephron the Hittite as a burial site.

After Joseph had buried his father, he returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had gone with him to bury his father.

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph bears a grudge? Then

he will surely repay us for all the evil that we did to him."

So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Before he died, your father commanded, 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I beg you, please forgive the transgression and sin of your brothers, for they did you wrong.' So now, Joseph, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father."

When their message came to him, Joseph wept. His brothers also came to him, bowed down before him, and said, "We are your slaves!"

But Joseph replied, "Do not be afraid. Am I in the place of God? As for you, what you intended against me for evil, God intended for good, in order to accomplish a day like this— to preserve the lives of many people. Therefore do not be afraid. I will provide for you and your little ones." So Joseph reassured his brothers and spoke kindly to them.

Now Joseph and his father's household remained in Egypt, and Joseph lived to the age of 110. He saw Ephraim's sons to the third generation, and indeed the sons of Machir son of Manasseh were brought up on Joseph's knees.

Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely visit you and bring you up from this land to the land He promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." And Joseph made the sons of Israel take an oath and said, "God will surely attend to you, and then you must carry my bones up from this place."

So Joseph died at the age of 110. And they embalmed his body and placed it in a coffin in Egypt.

Exodus

Book of Exodus

These are the names of the sons of Israel who went to Egypt with Jacob, each with his family:

Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah;

Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin;

Dan and Naphtali;

Gad and Asher.

The descendants of Jacob numbered seventy in all, including Joseph, who was already in Egypt.

Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died, but the Israelites were fruitful and increased rapidly; they multiplied and became exceedingly numerous, so that the land was filled with them.

Then a new king, who did not know Joseph, came to power in Egypt. “Look,” he said to his people, “the Israelites have become too numerous and too powerful for us. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase even more; and if a war breaks out, they may join our enemies, fight against us, and leave the country.”

So the Egyptians appointed taskmasters over the Israelites to oppress them with forced labor. As a result, they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and flourished; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites.

They worked the Israelites ruthlessly and made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar, and with all kinds of work in the fields. Every service they imposed was harsh.

Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, “When you help the Hebrew women give birth, observe them on the birthstools. If the child is a son, kill him; but if it is a daughter, let her live.”

The midwives, however, feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt had instructed; they let the boys live. So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, “Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?”

The midwives answered Pharaoh, “The Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before a midwife arrives.”

So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied and became even more numerous. And because the midwives feared God, He gave them families of their own.

Then Pharaoh commanded all his people: “Every son born to the Hebrews you must throw into the Nile, but every daughter you may allow to live.”

Now a man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a beautiful child, she hid him for three months.

But when she could no longer hide him, she got him a papyrus basket and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in the basket and set it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. And his sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.

Soon the daughter of Pharaoh went down to bathe in the Nile, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. And when she saw the basket among the reeds, she sent her maidservant to retrieve it. When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the little boy was crying. So she had compassion on him and said, “This is one of the Hebrew children.”

Then his sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and call one of the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?”

“Go ahead,” Pharaoh’s daughter told her. And the girl went and called the boy’s mother.

Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this child and nurse him for me, and I will pay your wages.” So the woman took the boy and nursed him.

When the child had grown older, she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses and explained, “I drew him out of the water.”

One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to his own people and observed their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. After looking this way and that and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand.

The next day Moses went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, “Why are you attacking your companion?”

But the man replied, “Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you planning to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?”

Then Moses was afraid and thought, “This thing I have done has surely become known.”

When Pharaoh heard about this matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and settled in the land of Midian, where he sat down beside a well.

Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father’s flock. And when some shepherds came along and drove them away, Moses rose up to help them and watered their flock.

When the daughters returned to their father Reuel, he asked them, “Why have you returned so early today?”

“An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds,” they replied. “He even drew water for us and watered the flock.”

“So where is he?” their father asked. “Why did you leave the man behind? Invite him to have something to eat.”

Moses agreed to stay with the man, and he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage. And she gave birth to a son, and Moses named him Gershom, saying, “I have become a foreigner in a foreign land.”

After a long time, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned and cried out under their burden of slavery, and their cry for deliverance from bondage ascended to God.

So God heard their groaning, and He remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God saw the Israelites and took notice.

Meanwhile, Moses was shepherding the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led

the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from within a bush. Moses saw the bush ablaze with fire, but it was not consumed. So Moses thought, "I must go over and see this marvelous sight. Why is the bush not burning up?"

When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called out to him from within the bush, "Moses, Moses!"

"Here I am," he answered.

"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Then He said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

At this, Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the affliction of My people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their oppressors, and I am aware of their sufferings. I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey— the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites.

And now the cry of the Israelites has reached Me, and I have seen how severely the Egyptians are oppressing them. Therefore, go! I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring My people the Israelites out of Egypt."

But Moses asked God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

"I will surely be with you," God said, "and this will be the sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, all of you will worship God on this mountain."

Then Moses asked God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is His name?' What should I tell them?"

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

God also told Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers — the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob — has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is how I am to be remembered in every generation.

Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers — the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — has appeared to me and said: I have surely attended to you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt. And I have promised to bring you up out of your affliction in Egypt, into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites— a land flowing with milk and honey.'

The elders of Israel will listen to what you say, and you must go with them to the king of Egypt and tell him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Now please let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness, so that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.'

But I know that the king of Egypt will not allow you to go unless a mighty hand compels him. So I will stretch out My hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders I will perform among them. And after that, he will release you.

And I will grant this people such favor in the sight of the Egyptians that when you leave, you will not go away empty-handed. Every woman shall ask her neighbor and any woman staying in her house for silver and gold jewelry and clothing, and you will put them on your sons and daughters. So you will plunder the Egyptians."

Then Moses answered, "What if they do not believe me or listen to my voice? For they may say, 'The LORD has not appeared to you.'"

And the LORD asked him, "What is that in your hand?"

"A staff," he replied.

"Throw it on the ground," said the LORD. So Moses threw it on the ground, and it became a snake, and he ran from it.

"Stretch out your hand and grab it by the tail," the LORD said to Moses, who reached out his hand and caught the snake, and it turned back into a staff in his hand. "This is so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers — the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob — has appeared to you."

Furthermore, the LORD said to Moses, "Put your hand inside your cloak." So he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, his hand was leprous, white as snow.

"Put your hand back inside your cloak," said the LORD.

So Moses put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored, like the rest of his skin.

And the LORD said, "If they refuse to believe you or heed the witness of the first sign, they may believe that of the second. But if they do not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice, take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground. Then the water you take from the Nile will become blood on the ground."

"Please, Lord," Moses replied, "I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since You have spoken to Your servant, for I am slow of speech and tongue."

And the LORD said to him, "Who gave man his mouth? Or who makes the mute or the deaf, the sighted or the blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go! I will help you as you speak, and I will teach you what to say."

But Moses replied, "Please, Lord, send someone else."

Then the anger of the LORD burned against Moses, and He said, "Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well, and he is now on his way to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. You are to speak to him and put the words in his mouth. I will help both of you to speak, and I will teach you what to do. He will speak to the people for you. He will be your spokesman, and it will be as if you were God to him. But take this staff in your hand so you can perform signs with it."

Then Moses went back to his father-in-law Jethro and said to him, "Please let me return to my brothers in Egypt to see if they are still alive."

"Go in peace," Jethro replied.

Now the LORD had said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt, for all the men who sought to kill you are dead.” So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey, and headed back to Egypt. And he took the staff of God in his hand.

The LORD instructed Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders that I have put within your power. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.

Then tell Pharaoh that this is what the LORD says: ‘Israel is My firstborn son, and I told you to let My son go so that he may worship Me. But since you have refused to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son!’”

Now at a lodging place along the way, the LORD met Moses and was about to kill him. But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son’s foreskin, and touched it to Moses’ feet. “Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me,” she said.

So the LORD let him alone. (When she said, “bridegroom of blood,” she was referring to the circumcision.)

Meanwhile, the LORD had said to Aaron, “Go and meet Moses in the wilderness.” So he went and met Moses at the mountain of God and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron everything the LORD had sent him to say, and all the signs He had commanded him to perform.

Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the Israelites, and Aaron relayed everything the LORD had said to Moses.

And Moses performed the signs before the people, and they believed. And when they heard that the LORD had attended to the Israelites and had seen their affliction, they bowed down and worshiped.

After that, Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Let My people go, so that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.’”

But Pharaoh replied, “Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and I will not let Israel go.”

“The God of the Hebrews has met with us,” they answered. “Please let us go on a three-day journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to the LORD our God, or He may strike us with plagues or with the sword.”

But the king of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why do you draw the people away from their work? Get back to your labor!” Pharaoh also said, “Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you would be stopping them from their labor.”

That same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their foremen: “You shall no longer supply the people with straw for making bricks. They must go and gather their own straw. But require of them the same quota of bricks as before; do not reduce it. For they are lazy; that is why they are crying out, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to our God.’ Make the work harder on the men so they will be occupied and pay no attention to these lies.”

So the taskmasters and foremen of the people went out and said to them, “This is what Pharaoh says: ‘I am no longer giving you straw. Go and get your own straw wherever you can find it; but your workload will in no way be reduced.’”

So the people scattered all over the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. The taskmasters kept pressing them, saying, “Fulfill your quota each day, just as you did when straw was provided.”

Then the Israelite foremen, whom Pharaoh’s taskmasters had set over the people, were beaten and asked, “Why have you not fulfilled your quota of bricks yesterday or today, as you did before?”

So the Israelite foremen went and appealed to Pharaoh: “Why are you treating your servants this way? No straw has been given to your servants, yet we are told, ‘Make bricks!’ Look, your servants are being beaten, but the fault is with your own people.”

“You are slackers!” Pharaoh replied. “Slackers! That is why you keep saying, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.’ Now get to work. You will be given no straw, yet you must deliver the full quota of bricks.”

The Israelite foremen realized they were in trouble when they were told, “You must not reduce your daily quota of bricks.” When they left Pharaoh, they confronted Moses and Aaron, who stood waiting to meet them.

“May the LORD look upon you and judge you,” the foremen said, “for you have made us a stench before Pharaoh and his officials; you have placed in their hand a sword to kill us!”

So Moses returned to the LORD and asked, “Lord, why have You brought trouble upon this people? Is this why You sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has brought trouble on this people, and You have not delivered Your people in any way.”

But the LORD said to Moses, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh, for because of My mighty hand he will let the people go; because of My strong hand he will drive them out of his land.”

God also told Moses, “I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by My name the LORD I did not make Myself known to them. I also established My covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land where they lived as foreigners. Furthermore, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered My covenant.

Therefore tell the Israelites: ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians and deliver you from their bondage. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as My own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD!’”

Moses relayed this message to the Israelites, but on account of their broken spirit and cruel bondage, they did not listen to him.

So the LORD said to Moses, “Go and tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his land.”

But in the LORD’s presence Moses replied, “If the Israelites will not listen to me, then why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I am unskilled in speech?”

Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them a charge concerning both the Israelites and

Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the Israelites out of the land of Egypt.

These were the heads of their fathers' houses:
The sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel, were Hanoch and Pallu, Hezron and Carmi. These were the clans of Reuben.
The sons of Simeon were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman. These were the clans of Simeon.
These were the names of the sons of Levi according to their records: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Levi lived 137 years.
The sons of Gershon were Libni and Shimei, by their clans.
The sons of Kohath were Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. Kohath lived 133 years.
The sons of Merari were Mahli and Mushi.
These were the clans of the Levites according to their records.
And Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, and she bore him Aaron and Moses. Amram lived 137 years.
The sons of Izhar were Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri.
The sons of Uzziel were Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri.
And Aaron married Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab and sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.
The sons of Korah were Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph. These were the clans of the Korahites.
Aaron's son Eleazar married one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him Phinehas.
These were the heads of the Levite families by their clans.

It was this Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said, "Bring the Israelites out of the land of Egypt by their divisions." Moses and Aaron were the ones who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt in order to bring the Israelites out of Egypt.

Now on the day that the LORD spoke to Moses in Egypt, He said to him, "I am the LORD; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt everything I say to you."

But in the LORD's presence Moses replied, "Since I am unskilled in speech, why would Pharaoh listen to me?"

The LORD answered Moses, "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. You are to speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron is to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his land.

But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I will multiply My signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, Pharaoh will not listen to you.

Then I will lay My hand on Egypt, and by mighty acts of judgment I will bring the divisions of My people the Israelites out of the land of Egypt. And the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out from among them."

So Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded them. Moses was eighty years old and Aaron was eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh.

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "When Pharaoh tells you, 'Perform a miracle,' you are to say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh,' and it will become a serpent."

So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD had commanded. Aaron threw his staff down before Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a serpent.

But Pharaoh called the wise men and sorcerers and magicians of Egypt, and they also did the same things by their magic arts. Each one threw down his staff, and it became a serpent. But Aaron's staff swallowed up the other staffs.

Still, Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is unyielding; he refuses to let the people go. Go to Pharaoh in the morning as you see him walking out to the water. Wait on the bank of the Nile to meet him, and take in your hand the staff that was changed into a snake. Then say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to tell you: Let My people go, so that they may worship Me in the wilderness. But until now you have not listened. This is what the LORD says: By this you will know that I am the LORD. Behold, with the staff in my hand I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will turn to blood. The fish in the Nile will die, the river will stink, and the Egyptians will be unable to drink its water.'"

And the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt— over their rivers and canals and ponds and all the reservoirs— that they may become blood.' There will be blood throughout the land of Egypt, even in the vessels of wood and stone."

Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded; in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials, Aaron raised the staff and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was turned to blood. The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water. And there was blood throughout the land of Egypt.

But the magicians of Egypt did the same things by their magic arts. So Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said. Instead, Pharaoh turned around, went into his palace, and did not take any of this to heart. So all the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink, because they could not drink the water from the river.

And seven full days passed after the LORD had struck the Nile.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and tell him that this is what the LORD says: 'Let My people go, so that they may worship Me. But if you refuse to let them go, I will plague your whole country with frogs. The Nile will teem with frogs, and they will come into your palace and up to your bedroom and onto your bed, into the houses of your officials and your people, and into your ovens and kneading bowls. The frogs will come up on you and your people and all your officials.'"

And the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers and canals and ponds, and cause the frogs to come up onto the land of Egypt.'"

So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt.

But the magicians did the same thing by their magic arts, and they also brought frogs up onto the land of Egypt.

Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Pray to the LORD to take the frogs away from me and my people. Then I will let your people go, that they may sacrifice to the LORD."

Moses said to Pharaoh, "You may have the honor over me. When shall I pray for you and your officials and your people that the frogs (except for those in the Nile) may be taken away from you and your houses?"

"Tomorrow," Pharaoh answered.

"May it be as you say," Moses replied, "so that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God. The frogs will depart from you and your houses and your officials and your people; they will remain only in the Nile."

After Moses and Aaron had left Pharaoh, Moses cried out to the LORD for help with the frogs that He had brought against Pharaoh. And the LORD did as Moses requested, and the frogs in the houses, the courtyards, and the fields died. They were piled into countless heaps, and there was a terrible stench in the land.

When Pharaoh saw that there was relief, however, he hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the earth, that it may turn into swarms of gnats throughout the land of Egypt.'"

This they did, and when Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff and struck the dust of the earth, gnats came upon man and beast. All the dust of the earth turned into gnats throughout the land of Egypt.

The magicians tried to produce gnats using their magic arts, but they could not. And the gnats remained on man and beast.

"This is the finger of God," the magicians said to Pharaoh. But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Get up early in the morning, and when Pharaoh goes out to the water, stand before him and tell him that this is what the LORD says: 'Let My people go, so that they may worship Me. But if you will not let My people go, I will send swarms of flies upon you and your officials and your people and your houses. The houses of the Egyptians and even the ground where they stand will be full of flies.

But on that day I will give special treatment to the land of Goshen, where My people live; no swarms of flies will be found there. In this way you will know that I, the LORD, am in the land. I will make a distinction between My people and your people. This sign will take place tomorrow.'"

And the LORD did so. Thick swarms of flies poured into Pharaoh's palace and into the houses of his officials. Throughout Egypt the land was ruined by swarms of flies.

Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Go, sacrifice to your God within this land."

But Moses replied, "It would not be right to do that, because the sacrifices we offer to the LORD our God would be detestable to the Egyptians. If we offer sacrifices that are detestable before the Egyptians, will they not stone us? We must make a three-day journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as He commands us."

Pharaoh answered, "I will let you go and sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness, but you must not go very far. Now pray for me."

"As soon as I leave you," Moses said, "I will pray to the LORD, so that tomorrow the swarms of flies will depart from Pharaoh and his officials and his people. But Pharaoh must not act deceitfully again by refusing to let the people go and sacrifice to the LORD."

Then Moses left Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD, and the LORD did as Moses requested. He removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh and his officials and his people; not one fly remained. But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time as well, and he would not let the people go.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and tell him that this is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: 'Let My people go, so that they may worship Me. But if you continue to restrain them and refuse to let them go, then the hand of the LORD will bring a severe plague on your livestock in the field—on your horses, donkeys, camels, herds, and flocks. But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that no animal belonging to the Israelites will die.'"

The LORD set a time, saying, "Tomorrow the LORD will do this in the land." And the next day the LORD did just that. All the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one animal belonging to the Israelites died. Pharaoh sent officials and found that none of the livestock of the Israelites had died. But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not let the people go.

Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Take handfuls of soot from the furnace; in the sight of Pharaoh, Moses is to toss it into the air. It will become fine dust over all the land of Egypt, and festering boils will break out on man and beast throughout the land."

So they took soot from the furnace and stood before Pharaoh. Moses tossed it into the air, and festering boils broke out on man and beast. The magicians could not stand before Moses, because the boils had broken out on them and on all the Egyptians.

But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said to Moses.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Get up early in the morning, stand before Pharaoh, and tell him that this is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: 'Let My people go, so that they may worship Me. Otherwise, I will send all My plagues against you and your officials and your people, so you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth.

For by this time I could have stretched out My hand and struck you and your people with a plague to wipe you off the earth. But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display My power to you, and that

My name might be proclaimed in all the earth. Still, you lord it over My people and do not allow them to go.

Behold, at this time tomorrow I will rain down the worst hail that has ever fallen on Egypt, from the day it was founded until now. So give orders now to shelter your livestock and everything you have in the field. Every man or beast that remains in the field and is not brought inside will die when the hail comes down upon them.'"

Those among Pharaoh's officials who feared the word of the LORD hurried to bring their servants and livestock to shelter, but those who disregarded the word of the LORD left their servants and livestock in the field.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, so that hail may fall on all the land of Egypt— on man and beast and every plant of the field throughout the land of Egypt."

So Moses stretched out his staff toward heaven, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and lightning struck the earth. So the LORD rained down hail upon the land of Egypt. The hail fell and the lightning continued flashing through it. The hail was so severe that nothing like it had ever been seen in all the land of Egypt from the time it became a nation.

Throughout the land of Egypt, the hail struck down everything in the field, both man and beast; it beat down every plant of the field and stripped every tree. The only place where it did not hail was in the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived.

Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. "This time I have sinned," he said. "The LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Pray to the LORD, for there has been enough of God's thunder and hail. I will let you go; you do not need to stay any longer."

Moses said to him, "When I have left the city, I will spread out my hands to the LORD. The thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, so that you may know that the earth is the LORD's. But as for you and your officials, I know that you still do not fear the LORD our God."

(Now the flax and barley were destroyed, since the barley was ripe and the flax was in bloom; but the wheat and spelt were not destroyed, because they are late crops.)

Then Moses departed from Pharaoh, went out of the city, and spread out his hands to the LORD. The thunder and hail ceased, and the rain no longer poured down on the land.

When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had ceased, he sinned again and hardened his heart — he and his officials. So Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not let the Israelites go, just as the LORD had said through Moses.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials, that I may perform these miraculous signs of Mine among them, and that you may tell your children and grandchildren how severely I dealt with the Egyptians when I performed miraculous signs among them, so that all of you may know that I am the LORD."

So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and told him, "This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, so that they may worship Me. But if you refuse to let My people go, I will bring locusts into your territory tomorrow. They will cover the face of the land so that no one can see it. They will devour whatever is left after the hail and eat every tree that grows in your fields. They will fill your houses and the houses of all your officials and every Egyptian— something neither your fathers nor your grandfathers have seen since the day they came into this land.'"

Then Moses turned and left Pharaoh's presence.

Pharaoh's officials asked him, "How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the people go, so that they may worship the LORD their God. Do you not yet realize that Egypt lies in ruins?"

So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh. "Go, worship the LORD your God," he said. "But who exactly will be going?"

"We will go with our young and old," Moses replied. "We will go with our sons and daughters, and with our flocks and herds, for we must hold a feast to the LORD."

Then Pharaoh told them, "May the LORD be with you if I ever let you go with your little ones. Clearly you are bent on evil. No, only the men may go and worship the LORD, since that is what you have been requesting." And Moses and Aaron were driven from Pharaoh's presence.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt, so that the locusts may swarm over it and devour every plant in the land — everything that the hail has left behind."

So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and throughout that day and night the LORD sent an east wind across the land. By morning the east wind had brought the locusts.

The locusts swarmed across the land and settled over the entire territory of Egypt. Never before had there been so many locusts, and never again will there be. They covered the face of all the land until it was black, and they consumed all the plants on the ground and all the fruit on the trees that the hail had left behind. Nothing green was left on any tree or plant in all the land of Egypt.

Pharaoh quickly summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you. Now please forgive my sin once more and appeal to the LORD your God, that He may remove this death from me."

So Moses left Pharaoh's presence and appealed to the LORD. And the LORD changed the wind to a very strong west wind that carried off the locusts and blew them into the Red Sea. Not a single locust remained anywhere in Egypt.

But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, so that darkness may spread over the land of Egypt — a palpable darkness."

So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and total darkness covered all the land of Egypt for three days. No one could see anyone else, and for three days no one left his place. Yet all the Israelites had light in their dwellings.

Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and said, “Go, worship the LORD. Even your little ones may go with you; only your flocks and herds must stay behind.”

But Moses replied, “You must also provide us with sacrifices and burnt offerings to present to the LORD our God. Even our livestock must go with us; not a hoof will be left behind, for we will need some of them to worship the LORD our God, and we will not know how we are to worship the LORD until we arrive.”

But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he was unwilling to let them go. “Depart from me!” Pharaoh said to Moses. “Make sure you never see my face again, for on the day you see my face, you will die.”

“As you say,” Moses replied, “I will never see your face again.”

Then the LORD said to Moses, “I will bring upon Pharaoh and Egypt one more plague. After that, he will allow you to leave this place. And when he lets you go, he will drive you out completely. Now announce to the people that men and women alike should ask their neighbors for articles of silver and gold.”

And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh’s officials and by the people.

So Moses declared, “This is what the LORD says: ‘About midnight I will go throughout Egypt, and every firstborn son in the land of Egypt will die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, to the firstborn of the servant girl behind the hand mill, as well as the firstborn of all the cattle. Then a great cry will go out over all the land of Egypt. Such an outcry has never been heard before and will never be heard again. But among all the Israelites, not even a dog will snarl at man or beast.’

Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. And all these officials of yours will come and bow before me, saying, ‘Go, you and all the people who follow you!’ After that, I will depart.”

And hot with anger, Moses left Pharaoh’s presence.

The LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that My wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.”

Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, but the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart so that he would not let the Israelites go out of his land.

Now the LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, “This month is the beginning of months for you; it shall be the first month of your year.

Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man must select a lamb for his family, one per household. If the household is too small for a whole lamb, they are to share with the nearest neighbor based on the number of people, and apportion the lamb accordingly.

Your lamb must be an unblemished year-old male, and you may take it from the sheep or the goats. You must keep it until the fourteenth day of the month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel will slaughter the animals at twilight. They are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.

They are to eat the meat that night, roasted over the fire, along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

Do not eat any of the meat raw or cooked in boiling water, but only roasted over the fire— its head and legs and inner parts. Do not leave any of it until morning; before the morning you must burn up any part that is left over.

This is how you are to eat it: You must be fully dressed for travel, with your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. You are to eat in haste; it is the LORD’s Passover.

On that night I will pass through the land of Egypt and strike down every firstborn male, both man and beast, and I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood on the houses where you are staying will be a sign; when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No plague will fall on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

And this day will be a memorial for you, and you are to celebrate it as a feast to the LORD, as a permanent statute for the generations to come. For seven days you must eat unleavened bread. On the first day you are to remove the leaven from your houses. Whoever eats anything leavened from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel.

On the first day you are to hold a sacred assembly, and another on the seventh day. You must not do any work on those days, except to prepare the meals — that is all you may do.

So you are to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your divisions out of the land of Egypt. You must keep this day as a permanent statute for the generations to come. In the first month you are to eat unleavened bread, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day. For seven days there must be no leaven found in your houses. If anyone eats something leavened, that person, whether a foreigner or native of the land, must be cut off from the congregation of Israel. You are not to eat anything leavened; eat unleavened bread in all your homes.”

Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and told them, “Go at once and select for yourselves a lamb for each family, and slaughter the Passover lamb. Take a cluster of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin, and brush the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe. None of you shall go out the door of his house until morning.

When the LORD passes through to strike down the Egyptians, He will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway; so He will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.

And you are to keep this command as a permanent statute for you and your descendants. When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as He promised, you are to keep this service.

When your children ask you, ‘What does this service mean to you?’ you are to reply, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when He struck down the Egyptians and spared our homes.’”

Then the people bowed down and worshiped. And the Israelites went and did just what the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron.

Now at midnight the LORD struck down every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on his throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner in the dungeon, as well as all the firstborn among the livestock.

During the night Pharaoh got up — he and all his officials and all the Egyptians — and there was loud wailing in Egypt; for there was no house without someone dead.

Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, "Get up, leave my people, both you and the Israelites! Go, worship the LORD as you have requested. Take your flocks and herds as well, just as you have said, and depart! And bless me also."

And in order to send them out of the land quickly, the Egyptians urged the people on. "For otherwise," they said, "we are all going to die!" So the people took their dough before it was leavened, carrying it on their shoulders in kneading bowls wrapped in clothing.

Furthermore, the Israelites acted on Moses' word and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold, and for clothing. And the LORD gave the people such favor in the sight of the Egyptians that they granted their request. In this way they plundered the Egyptians.

The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Succoth with about 600,000 men on foot, besides women and children. And a mixed multitude also went up with them, along with great droves of livestock, both flocks and herds.

Since their dough had no leaven, the people baked what they had brought out of Egypt into unleavened loaves. For when they had been driven out of Egypt, they could not delay and had not prepared any provisions for themselves.

Now the duration of the Israelites' stay in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the LORD's divisions went out of the land of Egypt. Because the LORD kept a vigil that night to bring them out of the land of Egypt, this same night is to be a vigil to the LORD, to be observed by all the Israelites for the generations to come.

And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the statute of the Passover: No foreigner is to eat of it. But any slave who has been purchased may eat of it, after you have circumcised him. A temporary resident or hired hand shall not eat the Passover.

It must be eaten inside one house. You are not to take any of the meat outside the house, and you may not break any of the bones.

The whole congregation of Israel must celebrate it. If a foreigner resides with you and wants to celebrate the LORD's Passover, all the males in the household must be circumcised; then he may come near to celebrate it, and he shall be like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised man may eat of it. The same law shall apply to both the native and the foreigner who resides among you."

Then all the Israelites did this — they did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron. And on that very day the LORD brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt by their divisions.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Consecrate to Me every firstborn male. The firstborn from every womb among the Israelites belongs to Me, both of man and beast."

So Moses told the people, "Remember this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; for the LORD brought you out of it by the strength of His hand. And nothing leavened shall be eaten.

Today, in the month of Abib, you are leaving. And when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites, and Jebusites — the land He swore to your fathers that He would give you, a land flowing with milk and honey — you shall keep this service in this month.

For seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD. Unleavened bread shall be eaten during those seven days. Nothing leavened may be found among you, nor shall leaven be found anywhere within your borders.

And on that day you are to explain to your son, 'This is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' It shall be a sign for you on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that the Law of the LORD is to be on your lips. For with a mighty hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt. Therefore you shall keep this statute at the appointed time year after year.

And after the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and gives it to you, as He swore to you and your fathers, you are to present to the LORD the firstborn male of every womb. All the firstborn males of your livestock belong to the LORD. You must redeem every firstborn donkey with a lamb, and if you do not redeem it, you are to break its neck. And every firstborn of your sons you must redeem.

In the future, when your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' you are to tell him, 'With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. And when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both of man and beast. This is why I sacrifice to the LORD the firstborn male of every womb, but I redeem all the firstborn of my sons.' So it shall serve as a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead, for with a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt."

When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them along the road through the land of the Philistines, though it was shorter. For God said, "If the people face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt." So God led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. And the Israelites left the land of Egypt arrayed for battle.

Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the sons of Israel swear a solemn oath when he said, "God will surely attend to you, and then you must carry my bones with you from this place."

They set out from Succoth and camped at Etham on the edge of the wilderness. And the LORD went before them in a pillar of cloud to guide their way by day, and in a pillar of fire to give them light by night, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud

by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place before the people.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. You are to encamp by the sea, directly opposite Baal-zephon.

For Pharaoh will say of the Israelites, 'They are wandering the land in confusion; the wilderness has boxed them in.' And I will harden Pharaoh's heart so that he will pursue them. But I will gain honor by means of Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD."

So this is what the Israelites did.

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, "What have we done? We have released Israel from serving us."

So Pharaoh prepared his chariot and took his army with him. He took 600 of the best chariots, and all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them.

And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt so that he pursued the Israelites, who were marching out defiantly. The Egyptians— all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, horsemen and troops— pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the sea near Pi-hahiroth, opposite Baal-zephon.

As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up and saw the Egyptians marching after them, and they were terrified and cried out to the LORD. They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us into the wilderness to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Did we not say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone so that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

But Moses told the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the LORD's salvation, which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians you see today, you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the Israelites to go forward. And as for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. Then I will gain honor by means of Pharaoh and all his army and chariots and horsemen. The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I am honored through Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."

And the angel of God, who had gone before the camp of Israel, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from before them and stood behind them, so that it came between the camps of Egypt and Israel. The cloud was there in the darkness, but it lit up the night. So all night long neither camp went near the other.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove back the sea with a strong east wind that turned it into dry land. So the waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on their right and on their left.

And the Egyptians chased after them— all Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and horsemen— and followed them into the sea. At morning watch, however, the LORD looked down on the army of the Egyptians from the pillar of fire and cloud, and He threw their camp into confusion. He caused their chariot wheels to wobble, so that they had difficulty driving. "Let us flee from the Israelites," said the Egyptians, "for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt!"

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen." So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea returned to its normal state. As the Egyptians were retreating, the LORD swept them into the sea. The waters flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen — the entire army of Pharaoh that had chased the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived.

But the Israelites had walked through the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on their right and on their left. That day the LORD saved Israel from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the shore. When Israel saw the great power that the LORD had exercised over the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and believed in Him and in His servant Moses.

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD:

> "I will sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted. The horse and rider He has thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise Him, my father's God, and I will exalt Him. The LORD is a warrior, the LORD is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and army He has cast into the sea; the finest of his officers are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them; they sank there like a stone. Your right hand, O LORD, is majestic in power; Your right hand, O LORD, has shattered the enemy. You overthrew Your adversaries by Your great majesty. You unleashed Your burning wrath; it consumed them like stubble. At the blast of Your nostrils the waters piled up; like a wall the currents stood firm; the depths congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy declared, 'I will pursue, I will overtake. I will divide the spoils; I will gorge myself on them. I will draw my sword; my hand will destroy them.' But You blew with Your breath, and the sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters. Who among the gods is like You, O LORD? Who is like You — majestic in holiness, revered with praises, performing wonders? You stretched out Your right hand, and the earth swallowed them up. With loving devotion You will lead the people You have redeemed; with Your strength You will guide them to Your holy dwelling. The nations will hear and tremble; anguish will grip the dwellers of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed; trembling will seize the lead-

ers of Moab; those who dwell in Canaan will melt away, and terror and dread will fall on them. By the power of Your arm they will be as still as a stone until Your people pass by, O LORD, until the people You have bought pass by. You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of Your inheritance — the place, O LORD, You have prepared for Your dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, Your hands have established. The LORD will reign forever and ever!"

For when Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and horsemen went into the sea, the LORD brought the waters of the sea back over them. But the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground.

Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her with tambourines and dancing. And Miriam sang back to them:

"Sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted; the horse and rider He has thrown into the sea."

Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the Desert of Shur. For three days they walked in the desert without finding water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink the water there because it was bitter. (That is why it was named Marah.)

So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?" And Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a log. And when he cast it into the waters, they were sweetened.

There the LORD made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there He tested them, saying, "If you will listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His eyes, and pay attention to His commands, and keep all His statutes, then I will not bring on you any of the diseases I inflicted on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you."

Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they camped there by the waters.

On the fifteenth day of the second month after they had left the land of Egypt, the whole congregation of Israel set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai. And there in the desert the whole congregation of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. "If only we had died by the LORD's hand in the land of Egypt!" they said. "There we sat by pots of meat and ate our fill of bread, but you have brought us into this desert to starve this whole assembly to death!"

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain down bread from heaven for you. Each day the people are to go out and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test whether or not they will follow My instructions. Then on the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on the other days."

So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "This evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you will see the LORD's glory, because He has heard your grumbling against Him. For who are we, that you should grumble against us?"

And Moses added, "The LORD will give you meat to eat this evening and bread to fill you in the morning, for He has heard your grumbling against Him. Who are we? Your grumblings are not against us but against the LORD."

Then Moses said to Aaron, "Tell the whole congregation of Israel, 'Come before the LORD, for He has heard your grumbling.'"

And as Aaron was speaking to the whole congregation of Israel, they looked toward the desert, and there in a cloud the glory of the LORD appeared.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, 'At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.'"

That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew had evaporated, there were thin flakes on the desert floor, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they asked one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was.

So Moses told them, "It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat. This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Each one is to gather as much as he needs. You may take an omer for each person in your tent.'"

So the Israelites did this. Some gathered more, and some less. When they measured it by the omer, he who gathered much had no excess, and he who gathered little had no shortfall. Each one gathered as much as he needed to eat.

Then Moses said to them, "No one may keep any of it until morning." But they did not listen to Moses; some people left part of it until morning, and it became infested with maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them.

Every morning each one gathered as much as was needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away.

On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much food — two omers per person — and all the leaders of the congregation came and reported this to Moses. He told them, "This is what the LORD has said: 'Tomorrow is to be a day of complete rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. So bake what you want to bake, and boil what you want to boil. Then set aside whatever remains and keep it until morning.'"

So they set it aside until morning as Moses had commanded, and it did not smell or contain any maggots. "Eat it today," Moses said, "because today is a Sabbath to the LORD. Today you will not find anything in the field. For six days you may gather, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, it will not be there."

Yet on the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they did not find anything. Then the LORD said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep My commandments and instructions? Understand that the LORD has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day He will give you bread for two days. On the seventh day, everyone must stay where he is; no one may leave his place."

So the people rested on the seventh day.

Now the house of Israel called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey. Moses said, "This is what the LORD

has commanded: 'Keep an omer of manna for the generations to come, so that they may see the bread I fed you in the wilderness when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.'"

So Moses told Aaron, "Take a jar and fill it with an omer of manna. Then place it before the LORD to be preserved for the generations to come." And Aaron placed it in front of the Testimony, to be preserved just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a land where they could settle; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan. (Now an omer is a tenth of an ephah.)

Then the whole congregation of Israel left the Desert of Sin, moving from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. So the people contended with Moses, "Give us water to drink."

"Why do you contend with me?" Moses replied. "Why do you test the LORD?"

But the people thirsted for water there, and they grumbled against Moses: "Why have you brought us out of Egypt — to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"

Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What should I do with these people? A little more and they will stone me!"

And the LORD said to Moses, "Walk on ahead of the people and take some of the elders of Israel with you. Take along in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. And when you strike the rock, water will come out of it for the people to drink."

So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. He named the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled, and because they tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

After this, the Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on the hilltop with the staff of God in my hand."

Joshua did as Moses had instructed him and fought against the Amalekites, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

As long as Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed; but when he lowered them, Amalek prevailed. When Moses' hands grew heavy, they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. Then Aaron and Hur held his hands up, one on each side, so that his hands remained steady until the sun went down.

So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his army with the sword.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this on a scroll as a reminder and recite it to Joshua, because I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven."

And Moses built an altar and named it The LORD Is My Banner. "Indeed," he said, "a hand was lifted up toward the throne of the LORD. The LORD will war against Amalek from generation to generation."

Now Moses' father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, heard about all that God had done for Moses and His people Israel, and how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt.

After Moses had sent back his wife Zipporah, his father-in-law Jethro had received her, along with her two sons. One son was named Gershom, for Moses had said, "I have been a foreigner in a foreign land." The other son was named Eliezer, for Moses had said, "The God of my father was my helper and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh."

Moses' father-in-law Jethro, along with Moses' wife and sons, came to him in the desert, where he was encamped at the mountain of God. He sent word to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons."

So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. They greeted each other and went into the tent. Then Moses recounted to his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardships they had encountered along the way, and how the LORD had delivered them.

And Jethro rejoiced over all the good things the LORD had done for Israel, whom He had rescued from the hand of the Egyptians. Jethro declared, "Blessed be the LORD, who has delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who has delivered the people from the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the LORD is greater than all other gods, for He did this when they treated Israel with arrogance."

Then Moses' father-in-law Jethro brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.

The next day Moses took his seat to judge the people, and they stood around him from morning until evening. When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he asked, "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone as judge, with all the people standing around you from morning till evening?"

"Because the people come to me to inquire of God," Moses replied. "Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me to judge between one man and another, and I make known to them the statutes and laws of God."

But Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. Surely you and these people with you will wear yourselves out, because the task is too heavy for you. You cannot handle it alone.

Now listen to me; I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their causes to Him. Teach them the statutes and laws, and show them the way to live and the work they must do.

Furthermore, select capable men from among the people — God-fearing, trustworthy men who are averse to dishonest gain. Appoint them over the people as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.

Have these men judge the people at all times. Then they can bring you any major issue, but all minor cases they can judge on their own, so that your load may be lightened as they share it with you.

If you follow this advice and God so directs you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people can go home in peace."

Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. So Moses chose capable men from all Israel and made them heads over the people as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And they judged the people at all times; they would bring the difficult cases to Moses, but any minor issue they would judge themselves.

Then Moses sent his father-in-law on his way, and Jethro returned to his own land.

In the third month, on the same day of the month that the Israelites had left the land of Egypt, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai. After they had set out from Rephidim, they entered the Wilderness of Sinai, and Israel camped there in front of the mountain.

Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, "This is what you are to tell the house of Jacob and explain to the sons of Israel: 'You have seen for yourselves what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, you will be My treasured possession out of all the nations — for the whole earth is Mine. And unto Me you shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you are to speak to the Israelites."

So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. And all the people answered together, "We will do everything that the LORD has spoken."

So Moses brought their words back to the LORD.

The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear when I speak with you, and they will always put their trust in you."

And Moses relayed to the LORD what the people had said.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. They must wash their clothes and be prepared by the third day, for on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

And you are to set up a boundary for the people around the mountain and tell them, 'Be careful not to go up on the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. No hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot with arrows — whether man or beast, he must not live.'

Only when the ram's horn sounds a long blast may they approach the mountain."

When Moses came down from the mountain to the people, he consecrated them, and they washed their clothes. "Be prepared for the third day," he said to the people. "Do not draw near to a woman."

On the third day, when morning came, there was thunder and lightning. A thick cloud was upon the mountain, and a very loud blast of the ram's horn went out, so that all the people in the camp trembled. Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.

Mount Sinai was completely enveloped in smoke, because the LORD had descended on it in fire. And the smoke rose like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently. And as the sound of the ram's horn grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him in the thunder.

The LORD descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the summit. So Moses went up, and the LORD said to him, "Go down and warn the people not to break through to see the LORD, lest many of them perish. Even the priests who approach the LORD must consecrate themselves, or the LORD will break out against them."

But Moses said to the LORD, "The people cannot come up Mount Sinai, for You solemnly warned us, 'Put a boundary around the mountain and set it apart as holy.'"

And the LORD replied, "Go down and bring Aaron with you. But the priests and the people must not break through to come up to the LORD, or He will break out against them."

So Moses went down to the people and spoke to them.

And God spoke all these words:

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

You shall have no other gods before Me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in the heavens above, on the earth below, or in the waters beneath. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on their children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing loving devotion to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments.

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave anyone unpunished who takes His name in vain.

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God, on which you must not do any work—neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant or livestock, nor the foreigner within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them, but on the seventh day He rested. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.

Honor your father and mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, or his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sounding of the ram's horn, and the mountain enveloped in smoke, they trembled and stood at a distance. "Speak to us yourself and we will listen," they said to Moses. "But do not let God speak to us, or we will die."

"Do not be afraid," Moses replied. "For God has come to test you, so that the fear of Him may be before you, to keep you from sinning." And the people stood at a distance as Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "This is what you are to tell the Israelites: 'You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven. You are not to make any gods alongside Me; you are not to make for yourselves gods of silver or gold.

You are to make for Me an altar of earth, and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and peace offerings, your sheep and goats and cattle. In every place where I cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you.

Now if you make an altar of stones for Me, you must not build it with stones shaped by tools; for if you use a chisel on it, you will defile it. And you must not go up to My altar on steps, lest your nakedness be exposed on it.'"

"These are the ordinances that you are to set before them:

If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free without paying anything. If he arrived alone, he is to leave alone; if he arrived with a wife, she is to leave with him. If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the woman and her children shall belong to her master, and only the man shall go free.

But if the servant declares, 'I love my master and my wife and children; I do not want to go free,' then his master is to bring him before the judges. And he shall take him to the door or doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he shall serve his master for life.

And if a man sells his daughter as a servant, she is not to go free as the menservants do. If she is displeasing in the eyes of her master who had designated her for himself, he must allow her to be redeemed. He has no right to sell her to foreigners, since he has broken faith with her. And if he chooses her for his son, he must deal with her as with a daughter. If he takes another wife, he must not reduce the food, clothing, or marital rights of his first wife. If, however, he does not provide her with these three things, she is free to go without monetary payment.

Whoever strikes and kills a man must surely be put to death. If, however, he did not lie in wait, but God allowed it to happen, then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee.

But if a man schemes and acts willfully against his neighbor to kill him, you must take him away from My altar to be put to death.

Whoever strikes his father or mother must surely be put to death.

Whoever kidnaps another man must be put to death, whether he sells him or the man is found in his possession.

Anyone who curses his father or mother must surely be put to death.

If men are quarreling and one strikes the other with a stone or a fist, and he does not die but is confined to bed, then the one who struck him shall go unpunished, as long as the other can get up and walk around outside with his staff. Nevertheless, he must compensate the man for his lost work and see that he is completely healed.

If a man strikes his manservant or maidservant with a rod, and the servant dies by his hand, he shall surely be punished. However, if the servant gets up after a day or two, the owner shall not be punished, since the servant is his property.

If men who are fighting strike a pregnant woman and her child is born prematurely, but there is no further injury, he shall surely be fined as the woman's husband demands and as the court allows. But if a serious injury results, then you must require a life for a life — eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, and stripe for stripe.

If a man strikes and blinds the eye of his manservant or maidservant, he must let the servant go free as compensation for the eye. And if he knocks out the tooth of his manservant or maidservant, he must let the servant go free as compensation for the tooth.

If an ox gores a man or woman to death, the ox must surely be stoned, and its meat must not be eaten. But the owner of the ox shall not be held responsible.

But if the ox has a habit of goring, and its owner has been warned yet does not restrain it, and it kills a man or woman, then the ox must be stoned and its owner must also be put to death. If payment is demanded of him instead, he may redeem his life by paying the full amount demanded of him.

If the ox gores a son or a daughter, it shall be done to him according to the same rule.

If the ox gores a manservant or maidservant, the owner must pay thirty shekels of silver to the master of that servant, and the ox must be stoned.

If a man opens or digs a pit and fails to cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, the owner of the pit shall make restitution; he must pay its owner, and the dead animal will be his.

If a man's ox injures his neighbor's ox and it dies, they must sell the live one and divide the proceeds; they also must divide the dead animal. But if it was known that the ox had a habit of goring, yet its owner failed to restrain it, he shall pay full compensation, ox for ox, and the dead animal will be his."

"If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters or sells it, he must repay five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep.

If a thief is caught breaking in and is beaten to death, no one shall be guilty of bloodshed. But if it happens after sunrise, there is guilt for his bloodshed.

A thief must make full restitution; if he has nothing, he himself shall be sold for his theft. If what was stolen is actually found alive in his possession— whether ox or donkey or sheep— he must pay back double.

If a man grazes his livestock in a field or vineyard and allows them to stray so that they graze in someone

else's field, he must make restitution from the best of his own field or vineyard.

If a fire breaks out and spreads to thornbushes so that it consumes stacked or standing grain, or the whole field, the one who started the fire must make full restitution.

If a man gives his neighbor money or goods for safekeeping and they are stolen from the neighbor's house, the thief, if caught, must pay back double. If the thief is not found, the owner of the house must appear before the judges to determine whether he has taken his neighbor's property.

In all cases of illegal possession of an ox, a donkey, a sheep, a garment, or any lost item that someone claims, 'This is mine,' both parties shall bring their cases before the judges. The one whom the judges find guilty must pay back double to his neighbor.

If a man gives a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any other animal to be cared for by his neighbor, but it dies or is injured or stolen while no one is watching, an oath before the LORD shall be made between the parties to determine whether or not the man has taken his neighbor's property. The owner must accept the oath and require no restitution.

But if the animal was actually stolen from the neighbor, he must make restitution to the owner.

If the animal was torn to pieces, he shall bring it as evidence; he need not make restitution for the torn carcass.

If a man borrows an animal from his neighbor and it is injured or dies while its owner is not present, he must make full restitution. If the owner was present, no restitution is required. If the animal was rented, the fee covers the loss.

If a man seduces a virgin who is not pledged in marriage and sleeps with her, he must pay the full dowry for her to be his wife. If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, the man still must pay an amount comparable to the bridal price of a virgin.

You must not allow a sorceress to live.

Whoever lies with an animal must surely be put to death.

If anyone sacrifices to any god other than the LORD alone, he must be set apart for destruction.

You must not exploit or oppress a foreign resident, for you yourselves were foreigners in the land of Egypt.

You must not mistreat any widow or orphan. If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to Me in distress, I will surely hear their cry. My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword; then your wives will become widows and your children will be fatherless.

If you lend money to one of My people among you who is poor, you must not act as a creditor to him; you are not to charge him interest.

If you take your neighbor's cloak as collateral, return it to him by sunset, because his cloak is the only covering he has for his body. What else will he sleep in? And if he cries out to Me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.

You must not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people.

You must not hold back offerings from your granaries or vats. You are to give Me the firstborn of your sons. You shall do likewise with your cattle and your sheep. Let them stay with their mothers for seven days, but on the eighth day you are to give them to Me.

You are to be My holy people. You must not eat the meat of a mauled animal found in the field; you are to throw it to the dogs."

"You shall not spread a false report. Do not join the wicked by being a malicious witness.

You shall not follow the crowd in wrongdoing. When you testify in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd. And do not show favoritism to a poor man in his lawsuit.

If you encounter your enemy's stray ox or donkey, you must return it to him.

If you see the donkey of one who hates you fallen under its load, do not leave it there; you must help him with it.

You shall not deny justice to the poor in their lawsuits. Stay far away from a false accusation. Do not kill the innocent or the just, for I will not acquit the guilty.

Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the righteous.

Do not oppress a foreign resident, since you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners; for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt.

For six years you are to sow your land and gather its produce, but in the seventh year you must let it rest and lie fallow, so that the poor among your people may eat from the field and the wild animals may consume what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and olive grove.

For six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you must cease, so that your ox and your donkey may rest and the son of your maidservant may be refreshed, as well as the foreign resident.

Pay close attention to everything I have said to you. You must not invoke the names of other gods; they must not be heard on your lips.

Three times a year you are to celebrate a feast to Me.

You are to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread as I commanded you: At the appointed time in the month of Abib you are to eat unleavened bread for seven days, because that was the month you came out of Egypt. No one may appear before Me empty-handed.

You are also to keep the Feast of Harvest with the firstfruits of the produce from what you sow in the field.

And keep the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather your produce from the field.

Three times a year all your males are to appear before the Lord GOD.

You must not offer the blood of My sacrifices with anything leavened, nor may the fat of My feast remain until morning.

Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God.

You must not cook a young goat in its mother's milk.

Behold, I am sending an angel before you to protect you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. Pay attention to him and listen to his voice; do not defy him, for he will not forgive rebellion, since My Name is in him.

But if you will listen carefully to his voice and do everything I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies

and a foe to your foes. For My angel will go before you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites, and I will annihilate them.

You must not bow down to their gods or serve them or follow their practices. Instead, you are to demolish them and smash their sacred stones to pieces.

So you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take away sickness from among you. No woman in your land will miscarry or be barren; I will fulfill the number of your days.

I will send My terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies turn and run. I will send the hornet before you to drive the Hivites and Canaanites and Hittites out of your way.

I will not drive them out before you in a single year; otherwise the land would become desolate and wild animals would multiply against you. Little by little I will drive them out ahead of you, until you become fruitful and possess the land.

And I will establish your borders from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the desert to the Euphrates. For I will deliver the inhabitants into your hand, and you will drive them out before you. You shall make no covenant with them or with their gods. They must not remain in your land, lest they cause you to sin against Me. For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD — you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of Israel's elders — and you are to worship at a distance. Moses alone shall approach the LORD, but the others must not come near. And the people may not go up with him."

When Moses came and told the people all the words and ordinances of the LORD, they all responded with one voice: "All the words that the LORD has spoken, we will do."

And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD.

Early the next morning he got up and built an altar at the base of the mountain, along with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent out some young men of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD.

Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he splattered on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people, who replied, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient."

So Moses took the blood, splattered it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel. Under His feet was a work like a pavement made of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. But God did not lay His hand on the nobles of Israel; they saw Him, and they ate and drank.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and stay here, so that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and commandments I have written for their instruction."

So Moses set out with Joshua his attendant and went up on the mountain of God. And he said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we return to you. Aaron and Hur are here with you. Whoever has a dispute can go to them."

When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered it, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the mountaintop in the eyes of the Israelites.

Moses entered the cloud as he went up on the mountain, and he remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites to bring Me an offering. You are to receive My offering from every man whose heart compels him. This is the offering you are to accept from them:

gold, silver, and bronze;
blue, purple, and scarlet yarn;
fine linen and goat hair;
ram skins dyed red and fine leather;
acacia wood;
olive oil for the light;
spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense;
and onyx stones and gemstones to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece.

And they are to make a sanctuary for Me, so that I may dwell among them. You must make the tabernacle and design all its furnishings according to the pattern I show you.

And they are to construct an ark of acacia wood, two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. Overlay it with pure gold both inside and out, and make a gold molding around it.

Cast four gold rings for it and fasten them to its four feet, two rings on one side and two on the other. And make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. Insert the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, in order to carry it. The poles are to remain in the rings of the ark; they must not be removed. And place inside the ark the Testimony, which I will give you.

And you are to construct a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide. Make two cherubim of hammered gold at the ends of the mercy seat, one cherub on one end and one on the other, all made from one piece of gold. And the cherubim are to have wings that spread upward, overshadowing the mercy seat. The cherubim are to face each other, looking toward the mercy seat.

Set the mercy seat atop the ark and put the Testimony that I will give you into the ark.

And I will meet with you there above the mercy seat, between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony; I will speak with you about all that I command you regarding the Israelites.

You are also to make a table of acacia wood two cubits long, a cubit wide, and a cubit and a half high. Overlay it with pure gold and make a gold molding

around it. And make a rim around it a handbreadth wide and put a gold molding on the rim.

Make four gold rings for the table and fasten them to the four corners at its four legs. The rings are to be close to the rim, to serve as holders for the poles used to carry the table. Make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold, so that the table may be carried with them.

You are also to make the plates and dishes, as well as the pitchers and bowls for pouring drink offerings. Make them out of pure gold.

And place the Bread of the Presence on the table before Me at all times.

Then you are to make a lampstand of pure, hammered gold. It shall be made of one piece, including its base and shaft, its cups, and its buds and petals.

Six branches are to extend from the sides of the lampstand — three on one side and three on the other. There are to be three cups shaped like almond blossoms on the first branch, each with buds and petals, three on the next branch, and the same for all six branches that extend from the lampstand.

And on the lampstand there shall be four cups shaped like almond blossoms with buds and petals. For the six branches that extend from the lampstand, a bud must be under the first pair of branches, a bud under the second pair, and a bud under the third pair. The buds and branches are to be all of one piece with the lampstand, hammered out of pure gold.

Make seven lamps and set them up on the lampstand so that they illuminate the area in front of it. The wick trimmers and their trays must be of pure gold. The lampstand and all these utensils shall be made from a talent of pure gold.

See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.''

"You are to construct the tabernacle itself with ten curtains of finely spun linen, each with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and cherubim skillfully worked into them. Each curtain shall be twenty-eight cubits long and four cubits wide — all curtains the same size.

Five of the curtains are to be joined together, and the other five joined as well. Make loops of blue material on the edge of the end curtain in the first set, and do the same for the end curtain in the second set.

Make fifty loops on one curtain and fifty loops on the end curtain of the second set, so that the loops line up opposite one another. Make fifty gold clasps as well, and join the curtains together with the clasps, so that the tabernacle will be a unit.

You are to make curtains of goat hair for the tent over the tabernacle — eleven curtains in all. Each of the eleven curtains is to be the same size — thirty cubits long and four cubits wide.

Join five of the curtains into one set and the other six into another. Then fold the sixth curtain over double at the front of the tent.

Make fifty loops along the edge of the end curtain in the first set, and fifty loops along the edge of the corresponding curtain in the second set. Make fifty bronze clasps and put them through the loops to join the tent together as a unit.

As for the overlap that remains of the tent curtains, the half curtain that is left over shall hang down over the back of the tabernacle. And the tent curtains will be a cubit longer on either side, and the excess will hang over the sides of the tabernacle to cover it.

Also make a covering for the tent out of ram skins dyed red, and over that a covering of fine leather.

You are to construct upright frames of acacia wood for the tabernacle. Each frame is to be ten cubits long and a cubit and a half wide. Two tenons must be connected to each other for each frame. Make all the frames of the tabernacle in this way.

Construct twenty frames for the south side of the tabernacle, with forty silver bases under the twenty frames — two bases for each frame, one under each tenon.

For the second side of the tabernacle, the north side, make twenty frames and forty silver bases — two bases under each frame.

Make six frames for the rear of the tabernacle, the west side, and two frames for the two back corners of the tabernacle, coupled together from bottom to top and fitted into a single ring. These will serve as the two corners. So there are to be eight frames and sixteen silver bases — two under each frame.

You are also to make five crossbars of acacia wood for the frames on one side of the tabernacle, five for those on the other side, and five for those on the rear side of the tabernacle, to the west.

The central crossbar in the middle of the frames shall extend from one end to the other. Overlay the frames with gold and make gold rings to hold the crossbars. Also overlay the crossbars with gold.

So you are to set up the tabernacle according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.

Make a veil of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and finely spun linen, with cherubim skillfully worked into it. Hang it with gold hooks on four posts of acacia wood, overlaid with gold and standing on four silver bases. And hang the veil from the clasps and place the ark of the Testimony behind the veil. So the veil will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place.

Put the mercy seat on the ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy Place. And place the table outside the veil on the north side of the tabernacle, and put the lampstand opposite the table, on the south side.

For the entrance to the tent, you are to make a curtain embroidered with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and finely spun linen. Make five posts of acacia wood for the curtain, overlay them with gold, use hooks of gold, and cast five bronze bases for them.''

"You are to build an altar of acacia wood. The altar must be square, five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high. Make a horn on each of its four corners, so that the horns are of one piece, and overlay it with bronze.

Make all its utensils of bronze — its pots for removing ashes, its shovels, its sprinkling bowls, its meat forks, and its firepans. Construct for it a grate of bronze mesh, and make a bronze ring at each of the four corners of the mesh. Set the grate beneath the ledge of the altar, so that the mesh comes halfway up the altar.

Additionally, make poles of acacia wood for the altar and overlay them with bronze. The poles are to be inserted into the rings so that the poles are on two sides of the altar when it is carried.

Construct the altar with boards so that it is hollow. It is to be made just as you were shown on the mountain.

You are also to make a courtyard for the tabernacle. On the south side of the courtyard make curtains of finely spun linen, a hundred cubits long on one side, with twenty posts and twenty bronze bases, and silver hooks and bands on the posts.

Likewise there are to be curtains on the north side, a hundred cubits long, with twenty posts and twenty bronze bases, and with silver hooks and bands on the posts. The curtains on the west side of the courtyard shall be fifty cubits wide, with ten posts and ten bases.

The east side of the courtyard, toward the sunrise, is to be fifty cubits wide. Make the curtains on one side fifteen cubits long, with three posts and three bases, and the curtains on the other side fifteen cubits long, with three posts and three bases.

The gate of the courtyard shall be twenty cubits long, with a curtain embroidered with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and finely spun linen. It shall have four posts and four bases.

All the posts around the courtyard shall have silver bands, silver hooks, and bronze bases. The entire courtyard shall be a hundred cubits long and fifty cubits wide, with curtains of finely spun linen five cubits high, and with bronze bases. All the utensils of the tabernacle for every use, including all its tent pegs and the tent pegs of the courtyard, shall be made of bronze.

And you are to command the Israelites to bring you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to keep the lamps burning continually.

In the Tent of Meeting, outside the veil that is in front of the Testimony, Aaron and his sons are to tend the lamps before the LORD from evening until morning. This is to be a permanent statute for the Israelites for the generations to come.''

"Next, have your brother Aaron brought to you from among the Israelites, along with his sons Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar, to serve Me as priests. Make holy garments for your brother Aaron, to give him glory and splendor.

You are to instruct all the skilled craftsmen, whom I have filled with a spirit of wisdom, to make garments for Aaron's consecration, so that he may serve Me as priest. These are the garments that they shall make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban, and a sash. They are to make these holy garments for your brother Aaron and his sons, so that they may serve Me as priests. They shall use gold, along with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and fine linen.

They are to make the ephod of finely spun linen embroidered with gold, and with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn. It shall have two shoulder pieces attached at two of its corners, so it can be fastened. And the skillfully woven waistband of the ephod must be of one piece, of the same workmanship — with gold, with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and with finely spun linen.

Take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel: six of their names on one stone and the remaining six on the other, in the order of their birth. Engrave the names of the sons of Israel on the two stones the way a gem cutter engraves a seal. Then mount the stones in gold filigree settings. Fasten both stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod as memorial stones for the sons of Israel. Aaron is to bear their names on his two shoulders as a memorial before the LORD.

Fashion gold filigree settings and two chains of pure gold, made of braided cord work; and attach these chains to the settings.

You are also to make a breastpiece of judgment with the same workmanship as the ephod. Construct it with gold, with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and with finely spun linen. It must be square when folded over double, a span long and a span wide.

And mount on it a setting of gemstones, four rows of stones:

In the first row there shall be a ruby, a topaz, and an emerald;

in the second row a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond;

in the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst;

and in the fourth row a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper.

Mount these stones in gold filigree settings. The twelve stones are to correspond to the names of the sons of Israel, each engraved like a seal with the name of one of the twelve tribes.

For the breastpiece, make braided chains like cords of pure gold. You are also to make two gold rings and fasten them to the two corners of the breastpiece. Then fasten the two gold chains to the two gold rings at the corners of the breastpiece, and fasten the other ends of the two chains to the two filigree settings, attaching them to the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front.

Make two more gold rings and attach them to the other two corners of the breastpiece, on the inside edge next to the ephod.

Make two additional gold rings and attach them to the bottom of the two shoulder pieces of the ephod, on its front, near its seam just above its woven waistband. The rings of the breastpiece shall be tied to the rings of the ephod with a cord of blue yarn, so that the breastpiece is above the waistband of the ephod and does not swing out from the ephod.

Whenever Aaron enters the Holy Place, he shall bear the names of the sons of Israel over his heart on the breastpiece of judgment, as a continual reminder before the LORD.

And place the Urim and Thummim in the breastpiece of judgment, so that they will also be over Aaron's heart whenever he comes before the LORD. Aaron will continually carry the judgment of the sons of Israel over his heart before the LORD.

You are to make the robe of the ephod entirely of blue cloth, with an opening at its top in the center. Around the opening shall be a woven collar with an opening like that of a garment, so that it will not tear.

Make pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn all the way around the lower hem, with gold bells between them, alternating the gold bells and pomegranates around the lower hem of the robe.

Aaron must wear the robe whenever he ministers, and its sound will be heard when he enters or exits the sanctuary before the LORD, so that he will not die.

You are to make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it as on a seal:

HOLY TO THE LORD.

Fasten to it a blue cord to mount it on the turban; it shall be on the front of the turban. And it will be worn on Aaron's forehead, so that he may bear the iniquity of the holy things that the sons of Israel consecrate with regard to all their holy gifts. It shall always be on his forehead, so that they may be acceptable before the LORD.

You are to weave the tunic with fine linen, make the turban of fine linen, and fashion an embroidered sash. Make tunics, sashes, and headbands for Aaron's sons, to give them glory and splendor.

After you put these garments on your brother Aaron and his sons, anoint them, ordain them, and consecrate them so that they may serve Me as priests.

Make linen undergarments to cover their bare flesh, extending from waist to thigh. Aaron and his sons must wear them whenever they enter the Tent of Meeting or approach the altar to minister in the Holy Place, so that they will not incur guilt and die. This is to be a permanent statute for Aaron and his descendants.''

"Now this is what you are to do to consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve Me as priests: Take a young bull and two rams without blemish, along with unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil. Make them out of fine wheat flour, put them in a basket, and present them in the basket, along with the bull and the two rams.

Then present Aaron and his sons at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and wash them with water. Take the garments and clothe Aaron with the tunic, the robe of the ephod, the ephod itself, and the breastplate. Fasten the ephod on him with its woven waistband. Put the turban on his head and attach the holy diadem to the turban. Then take the anointing oil and anoint him by pouring it on his head.

Present his sons as well and clothe them with tunics. Wrap the sashes around Aaron and his sons and tie headbands on them. The priesthood shall be theirs by a permanent statute. In this way you are to ordain Aaron and his sons.

You are to present the bull at the front of the Tent of Meeting, and Aaron and his sons are to lay their hands on its head. And you shall slaughter the bull before the LORD at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Take some of the blood of the bull and put it on the horns of the altar with your finger; then pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. Take all the fat that covers the entrails and the lobe of the liver, and both kidneys with the fat on them, and burn them on the altar. But burn the flesh of the bull and its hide and dung outside the camp; it is a sin offering.

Take one of the rams, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head. You are to slaughter the ram, take its blood, and splatter it on all sides of the altar. Cut the ram into pieces, wash the entrails and legs, and place them with its head and other pieces. Then burn the entire ram on the altar; it is a burnt offering to the LORD, a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the LORD.

Take the second ram, and Aaron and his sons are to lay their hands on its head. Slaughter the ram, take some of its blood, and put it on the right earlobes of Aaron and his sons, on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right feet. Splatter the remaining blood on all sides of the altar. And take some of the blood on the altar and some of the anointing oil and sprinkle it on Aaron and his garments, as well as on his sons and their garments. Then he and his garments will be consecrated, as well as his sons and their garments.

Take the fat from the ram, the fat tail, the fat covering the entrails, the lobe of the liver, both kidneys with the fat on them, and the right thigh (since this is a ram for ordination), along with one loaf of bread, one cake of bread made with oil, and one wafer from the basket of unleavened bread that is before the LORD. Put all these in the hands of Aaron and his sons and wave them before the LORD as a wave offering. Then take them from their hands and burn them on the altar atop the burnt offering as a pleasing aroma before the LORD; it is a food offering to the LORD.

Take the breast of the ram of Aaron's ordination and wave it before the LORD as a wave offering, and it will be your portion. Consecrate for Aaron and his sons the breast of the wave offering that is waved and the thigh of the heave offering that is lifted up from the ram of ordination. This will belong to Aaron and his sons as a regular portion from the Israelites, for it is the heave offering the Israelites will make to the LORD from their peace offerings.

The holy garments that belong to Aaron will belong to his sons after him, so they can be anointed and ordained in them. The son who succeeds him as priest and enters the Tent of Meeting to minister in the Holy Place must wear them for seven days.

You are to take the ram of ordination and boil its flesh in a holy place. At the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, Aaron and his sons are to eat the meat of the ram and the bread that is in the basket. They must eat those things by which atonement was made for their ordination and consecration. But no outsider may eat them, because these things are sacred. And if any of the meat of ordination or any bread is left until the morning, you are to burn up the remainder. It must not be eaten, because it is sacred.

This is what you are to do for Aaron and his sons based on all that I have commanded you, taking seven days to ordain them. Sacrifice a bull as a sin offering each day for atonement. Purify the altar by making atonement for it, and anoint it to consecrate it. For seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate it. Then the altar will become most holy; whatever touches the altar will be holy.

This is what you are to offer regularly on the altar, each day: two lambs that are a year old. Offer one lamb in the morning and the other at twilight. With the first lamb offer a tenth of an ephah of fine flour, mixed with a quarter hin of oil from pressed olives, and a drink offering of a quarter hin of wine. And offer the second lamb at twilight with the same grain offering and drink offering as in the morning, as a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the LORD.

For the generations to come, this burnt offering shall be made regularly at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting before the LORD, where I will meet you to speak with you. I will also meet with the Israelites there, and that place will be consecrated by My glory. So I will consecrate the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and I will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve Me as priests.

Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. And they will know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt so that I might dwell among them.

I am the LORD their God.''

"You are also to make an altar of acacia wood for the burning of incense. It is to be square, a cubit long, a cubit wide, and two cubits high. Its horns must be of one piece. Overlay with pure gold the top and all the sides and horns, and make a molding of gold around it. And make two gold rings below the molding on opposite sides to hold the poles used to carry it. Make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold.

Place the altar in front of the veil that is before the ark of the Testimony— before the mercy seat that is over the Testimony— where I will meet with you. And Aaron is to burn fragrant incense on it every morning when he tends the lamps. When Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he must burn the incense perpetually before the LORD for the generations to come. On this altar you must not offer unauthorized incense or a burnt offering or grain offering; nor are you to pour a drink offering on it.

Once a year Aaron shall make atonement on the horns of the altar. Throughout your generations he shall make atonement on it annually with the blood of the sin offering of atonement. The altar is most holy to the LORD."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "When you take a census of the Israelites to number them, each man must pay the LORD a ransom for his life when he is counted. Then no plague will come upon them when they are numbered. Everyone who crosses over to those counted must pay a half shekel, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs. This half shekel is an offering to the LORD.

Everyone twenty years of age or older who crosses over must give this offering to the LORD. In making the offering to the LORD to atone for your lives, the rich shall not give more than a half shekel, nor shall the poor give less. Take the atonement money from the Israelites and use it for the service of the Tent of Meeting. It will serve as a memorial for the Israelites before the LORD to make atonement for your lives."

And the LORD said to Moses, "You are to make a bronze basin with a bronze stand for washing. Set it between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and put water in it, with which Aaron and his sons are to wash their hands and feet. Whenever they enter the Tent of Meeting or approach the altar to minister by presenting a food offering to the LORD, they must wash with water so that they will not die. Thus they are to wash their hands and feet so that they will not die; this shall be a permanent statute for Aaron and his descendants for the generations to come."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take the finest spices: 500 shekels of liquid myrrh, half that amount (250 shekels) of fragrant cinnamon, 250 shekels of fragrant cane, 500 shekels of cassia — all according to the sanctuary shekel — and a hin of olive oil. Prepare from these a sacred anointing oil, a fragrant blend, the work of a perfumer; it will be a sacred anointing oil.

Use this oil to anoint the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the Testimony, the table and all its utensils, the lampstand and its utensils, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the basin with its stand. You are to consecrate them so that they will be most holy. Whatever touches them shall be holy. Anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them to serve Me as priests.

And you are to tell the Israelites, 'This will be My sacred anointing oil for the generations to come. It must not be used to anoint an ordinary man, and you must not make anything like it with the same formula. It is holy, and it must be holy to you. Anyone who mixes perfume like it or puts it on an outsider shall be cut off from his people.'"

The LORD also said to Moses, "Take fragrant spices — gum resin, onycha, galbanum, and pure frankincense — in equal measures, and make a fragrant blend of incense, the work of a perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy. Grind some of it into fine powder and place it in front of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. You are never to use this formula to make incense for yourselves; you shall regard it as holy to the LORD. Anyone who makes something like it to enjoy its fragrance shall be cut off from his people."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "See, I have called by name Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of craftsmanship, to design artistic works in gold, silver, and bronze, to cut gemstones for settings, and to carve wood, so that he may be a master of every craft.

Moreover, I have selected Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, as his assistant.

I have also given skill to all the craftsmen, that they may fashion all that I have commanded you: the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat upon it, and all the other furnishings of the tent— the table with its utensils, the pure gold lampstand with all its utensils, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the basin with its stand— as well as the woven garments, both the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons to serve as priests, in addition to the anointing oil and fragrant incense for the Holy Place. They are to make them according to all that I have commanded you."

And the LORD said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites, 'Surely you must keep My Sabbaths, for this will be a sign between Me and you for the generations to come, so that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. Keep the Sabbath, for it is holy to you. Anyone who profanes it must surely be put to death. Whoever does any work on that day must be cut off from among his people. For six days work may be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of complete rest, holy to the

LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must surely be put to death.

The Israelites must keep the Sabbath, celebrating it as a permanent covenant for the generations to come. It is a sign between Me and the Israelites forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, but on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.'"

When the LORD had finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, He gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.

Now when the people saw that Moses was delayed in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this Moses who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him!"

So Aaron told them, "Take off the gold earrings that are on your wives and sons and daughters, and bring them to me."

Then all the people took off their gold earrings and brought them to Aaron. He took the gold from their hands, and with an engraving tool he fashioned it into a molten calf. And they said, "These, O Israel, are your gods, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"

When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before the calf and proclaimed: "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD."

So the next day they arose, offered burnt offerings, and presented peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. How quickly they have turned aside from the way that I commanded them! They have made for themselves a molten calf and have bowed down to it. They have sacrificed to it and said, 'These, O Israel, are your gods, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.'"

The LORD also said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and they are indeed a stiff-necked people. Now leave Me alone, so that My anger may burn against them and consume them. Then I will make you into a great nation."

But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God, saying, "O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people, whom You brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians declare, 'He brought them out with evil intent, to kill them in the mountains and wipe them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your fierce anger and relent from doing harm to Your people. Remember Your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, to whom You swore by Your very self when You declared, 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky, and I will give your descendants all this land that I have promised, and it shall be their inheritance forever.'"

So the LORD relented from the calamity He had threatened to bring on His people.

Then Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back. The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.

When Joshua heard the sound of the people shouting, he said to Moses, "The sound of war is in the camp."

But Moses replied:

> "It is neither the cry of victory nor the cry of defeat; I hear the sound of singing!"

As Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, he burned with anger and threw the tablets out of his hands, shattering them at the base of the mountain. Then he took the calf they had made, burned it in the fire, ground it to powder, and scattered the powder over the face of the water. Then he forced the Israelites to drink it.

"What did this people do to you," Moses asked Aaron, "that you have led them into so great a sin?"

"Do not be enraged, my lord," Aaron replied. "You yourself know that the people are intent on evil. They told me, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this Moses who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him!'

So I said to them, 'Whoever has gold, let him take it off,' and they gave it to me. And when I threw it into the fire, out came this calf!"

Moses saw that the people were out of control, for Aaron had let them run wild and become a laughingstock to their enemies. So Moses stood at the entrance to the camp and said, "Whoever is for the LORD, come to me."

And all the Levites gathered around him.

He told them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Each of you men is to fasten his sword to his side, go back and forth through the camp from gate to gate, and slay his brother, his friend, and his neighbor.'"

The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people fell dead.

Afterward, Moses said, "Today you have been ordained for service to the LORD, since each man went against his son and his brother; so the LORD has bestowed a blessing on you this day."

The next day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. Now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin."

So Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made gods of gold for themselves. Yet now, if You would only forgive their sin.... But if not, please blot me out of the book that You have written."

The LORD replied to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot out of My book. Now go, lead the people to the place I described. Behold, My angel shall go before you. But on the day I settle accounts, I will punish them for their sin."

And the LORD sent a plague on the people because of what they had done with the calf that Aaron had made.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of the land of Egypt, and go to the land that I promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when I said, 'I will give it to your descendants.' And I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are

a stiff-necked people; otherwise, I might destroy you on the way."

When the people heard this bad news, they went into mourning, and no one put on any of his jewelry. For the LORD had said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites, 'You are a stiff-necked people. If I should go with you for a single moment, I would destroy you. Now take off your jewelry, and I will decide what to do with you.'"

So the Israelites stripped themselves of their jewelry from Mount Horeb onward.

Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it at a distance outside the camp. He called it the Tent of Meeting, and anyone inquiring of the LORD would go to the Tent of Meeting outside the camp. Then, whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would stand at the entrances to their own tents and watch Moses until he entered the tent. As Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and remain at the entrance, and the LORD would speak with Moses. When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they would stand up and worship, each one at the entrance to his own tent.

Thus the LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young assistant Joshua son of Nun would not leave the tent.

Then Moses said to the LORD, "Look, You have been telling me, 'Lead this people up,' but You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, 'I know you by name, and you have found favor in My sight.' Now if indeed I have found favor in Your sight, please let me know Your ways, that I may know You and find favor in Your sight. Remember that this nation is Your people."

And the LORD answered, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

"If Your Presence does not go with us," Moses replied, "do not lead us up from here. For how then can it be known that Your people and I have found favor in Your sight, unless You go with us? How else will we be distinguished from all the other people on the face of the earth?"

So the LORD said to Moses, "I will do this very thing you have asked, for you have found favor in My sight, and I know you by name."

Then Moses said, "Please show me Your glory."

"I will cause all My goodness to pass before you," the LORD replied, "and I will proclaim My name — the LORD — in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

But He added, "You cannot see My face, for no one can see Me and live."

The LORD continued, "There is a place near Me where you are to stand upon a rock, and when My glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. Then I will take My hand away, and you will see My back; but My face must not be seen."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Chisel out two stone tablets like the originals, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. Be ready in the morning, and come up on Mount Sinai to present yourself before Me on the mountaintop. No one may go up with you; in fact, no one may be seen anywhere on the mountain — not even the flocks or herds may graze in front of the mountain."

So Moses chiseled out two stone tablets like the originals. He rose early in the morning, and taking the two stone tablets in his hands, he went up Mount Sinai as the LORD had commanded him.

And the LORD descended in a cloud, stood with him there, and proclaimed His name, the LORD. Then the LORD passed in front of Moses and called out:

> "The LORD, the LORD God, is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in loving devotion and faithfulness, maintaining loving devotion to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. Yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished; He will visit the iniquity of the fathers on their children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."

Moses immediately bowed down to the ground and worshiped. "O Lord," he said, "if I have indeed found favor in Your sight, my Lord, please go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, forgive our iniquity and sin, and take us as Your inheritance."

And the LORD said, "Behold, I am making a covenant. Before all your people I will perform wonders that have never been done in any nation in all the world. All the people among whom you live will see the LORD's work, for it is an awesome thing that I am doing with you.

Observe what I command you this day. I will drive out before you the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. Be careful not to make a treaty with the inhabitants of the land you are entering, lest they become a snare in your midst. Rather, you must tear down their altars, smash their sacred stones, and chop down their Asherah poles. For you must not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

Do not make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite you, and you will eat their sacrifices. And when you take some of their daughters as brides for your sons, their daughters will prostitute themselves to their gods and cause your sons to do the same.

You shall make no molten gods for yourselves.

You are to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. For seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, you are to eat unleavened bread as I commanded you. For in the month of Abib you came out of Egypt.

The first offspring of every womb belongs to Me, including all the firstborn males among your livestock, whether cattle or sheep. You must redeem the firstborn of a donkey with a lamb; but if you do not redeem it, you are to break its neck. You must redeem all the firstborn of your sons. No one shall appear before Me empty-handed.

Six days you shall labor, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even in the seasons of plowing and harvesting, you must rest.

And you are to celebrate the Feast of Weeks with the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of

Ingathering at the turn of the year. Three times a year all your males are to appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel. For I will drive out the nations before you and enlarge your borders, and no one will covet your land when you go up three times a year to appear before the LORD your God.

Do not offer the blood of a sacrifice to Me along with anything leavened, and do not let any of the sacrifice from the Passover Feast remain until morning.

Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God.

You must not cook a young goat in its mother's milk."

The LORD also said to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel."

So Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant — the Ten Commandments.

And when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was unaware that his face had become radiant from speaking with the LORD. Aaron and all the Israelites looked at Moses, and behold, his face was radiant. And they were afraid to approach him.

But Moses called out to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke to them. And after this all the Israelites came near, and Moses commanded them to do everything that the LORD had told him on Mount Sinai.

When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would remove the veil until he came out. And when he came out, he would tell the Israelites what he had been commanded, and the Israelites would see that the face of Moses was radiant. So Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the LORD.

Then Moses assembled the whole congregation of Israel and said to them, "These are the things that the LORD has commanded you to do: For six days work may be done, but the seventh day shall be your holy day, a Sabbath of complete rest to the LORD. Whoever does any work on that day must be put to death. Do not light a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day."

Moses also told the whole congregation of Israel, "This is what the LORD has commanded: Take from among you an offering to the LORD. Let everyone whose heart is willing bring an offering to the LORD:

gold, silver, and bronze;
blue, purple, and scarlet yarn;
fine linen and goat hair;
ram skins dyed red and fine leather;
acacia wood;
olive oil for the light;
spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense;
and onyx stones and gemstones to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece.

Let every skilled craftsman among you come and make everything that the LORD has commanded:

the tabernacle with its tent and covering, its clasps and frames, its crossbars, posts, and bases;
the ark with its poles and mercy seat, and the veil to shield it;
the table with its poles, all its utensils, and the Bread of the Presence;
the lampstand for light with its accessories and lamps and oil for the light;
the altar of incense with its poles;
the anointing oil and fragrant incense;
the curtain for the doorway at the entrance to the tabernacle;
the altar of burnt offering with its bronze grate, its poles, and all its utensils;
the basin with its stand;
the curtains of the courtyard with its posts and bases, and the curtain for the gate of the courtyard;
the tent pegs for the tabernacle and for the courtyard, along with their ropes;
and the woven garments for ministering in the holy place— both the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons to serve as priests."

Then the whole congregation of Israel withdrew from the presence of Moses. And everyone whose heart stirred him and whose spirit prompted him came and brought an offering to the LORD for the work on the Tent of Meeting, for all its services, and for the holy garments.

So all who had willing hearts, both men and women, came and brought brooches and earrings, rings and necklaces, and all kinds of gold jewelry. And they all presented their gold as a wave offering to the LORD.

Everyone who had blue, purple, or scarlet yarn, or fine linen, goat hair, ram skins dyed red, or articles of fine leather, brought them. And all who could present an offering of silver or bronze brought it as a contribution to the LORD. Also, everyone who had acacia wood for any part of the service brought it.

Every skilled woman spun with her hands and brought what she had spun: blue, purple, or scarlet yarn, or fine linen. And all the skilled women whose hearts were stirred spun the goat hair.

The leaders brought onyx stones and gemstones to mount on the ephod and breastpiece, as well as spices and olive oil for the light, for the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense.

So all the men and women of the Israelites whose hearts prompted them brought a freewill offering to the LORD for all the work that the LORD through Moses had commanded them to do.

Then Moses said to the Israelites, "See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And He has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of craftsmanship, to design artistic works in gold, silver, and bronze, to cut gemstones for settings, and to carve wood, so that he may be a master of every artistic craft.

And the LORD has given both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach others. He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work as engravers, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and as weavers — as artistic designers of every kind of craft."

"So Bezalel, Oholiab, and every skilled person are to carry out everything commanded by the LORD, who has given them skill and ability to know how to perform all the work of constructing the sanctuary."

Then Moses summoned Bezalel, Oholiab, and every skilled person whom the LORD had gifted — everyone whose heart stirred him to come and do the work. They received from Moses all the contributions that the Israelites had brought to carry out the service of constructing the sanctuary.

Meanwhile, the people continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning, so that all the skilled craftsmen who were doing all the work on the sanctuary left their work and said to Moses, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the LORD has commanded us to do."

After Moses had given an order, they sent a proclamation throughout the camp: "No man or woman should make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary." So the people were restrained from bringing more, since what they already had was more than enough to perform all the work.

All the skilled craftsmen among the workmen made the ten curtains for the tabernacle. They were made of finely spun linen, as well as blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, with cherubim skillfully worked into them. Each curtain was twenty-eight cubits long and four cubits wide; all the curtains were the same size. And he joined five of the curtains together, and the other five he joined as well.

He made loops of blue material on the edge of the end curtain in the first set, and also on the end curtain in the second set. He made fifty loops on one curtain and fifty loops on the end curtain of the second set, so that the loops lined up opposite one another. He also made fifty gold clasps to join the curtains together, so that the tabernacle was a unit.

He then made curtains of goat hair for the tent over the tabernacle — eleven curtains in all. Each of the eleven curtains was the same size — thirty cubits long and four cubits wide. He joined five of the curtains into one set and the other six into another. He made fifty loops along the edge of the end curtain in the first set, and fifty loops along the edge of the corresponding curtain in the second set. He also made fifty bronze clasps to join the tent together as a unit.

Additionally, he made for the tent a covering of ram skins dyed red, and over that a covering of fine leather.

Next, he constructed upright frames of acacia wood for the tabernacle. Each frame was ten cubits long and a cubit and a half wide. Two tenons were connected to each other for each frame. He made all the frames of the tabernacle in this way.

He constructed twenty frames for the south side of the tabernacle, with forty silver bases to put under the twenty frames — two bases for each frame, one under each tenon.

For the second side of the tabernacle, the north side, he made twenty frames and forty silver bases — two bases under each frame.

He made six frames for the rear of the tabernacle, the west side, and two frames for the two back corners of the tabernacle, coupled together from bottom to top and fitted into a single ring. He made both corners in this way. So there were eight frames and sixteen silver bases — two under each frame.

He also made five crossbars of acacia wood for the frames on one side of the tabernacle, five for those on the other side, and five for those on the rear side of the tabernacle, to the west.

He made the central crossbar to run through the center of the frames, from one end to the other. And he overlaid the frames with gold and made gold rings to hold the crossbars. He also overlaid the crossbars with gold.

Next, he made the veil of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and finely spun linen, with cherubim skillfully worked into it.

He also made four posts of acacia wood for it and overlaid them with gold, along with gold hooks; and he cast four silver bases for the posts.

For the entrance to the tent, he made a curtain embroidered with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and finely spun linen, together with five posts and their hooks.

He overlaid the tops of the posts and their bands with gold, and their five bases were bronze.

Bezalel went on to construct the ark of acacia wood, two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. He overlaid it with pure gold, both inside and out, and made a gold molding around it. And he cast four gold rings for its four feet, two rings on one side and two on the other. Then he made poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold. He inserted the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark in order to carry it.

He constructed a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide. He made two cherubim of hammered gold at the ends of the mercy seat, one cherub on one end and one on the other, all made from one piece of gold. And the cherubim had wings that spread upward, overshadowing the mercy seat. The cherubim faced each other, looking toward the mercy seat.

He also made the table of acacia wood two cubits long, a cubit wide, and a cubit and a half high. He overlaid it with pure gold and made a gold molding around it. And he made a rim around it a handbreadth wide and put a gold molding on the rim.

He cast four gold rings for the table and fastened them to the four corners at its four legs. The rings were placed close to the rim, to serve as holders for the poles used to carry the table. He made the poles of acacia wood for carrying the table and overlaid them with gold.

He also made the utensils for the table out of pure gold: its plates and dishes, as well as its bowls and pitchers for pouring drink offerings.

Then he made the lampstand out of pure hammered gold, all of one piece: its base and shaft, its cups, and its buds and petals. Six branches extended from the sides, three on one side and three on the other. There were three cups shaped like almond blossoms on the first branch, each with buds and petals, three on the next branch, and the same for all six branches that extended from the lampstand.

And on the lampstand were four cups shaped like almond blossoms with buds and petals. A bud was under the first pair of branches that extended from the lampstand, a bud under the second pair, and a bud under the third pair. The buds and branches were all of one piece with the lampstand, hammered out of pure gold.

He also made its seven lamps, its wick trimmers, and trays of pure gold. He made the lampstand and all its utensils from a talent of pure gold.

He made the altar of incense out of acacia wood. It was square, a cubit long, a cubit wide, and two cubits high. Its horns were of one piece. And he overlaid with pure gold the top and all the sides and horns. Then he made a molding of gold around it.

He made two gold rings below the molding on opposite sides to hold the poles used to carry it. And he made the poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold.

He also made the sacred anointing oil and the pure, fragrant incense, the work of a perfumer.

Bezalel constructed the altar of burnt offering from acacia wood. It was square, five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high. He made a horn at each of its four corners, so that the horns and altar were of one piece, and he overlaid the altar with bronze.

He made all the altar's utensils of bronze — its pots, shovels, sprinkling bowls, meat forks, and firepans. He made a grate of bronze mesh for the altar under its ledge, halfway up from the bottom.

At the four corners of the bronze grate he cast four rings as holders for the poles. And he made the poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with bronze. Then he inserted the poles into the rings on the sides of the altar for carrying it. He made the altar with boards so that it was hollow.

Next he made the bronze basin and its stand from the mirrors of the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

Then he constructed the courtyard. The south side of the courtyard was a hundred cubits long and had curtains of finely spun linen, with twenty posts and twenty bronze bases, and with silver hooks and bands on the posts. The north side was also a hundred cubits long, with twenty posts and twenty bronze bases. The hooks and bands of the posts were silver. The west side was fifty cubits long and had curtains, with ten posts and ten bases. The hooks and bands of the posts were silver. And the east side, toward the sunrise, was also fifty cubits long.

The curtains on one side of the entrance were fifteen cubits long, with three posts and three bases. And the curtains on the other side were also fifteen cubits long, with three posts and three bases as well. All the curtains around the courtyard were made of finely spun linen. The bases for the posts were bronze, the hooks and bands were silver, and the plating for the tops of the posts was silver. So all the posts of the courtyard were banded with silver.

The curtain for the entrance to the courtyard was embroidered with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and finely spun linen. It was twenty cubits long and, like the curtains of the courtyard, five cubits high, with four posts and four bronze bases. Their hooks were silver, as well as the bands and the plating of their tops. All the tent pegs for the tabernacle and for the surrounding courtyard were bronze.

This is the inventory for the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the Testimony, as recorded at Moses' command by the Levites under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest. Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made everything that the LORD had commanded Moses. With him was Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, an engraver, designer, and embroiderer in blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine linen.

All the gold from the wave offering used for the work on the sanctuary totaled 29 talents and 730 shekels, according to the sanctuary shekel.

The silver from those numbered among the congregation totaled 100 talents and 1,775 shekels, according to the sanctuary shekel— a beka per person, that is, half a shekel, according to the sanctuary shekel, from everyone twenty years of age or older who had crossed over to be numbered, a total of 603,550 men.

The hundred talents of silver were used to cast the bases of the sanctuary and the bases of the veil— 100 bases from the 100 talents, one talent per base.

With the 1,775 shekels of silver he made the hooks for the posts, overlaid their tops, and supplied bands for them.

The bronze from the wave offering totaled 70 talents and 2,400 shekels. He used it to make the bases for the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the bronze altar and its bronze grating, all the utensils for the altar, the bases for the surrounding courtyard and its gate, and all the tent pegs for the tabernacle and its surrounding courtyard.

From the blue, purple, and scarlet yarn they made specially woven garments for ministry in the sanctuary, as well as the holy garments for Aaron, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Bezalel made the ephod of finely spun linen embroidered with gold, and with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn. They hammered out thin sheets of gold and cut threads from them to interweave with the blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and fine linen — the work of a skilled craftsman. They made shoulder pieces for the ephod, which were attached at two of its corners, so it could be fastened. And the skillfully woven waistband of the ephod was of one piece with the ephod, of the same workmanship — with gold, with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and with finely spun linen, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

They mounted the onyx stones in gold filigree settings, engraved like a seal with the names of the sons of Israel. Then they fastened them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod as memorial stones for the sons of Israel, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

He made the breastpiece with the same workmanship as the ephod, with gold, with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and with finely spun linen. It was square when folded over double, a span long and a span wide.

And they mounted on it four rows of gemstones:
The first row had a ruby, a topaz, and an emerald;
the second row had a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond;

the third row had a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst;
and the fourth row had a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper.

These stones were mounted in gold filigree settings.

The twelve stones corresponded to the names of the sons of Israel. Each stone was engraved like a seal with the name of one of the twelve tribes.

For the breastpiece they made braided chains like cords of pure gold. They also made two gold filigree settings and two gold rings, and fastened the two rings to the two corners of the breastpiece. Then they fastened the two gold chains to the two gold rings at the corners of the breastpiece, and they fastened the other ends of the two chains to the two filigree settings, attaching them to the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front.

They made two more gold rings and attached them to the other two corners of the breastpiece, on the inside edge next to the ephod.

They made two additional gold rings and attached them to the bottom of the two shoulder pieces of the ephod, on its front, near the seam just above its woven waistband. Then they tied the rings of the breastpiece to the rings of the ephod with a cord of blue yarn, so that the breastpiece was above the waistband of the ephod and would not swing out from the ephod, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

They made the robe of the ephod entirely of blue cloth, the work of a weaver, with an opening in the center of the robe like that of a garment, with a collar around the opening so that it would not tear.

They made pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and finely spun linen on the lower hem of the robe. They also made bells of pure gold and attached them around the hem between the pomegranates, alternating the bells and pomegranates around the lower hem of the robe to be worn for ministry, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

For Aaron and his sons they made tunics of fine linen, the work of a weaver, as well as the turban of fine linen, the ornate headbands and undergarments of finely spun linen, and the sash of finely spun linen, embroidered with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

They also made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and they engraved on it, like an inscription on a seal:

HOLY TO THE LORD.

Then they fastened to it a blue cord to mount it on the turban, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

So all the work for the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, was completed. The Israelites did everything just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Then they brought the tabernacle to Moses:
the tent with all its furnishings, its clasps, its frames, its crossbars, and its posts and bases;
the covering of ram skins dyed red, the covering of fine leather, and the veil of the covering;
the ark of the Testimony with its poles and the mercy seat;
the table with all its utensils and the Bread of the Presence;
the pure gold lampstand with its row of lamps and all its utensils, as well as the oil for the light;
the gold altar, the anointing oil, the fragrant incense, and the curtain for the entrance to the tent;
the bronze altar with its bronze grating, its poles, and all its utensils;
the basin with its stand;
the curtains of the courtyard with its posts and bases;
the curtain for the gate of the courtyard, its ropes and tent pegs, and all the equipment for the service of the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting;
and the woven garments for ministering in the sanctuary, both the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons to serve as priests.

The Israelites had done all the work just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And Moses inspected all the work and saw that they had accomplished it just as the LORD had commanded. So Moses blessed them.

Then the LORD said to Moses, “On the first day of the first month you are to set up the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting. Put the ark of the Testimony in it and screen off the ark with the veil. Then bring in the table and set out its arrangement; bring in the lampstand as well, and set up its lamps.

Place the gold altar of incense in front of the ark of the Testimony, and hang the curtain at the entrance to the tabernacle. Place the altar of burnt offering in front of the entrance to the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting. And place the basin between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and put water in it.

Set up the surrounding courtyard and hang the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard.

Take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and everything in it; consecrate it along with all its furnishings, and it shall be holy. Anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils; consecrate the altar, and it shall be most holy. Anoint the basin and its stand and consecrate them.

Then bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and wash them with water. And you are to clothe Aaron with the holy garments, anoint him, and consecrate him, so that he may serve Me as a priest. Bring his sons forward and clothe them with tunics. Anoint them just as you anointed their father, so that they may also serve Me as priests. Their anointing will qualify them for a permanent priesthood throughout their generations.”

Moses did everything just as the LORD had commanded him. So the tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month of the second year.

When Moses set up the tabernacle, he laid its bases, positioned its frames, inserted its crossbars, and set up its posts. Then he spread the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering over the tent, just as the LORD had commanded him.

Moses took the Testimony and placed it in the ark, attaching the poles to the ark; and he set the mercy seat atop the ark. Then he brought the ark into the tabernacle, put up the veil for the screen, and shielded off the ark of the Testimony, just as the LORD had commanded him.

Moses placed the table in the Tent of Meeting on the north side of the tabernacle, outside the veil. He arranged the bread on it before the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded him.

He also placed the lampstand in the Tent of Meeting opposite the table on the south side of the tabernacle and set up the lamps before the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded him.

Moses placed the gold altar in the Tent of Meeting, in front of the veil, and he burned fragrant incense on it, just as the LORD had commanded him. Then he put up the curtain at the entrance to the tabernacle. He placed the altar of burnt offering near the entrance to the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, and offered on it the burnt offering and the grain offering, just as the LORD had commanded him.

He placed the basin between the Tent of Meeting and the altar and put water in it for washing; and from it Moses, Aaron, and his sons washed their hands and feet. They washed whenever they entered the Tent of Meeting or approached the altar, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

And Moses set up the courtyard around the tabernacle and the altar, and he hung the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard. So Moses finished the work.

Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses was unable to enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

Whenever the cloud was lifted from above the tabernacle, the Israelites would set out through all the stages of their journey. If the cloud was not lifted, they would not set out until the day it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel through all their journeys.

Leviticus

Book of Leviticus

Then the LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying, “Speak to the Israelites and tell them: When any of you brings an offering to the LORD, you may bring as your offering an animal from the herd or the flock.

If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he is to present an unblemished male. He must bring it to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting for its acceptance before the LORD. He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, so it can be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.

And he shall slaughter the young bull before the LORD, and Aaron’s sons the priests are to present the blood and splatter it on all sides of the altar at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Next, he is to skin the burnt offering and cut it into pieces.

The sons of Aaron the priest shall put a fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. Then Aaron’s sons the priests are to arrange the pieces, including the head and the fat, atop the burning wood on the altar. The entrails and legs must be washed with water, and the priest shall burn all of it on the altar as a burnt offering, a food offering, a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

If, however, one’s offering is a burnt offering from the flock — from the sheep or goats — he is to present an unblemished male. He shall slaughter it on the north side of the altar before the LORD, and Aaron’s sons the priests are to splatter its blood against the altar on all sides. He is to cut the animal into pieces, and the priest shall arrange them, including the head and fat, atop the burning wood that is on the altar. The entrails and legs must be washed with water, and the priest shall present all of it and burn it on the altar; it is a burnt offering, a food offering, a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

If, instead, one’s offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, he is to present a turtledove or a young pigeon. Then the priest shall bring it to the altar, twist off its head, and burn it on the altar; its blood should be drained out on the side of the altar. And he is to remove the crop with its contents and throw it to the east side of the altar, in the place for ashes. He shall tear it open by its wings, without dividing the bird completely. And the priest is to burn it on the altar atop the burning wood. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, a pleasing aroma to the LORD.’’

“When anyone brings a grain offering to the LORD, his offering must consist of fine flour. He is to pour olive oil on it, put frankincense on it, and bring it to Aaron’s sons the priests. The priest shall take a handful of the flour and oil, together with all the frankincense, and burn this as a memorial portion on the altar, a food offering, a pleasing aroma to the LORD. The remainder of the grain offering shall belong to Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the food offerings to the LORD.

Now if you bring an offering of grain baked in an oven, it must consist of fine flour, either unleavened cakes mixed with oil or unleavened wafers coated with oil.

If your offering is a grain offering prepared on a griddle, it must be unleavened bread made of fine flour mixed with oil. Crumble it and pour oil on it; it is a grain offering.

If your offering is a grain offering cooked in a pan, it must consist of fine flour with oil.

When you bring to the LORD the grain offering made in any of these ways, it is to be presented to the priest, and he shall take it to the altar. The priest is to remove the memorial portion from the grain offering and burn it on the altar as a food offering, a pleasing aroma to the LORD. But the remainder of the grain offering shall belong to Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the food offerings to the LORD.

No grain offering that you present to the LORD may be made with leaven, for you are not to burn any leaven or honey as a food offering to the LORD. You may bring them to the LORD as an offering of firstfruits, but they must not go up on the altar as a pleasing aroma. And you shall season each of your grain offerings with salt. You must not leave the salt of the covenant of your God out of your grain offering; you are to add salt to each of your offerings.

If you bring a grain offering of firstfruits to the LORD, you shall offer crushed heads of new grain roasted on the fire. And you are to put oil and frankincense on it; it is a grain offering. The priest shall then burn the memorial portion of the crushed grain and the oil, together with all its frankincense, as a food offering to the LORD.’’

“If one’s offering is a peace offering and he offers an animal from the herd, whether male or female, he must present it without blemish before the LORD. He is to lay his hand on the head of the offering and slaughter it at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Then Aaron’s sons the priests shall splatter the blood on all sides of the altar.

From the peace offering he is to bring a food offering to the LORD: the fat that covers the entrails, all the fat that is on them, both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which he is to remove with the kidneys. Then Aaron’s sons are to burn it on the altar atop the burnt offering that is on the burning wood, as a food offering, a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

If, however, one’s peace offering to the LORD is from the flock, he must present a male or female without blemish.

If he is presenting a lamb for his offering, he must present it before the LORD. He is to lay his hand on the head of his offering and slaughter it in front of the Tent of Meeting. Then Aaron’s sons shall splatter its blood on all sides of the altar.

And from the peace offering he shall bring a food offering to the LORD consisting of its fat: the entire fat tail cut off close to the backbone, the fat that covers the entrails, all the fat that is on them, both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which he is to remove with the kidneys. Then the priest

is to burn them on the altar as food, a food offering to the LORD.

If one's offering is a goat, he is to present it before the LORD. He must lay his hand on its head and slaughter it in front of the Tent of Meeting. Then Aaron's sons shall splatter its blood on all sides of the altar.

And from his offering he shall present a food offering to the LORD: the fat that covers the entrails, all the fat that is on them, both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which he is to remove with the kidneys. Then the priest is to burn the food on the altar as a food offering, a pleasing aroma. All the fat is the LORD's.

This is a permanent statute for the generations to come, wherever you live: You must not eat any fat or any blood."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites to do as follows with one who sins unintentionally against any of the LORD's commandments and does what is forbidden by them:

If the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, he must bring to the LORD a young bull without blemish as a sin offering for the sin he has committed. He must bring the bull to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting before the LORD, lay his hand on the bull's head, and slaughter it before the LORD. Then the anointed priest shall take some of the bull's blood and bring it into the Tent of Meeting. The priest is to dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle some of it seven times before the LORD, in front of the veil of the sanctuary. The priest must then put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense that is before the LORD in the Tent of Meeting. And he is to pour out the rest of the bull's blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Then he shall remove all the fat from the bull of the sin offering — the fat that covers the entrails, all the fat that is on them, both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which he is to remove with the kidneys— just as the fat is removed from the ox of the peace offering. Then the priest shall burn them on the altar of burnt offering. But the hide of the bull and all its flesh, with its head and legs and its entrails and dung— all the rest of the bull— he must take outside the camp to a ceremonially clean place where the ashes are poured out, and there he must burn it on a wood fire on the ash heap.

Now if the whole congregation of Israel strays unintentionally and the matter escapes the notice of the assembly so that they violate any of the LORD's commandments and incur guilt by doing what is forbidden, when they become aware of the sin they have committed, then the assembly must bring a young bull as a sin offering and present it before the Tent of Meeting. The elders of the congregation are to lay their hands on the bull's head before the LORD, and it shall be slaughtered before the LORD. Then the anointed priest is to bring some of the bull's blood into the Tent of Meeting, and he is to dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle it seven times before the LORD in front of the veil. He is also to put some of the blood on the horns of the altar that is before the LORD in the Tent of Meeting, and he must pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. And he is to remove all the fat from it and burn it on the altar. He shall offer this bull just as he did the bull for the sin offering; in this way the priest will make atonement on their behalf, and they will be forgiven. Then he is to take the bull outside the camp and burn it, just as he burned the first bull. It is the sin offering for the assembly.

When a leader sins unintentionally and does what is prohibited by any of the commandments of the LORD his God, he incurs guilt. When he becomes aware of the sin he has committed, he must bring an unblemished male goat as his offering. He is to lay his hand on the head of the goat and slaughter it at the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered before the LORD. It is a sin offering. Then the priest is to take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. He must burn all its fat on the altar, like the fat of the peace offerings; thus the priest will make atonement for that man's sin, and he will be forgiven.

And if one of the common people sins unintentionally and does what is prohibited by any of the LORD's commandments, he incurs guilt. When he becomes aware of the sin he has committed, he must bring an unblemished female goat as his offering for that sin. He is to lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and slaughter it at the place of the burnt offering. Then the priest is to take some of its blood with his finger, put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. Then he is to remove all the fat, just as it is removed from the peace offering, and the priest is to burn it on the altar as a pleasing aroma to the LORD. In this way the priest will make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven.

If, however, he brings a lamb as a sin offering, he must bring an unblemished female. And he is to lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and slaughter it as a sin offering at the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered. Then the priest is to take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour out the rest of its blood at the base of the altar. And he shall remove all the fat, just as the fat of the lamb is removed from the peace offerings, and he shall burn it on the altar along with the food offerings to the LORD. In this way the priest will make atonement for him for the sin he has committed, and he will be forgiven."

"If someone sins by failing to testify when he hears a public charge about something he has witnessed, whether he has seen it or learned of it, he shall bear the iniquity.

Or if a person touches anything unclean— whether the carcass of any unclean wild animal or livestock or crawling creature— even if he is unaware of it, he is unclean and guilty.

Or if he touches human uncleanness— anything by which one becomes unclean— even if he is unaware of it, when he realizes it, he is guilty.

Or if someone swears thoughtlessly with his lips to do anything good or evil— in whatever matter a man

may rashly pronounce an oath— even if he is unaware of it, when he realizes it, he is guilty in the matter.

If someone incurs guilt in one of these ways, he must confess the sin he has committed, and he must bring his guilt offering to the LORD for the sin he has committed: a female lamb or goat from the flock as a sin offering. And the priest will make atonement for him concerning his sin.

If, however, he cannot afford a lamb, he may bring to the LORD as restitution for his sin two turtledoves or two young pigeons — one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering. He is to bring them to the priest, who shall first present the one for the sin offering. He is to twist its head at the front of its neck without severing it; then he is to sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering on the side of the altar, while the rest of the blood is drained out at the base of the altar. It is a sin offering. And the priest must prepare the second bird as a burnt offering according to the ordinance. In this way the priest will make atonement for him for the sin he has committed, and he will be forgiven.

But if he cannot afford two turtledoves or two young pigeons, he may bring a tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a sin offering. He must not put olive oil or frankincense on it, because it is a sin offering. He is to bring it to the priest, who shall take a handful from it as a memorial portion and burn it on the altar atop the food offerings to the LORD; it is a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for him for any of these sins he has committed, and he will be forgiven. The remainder will belong to the priest, like the grain offering."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "If someone acts unfaithfully and sins unintentionally against any of the LORD's holy things, he must bring his guilt offering to the LORD: an unblemished ram from the flock, of proper value in silver shekels according to the sanctuary shekel; it is a guilt offering. Regarding any holy thing he has harmed, he must make restitution by adding a fifth of its value to it and giving it to the priest, who will make atonement on his behalf with the ram as a guilt offering, and he will be forgiven.

If someone sins and violates any of the LORD's commandments even though he was unaware, he is guilty and shall bear his punishment. He is to bring to the priest an unblemished ram of proper value from the flock as a guilt offering. Then the priest will make atonement on his behalf for the wrong he has committed in ignorance, and he will be forgiven. It is a guilt offering; he was certainly guilty before the LORD."

And the LORD said to Moses, "If someone sins and acts unfaithfully against the LORD by deceiving his neighbor in regard to a deposit or security entrusted to him or stolen, or if he extorts his neighbor or finds lost property and lies about it and swears falsely, or if he commits any such sin that a man might commit— once he has sinned and becomes guilty, he must return what he has stolen or taken by extortion, or the deposit entrusted to him, or the lost property he found, or anything else about which he has sworn falsely.

He must make restitution in full, add a fifth of the value, and pay it to the owner on the day he acknowledges his guilt. Then he must bring to the priest his guilt offering to the LORD: an unblemished ram of proper value from the flock. In this way the priest will make atonement for him before the LORD, and he will be forgiven for anything he may have done to incur guilt."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Command Aaron and his sons that this is the law of the burnt offering: The burnt offering is to remain on the hearth of the altar all night, until morning, and the fire must be kept burning on the altar.

And the priest shall put on his linen robe and linen undergarments, and he shall remove from the altar the ashes of the burnt offering that the fire has consumed and place them beside it. Then he must take off his garments, put on other clothes, and carry the ashes outside the camp to a ceremonially clean place.

The fire on the altar shall be kept burning; it must not be extinguished. Every morning the priest is to add wood to the fire, arrange the burnt offering on it, and burn the fat portions of the peace offerings on it. The fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually; it must not be extinguished.

Now this is the law of the grain offering: Aaron's sons shall present it before the LORD in front of the altar. The priest is to remove a handful of fine flour and olive oil, together with all the frankincense from the grain offering, and burn the memorial portion on the altar as a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

Aaron and his sons are to eat the remainder. It must be eaten without leaven in a holy place; they are to eat it in the courtyard of the Tent of Meeting. It must not be baked with leaven; I have assigned it as their portion of My food offerings. It is most holy, like the sin offering and the guilt offering. Any male among the sons of Aaron may eat it. This is a permanent portion from the food offerings to the LORD for the generations to come. Anything that touches them will become holy."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "This is the offering that Aaron and his sons must present to the LORD on the day he is anointed: a tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a regular grain offering, half of it in the morning and half in the evening. It shall be prepared with oil on a griddle; you are to bring it well-kneaded and present it as a grain offering broken in pieces, a pleasing aroma to the LORD. The priest, who is one of Aaron's sons and will be anointed to take his place, is to prepare it. As a permanent portion for the LORD, it must be burned completely. Every grain offering for a priest shall be burned completely; it is not to be eaten."

And the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron and his sons that this is the law of the sin offering: In the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered, the sin offering shall be slaughtered before the LORD; it is most holy. The priest who offers it shall eat it; it must be eaten in a holy place, in the courtyard of the Tent of Meeting. Anything that touches its flesh will become holy, and if any of the blood is spattered on a garment, you must wash it in a holy place.

The clay pot in which the sin offering is boiled must be broken; if it is boiled in a bronze pot, the pot must be scoured and rinsed with water. Any male among the priests may eat it; it is most holy. But no sin offering may be eaten if its blood has been brought into the Tent of

Meeting to make atonement in the Holy Place; it must be burned.''

"Now this is the law of the guilt offering, which is most holy: The guilt offering must be slaughtered in the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered, and the priest shall splatter its blood on all sides of the altar. And all the fat from it shall be offered: the fat tail, the fat that covers the entrails, both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which is to be removed with the kidneys. The priest shall burn them on the altar as a food offering to the LORD; it is a guilt offering. Every male among the priests may eat of it. It must be eaten in a holy place; it is most holy.

The guilt offering is like the sin offering; the same law applies to both. It belongs to the priest who makes atonement with it. As for the priest who presents a burnt offering for anyone, the hide of that offering belongs to him. Likewise, every grain offering that is baked in an oven or cooked in a pan or on a griddle belongs to the priest who presents it, and every grain offering, whether dry or mixed with oil, belongs equally to all the sons of Aaron.

Now this is the law of the peace offering that one may present to the LORD: If he offers it in thanksgiving, then along with the sacrifice of thanksgiving he shall offer unleavened cakes mixed with olive oil, unleavened wafers coated with oil, and well-kneaded cakes of fine flour mixed with oil.

Along with his peace offering of thanksgiving he is to present an offering with cakes of leavened bread. From the cakes he must present one portion of each offering as a contribution to the LORD. It belongs to the priest who sprinkles the blood of the peace offering. The meat of the sacrifice of his peace offering of thanksgiving must be eaten on the day he offers it; none of it may be left until morning.

If, however, the sacrifice he offers is a vow or a freewill offering, it shall be eaten on the day he presents his sacrifice, but the remainder may be eaten on the next day. But any meat of the sacrifice remaining until the third day must be burned up. If any of the meat from his peace offering is eaten on the third day, it will not be accepted. It will not be credited to the one who presented it; it shall be an abomination, and the one who eats of it shall bear his iniquity.

Meat that touches anything unclean must not be eaten; it is to be burned up. As for any other meat, anyone who is ceremonially clean may eat it. But if anyone who is unclean eats meat from the peace offering that belongs to the LORD, that person must be cut off from his people. If one touches anything unclean, whether human uncleanness, an unclean animal, or any unclean, detestable thing, and then eats any of the meat of the peace offering that belongs to the LORD, that person must be cut off from his people."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and say, 'You are not to eat any of the fat of an ox, a sheep, or a goat. The fat of an animal found dead or mauled by wild beasts may be used for any other purpose, but you must not eat it.

If anyone eats the fat of an animal from which a food offering may be presented to the LORD, the one who eats it must be cut off from his people. You must not eat the blood of any bird or animal in any of your dwellings. If anyone eats blood, that person must be cut off from his people.'"

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and say, 'Anyone who presents a peace offering to the LORD must bring it as his sacrifice to the LORD. With his own hands he is to bring the food offerings to the LORD; he shall bring the fat, together with the breast, and wave the breast as a wave offering before the LORD.

The priest is to burn the fat on the altar, but the breast belongs to Aaron and his sons. And you are to give the right thigh to the priest as a contribution from your peace offering. The son of Aaron who presents the blood and fat of the peace offering shall have the right thigh as a portion.

I have taken from the sons of Israel the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the contribution of their peace offerings, and I have given them to Aaron the priest and his sons as a permanent portion from the sons of Israel.'"

This is the portion of the food offerings to the LORD for Aaron and his sons since the day they were presented to serve the LORD as priests. On the day they were anointed, the LORD commanded that this be given them by the sons of Israel. It is a permanent portion for the generations to come.

This is the law of the burnt offering, the grain offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the ordination offering, and the peace offering, which the LORD gave Moses on Mount Sinai on the day He commanded the Israelites to present their offerings to the LORD in the Wilderness of Sinai.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take Aaron and his sons, their garments, the anointing oil, the bull of the sin offering, the two rams, and the basket of unleavened bread, and assemble the whole congregation at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting."

So Moses did as the LORD had commanded him, and the assembly gathered at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. And Moses said to them, "This is what the LORD has commanded to be done."

Then Moses presented Aaron and his sons and washed them with water. He put the tunic on Aaron, tied the sash around him, clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod on him. He tied the woven band of the ephod around him and fastened it to him. Then he put the breastpiece on him and placed the Urim and Thummim in the breastpiece. Moses also put the turban on Aaron's head and set the gold plate, the holy diadem, on the front of the turban, as the LORD had commanded him.

Next, Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and everything in it; and so he consecrated them. He sprinkled some of the oil on the altar seven times, anointing the altar and all its utensils, and the basin with its stand, to consecrate them.

He also poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him to consecrate him. Then Moses presented Aaron's sons, put tunics on them, wrapped sashes around them, and tied headbands on them, just as the LORD had commanded him.

Moses then brought the bull near for the sin offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head. Moses slaughtered the bull, took some of the blood, and applied it with his finger to all four horns of the altar, purifying the altar. He poured out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar and consecrated it so that atonement could be made on it.

Moses also took all the fat that was on the entrails, the lobe of the liver, and both kidneys and their fat, and burned it all on the altar. But the bull with its hide, flesh, and dung he burned outside the camp, as the LORD had commanded him.

Then Moses presented the ram for the burnt offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head. Moses slaughtered the ram and splattered the blood on all sides of the altar. He cut the ram into pieces and burned the head, the pieces, and the fat. He washed the entrails and legs with water and burned the entire ram on the altar as a burnt offering, a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

After that, Moses presented the other ram, the ram of ordination, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head. Moses slaughtered the ram and took some of its blood and put it on Aaron's right earlobe, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. Moses also presented Aaron's sons and put some of the blood on their right earlobes, on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right feet. Then he splattered the blood on all sides of the altar.

And Moses took the fat— the fat tail, all the fat that was on the entrails, the lobe of the liver, and both kidneys with their fat— as well as the right thigh. And from the basket of unleavened bread that was before the LORD, he took one cake of unleavened bread, one cake of bread made with oil, and one wafer, and he placed them on the fat portions and on the right thigh. He put all these in the hands of Aaron and his sons and waved them before the LORD as a wave offering.

Then Moses took these from their hands and burned them on the altar with the burnt offering. This was an ordination offering, a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the LORD. He also took the breast — Moses' portion of the ram of ordination — and waved it before the LORD as a wave offering, as the LORD had commanded him.

Next, Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood that was on the altar and sprinkled them on Aaron and his garments, and on his sons and their garments. So he consecrated Aaron and his garments, as well as Aaron's sons and their garments.

And Moses said to Aaron and his sons, "Boil the meat at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and eat it there with the bread that is in the basket of ordination offerings, as I commanded, saying, 'Aaron and his sons are to eat it.' Then you must burn up the remainder of the meat and bread.

You must not go outside the entrance to the Tent of Meeting for seven days, until the days of your ordination are complete; for it will take seven days to ordain you. What has been done today has been commanded by the LORD in order to make atonement on your behalf. You must remain at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting day and night for seven days and keep the LORD's charge so that you will not die, for this is what I have been commanded."

So Aaron and his sons did everything the LORD had commanded through Moses.

On the eighth day Moses summoned Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel. He said to Aaron, "Take for yourself a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering, both without blemish, and present them before the LORD. Then speak to the Israelites and say, 'Take a male goat for a sin offering, a calf and a lamb — both a year old and without blemish — for a burnt offering, an ox and a ram for a peace offering to sacrifice before the LORD, and a grain offering mixed with oil. For today the LORD will appear to you.'"

So they took what Moses had commanded to the front of the Tent of Meeting, and the whole congregation drew near and stood before the LORD. And Moses said, "This is what the LORD has commanded you to do, so that the glory of the LORD may appear to you."

Then Moses said to Aaron, "Approach the altar and sacrifice your sin offering and your burnt offering to make atonement for yourself and for the people. And sacrifice the people's offering to make atonement for them, as the LORD has commanded."

So Aaron approached the altar and slaughtered the calf as a sin offering for himself. The sons of Aaron brought the blood to him, and he dipped his finger in the blood and applied it to the horns of the altar. And he poured out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. On the altar he burned the fat, the kidneys, and the lobe of the liver from the sin offering, as the LORD had commanded Moses. But he burned up the flesh and the hide outside the camp.

Then Aaron slaughtered the burnt offering. His sons brought him the blood, and he splattered it on all sides of the altar. They brought him the burnt offering piece by piece, including the head, and he burned them on the altar. He washed the entrails and the legs and burned them atop the burnt offering on the altar.

Aaron then presented the people's offering. He took the male goat for the people's sin offering, slaughtered it, and offered it for sin like the first one.

He presented the burnt offering and offered it according to the ordinance.

Next he presented the grain offering, took a handful of it, and burned it on the altar in addition to the morning's burnt offering.

Then he slaughtered the ox and the ram as the people's peace offering. His sons brought him the blood, and he splattered it on all sides of the altar.

They also brought the fat portions from the ox and the ram— the fat tail, the fat covering the entrails, the kidneys, and the lobe of the liver— and placed these on the breasts. Aaron burned the fat portions on the altar, but he waved the breasts and the right thigh as a wave offering before the LORD, as Moses had commanded.

Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them. And having made the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offering, he stepped down.

Moses and Aaron then entered the Tent of Meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people, and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. Fire came

out from the presence of the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted for joy and fell facedown.

Now Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense, and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to His command. So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died in the presence of the LORD.

Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD meant when He said:

> 'To those who come near Me I will show My holiness, and in the sight of all the people I will reveal My glory.'"

But Aaron remained silent.

Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel, and said to them, "Come here; carry the bodies of your cousins outside the camp, away from the front of the sanctuary." So they came forward and carried them, still in their tunics, outside the camp, as Moses had directed.

Then Moses said to Aaron and his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not let your hair become disheveled and do not tear your garments, or else you will die, and the LORD will be angry with the whole congregation. But your brothers, the whole house of Israel, may mourn on account of the fire that the LORD has ignited. You shall not go outside the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, or you will die, for the LORD's anointing oil is on you."

So they did as Moses instructed.

Then the LORD said to Aaron, "You and your sons are not to drink wine or strong drink when you enter the Tent of Meeting, or else you will die; this is a permanent statute for the generations to come. You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the clean and the unclean, so that you may teach the Israelites all the statutes that the LORD has given them through Moses."

And Moses said to Aaron and his remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, "Take the grain offering that remains from the food offerings to the LORD and eat it without leaven beside the altar, because it is most holy. You shall eat it in a holy place, because it is your share and your sons' share of the food offerings to the LORD; for this is what I have been commanded.

And you and your sons and daughters may eat the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the contribution in a ceremonially clean place, because these portions have been assigned to you and your children from the peace offerings of the sons of Israel. They are to bring the thigh of the contribution and the breast of the wave offering, together with the fat portions of the food offerings, to wave as a wave offering before the LORD. It will belong permanently to you and your children, as the LORD has commanded."

Later, Moses searched carefully for the goat of the sin offering, and behold, it had been burned up. He was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's remaining sons, and asked, "Why didn't you eat the sin offering in the holy place? For it is most holy; it was given to you to take away the guilt of the congregation by making atonement for them before the LORD. Since its blood was not brought inside the holy place, you should have eaten it in the sanctuary area, as I commanded."

But Aaron replied to Moses, "Behold, this very day they presented their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD. Since these things have happened to me, if I had eaten the sin offering today, would it have been acceptable in the sight of the LORD?"

And when Moses heard this explanation, he was satisfied.

The LORD spoke again to Moses and Aaron, telling them, "Say to the Israelites, 'Of all the beasts of the earth, these ones you may eat: You may eat any animal that has a split hoof completely divided and that chews the cud.

But of those that only chew the cud or only have a divided hoof, you are not to eat the following:

The camel, though it chews the cud, does not have a divided hoof; it is unclean for you.

The rock badger, though it chews the cud, does not have a divided hoof; it is unclean for you.

The rabbit, though it chews the cud, does not have a divided hoof; it is unclean for you.

And the pig, though it has a split hoof completely divided, does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you.

You must not eat their meat or touch their carcasses; they are unclean for you.

Of all the creatures that live in the water, whether in the seas or in the streams, you may eat anything with fins and scales.

But the following among all the teeming life and creatures in the water are detestable to you: everything in the seas or streams that does not have fins and scales. They shall be an abomination to you; you must not eat their meat, and you must detest their carcasses. Everything in the water that does not have fins and scales shall be detestable to you.

Additionally, you are to detest the following birds, and they must not be eaten because they are detestable:

the eagle, the bearded vulture, the black vulture,
the kite, any kind of falcon,
any kind of raven,
the ostrich, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk,
the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl,
the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey,
the stork, any kind of heron,
the hoopoe, and the bat.

All flying insects that walk on all fours are detestable to you. However, you may eat the following kinds of flying insects that walk on all fours: those having jointed legs above their feet for hopping on the ground. Of these you may eat any kind of locust, katydid, cricket, or grasshopper. All other flying insects that have four legs are detestable to you.

These creatures will make you unclean. Whoever touches their carcasses will be unclean until evening, and whoever picks up one of their carcasses must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean until evening.

Every animal with hooves not completely divided or that does not chew the cud is unclean for you. Whoever touches any of them will be unclean.

All the four-footed animals that walk on their paws are unclean for you; whoever touches their carcasses

will be unclean until evening, and anyone who picks up a carcass must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean until evening. They are unclean for you.

The following creatures that move along the ground are unclean for you: the mole, the mouse, any kind of great lizard, the gecko, the monitor lizard, the common lizard, the skink, and the chameleon.

These animals are unclean for you among all the crawling creatures. Whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until evening. When one of them dies and falls on something, that article becomes unclean; any article of wood, clothing, leather, sackcloth, or any implement used for work must be rinsed with water and will remain unclean until evening; then it will be clean. If any of them falls into a clay pot, everything in it will be unclean; you must break the pot. Any food coming into contact with water from that pot will be unclean, and any drink in such a container will be unclean.

Anything upon which one of their carcasses falls will be unclean. If it is an oven or cooking pot, it must be smashed; it is unclean and will remain unclean for you. Nevertheless, a spring or cistern containing water will remain clean, but one who touches a carcass in it will be unclean. If a carcass falls on any seed for sowing, the seed is clean; but if water has been put on the seed and a carcass falls on it, it is unclean for you.

If an animal that you may eat dies, anyone who touches the carcass will be unclean until evening. Whoever eats from the carcass must wash his clothes and will be unclean until evening, and anyone who picks up the carcass must wash his clothes and will be unclean until evening.

Every creature that moves along the ground is detestable; it must not be eaten. Do not eat any creature that moves along the ground, whether it crawls on its belly or walks on four or more feet; for such creatures are detestable.

Do not defile yourselves by any crawling creature; do not become unclean or defiled by them. For I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy, because I am holy. You must not defile yourselves by any creature that crawls along the ground. For I am the LORD, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt so that I would be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.

This is the law regarding animals, birds, all living creatures that move in the water, and all creatures that crawl along the ground. You must distinguish between the unclean and the clean, between animals that may be eaten and those that may not.'"

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be unclean for seven days, as she is during the days of her menstruation. And on the eighth day the flesh of the boy's foreskin is to be circumcised.

The woman shall continue in purification from her bleeding for thirty-three days. She must not touch anything sacred or go into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are complete.

If, however, she gives birth to a daughter, the woman will be unclean for two weeks as she is during her menstruation. Then she must continue in purification from her bleeding for sixty-six days.

When the days of her purification are complete, whether for a son or for a daughter, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering. And the priest will present them before the LORD and make atonement for her; and she shall be ceremonially cleansed from her flow of blood. This is the law for a woman giving birth, whether to a male or to a female.

But if she cannot afford a lamb, she shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. Then the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean.'"

Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "When someone has a swelling or rash or bright spot on his skin that may be an infectious skin disease, he must be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons who is a priest.

The priest is to examine the infection on his skin, and if the hair in the infection has turned white and the sore appears to be deeper than the skin, it is a skin disease. After the priest examines him, he must pronounce him unclean.

If, however, the spot on his skin is white and does not appear to be deeper than the skin, and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest shall isolate the infected person for seven days. On the seventh day the priest is to reexamine him, and if he sees that the infection is unchanged and has not spread on the skin, the priest must isolate him for another seven days. The priest will examine him again on the seventh day, and if the sore has faded and has not spread on the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is a rash. The person must wash his clothes and be clean.

But if the rash spreads further on his skin after he has shown himself to the priest for his cleansing, he must present himself again to the priest. The priest will reexamine him, and if the rash has spread on the skin, the priest must pronounce him unclean; it is a skin disease.

When anyone develops a skin disease, he must be brought to the priest. The priest will examine him, and if there is a white swelling on the skin that has turned the hair white, and there is raw flesh in the swelling, it is a chronic skin disease and the priest must pronounce him unclean. He need not isolate him, for he is unclean.

But if the skin disease breaks out all over his skin so that it covers all the skin of the infected person from head to foot, as far as the priest can see, the priest shall examine him, and if the disease has covered his entire body, he is to pronounce the infected person clean. Since it has all turned white, he is clean.

But whenever raw flesh appears on someone, he will be unclean. When the priest sees the raw flesh, he must pronounce him unclean. The raw flesh is unclean; it is a skin disease. But if the raw flesh changes and turns white, he must go to the priest. The priest will reexamine him, and if the infection has turned white, the priest is to pronounce the infected person clean; then he is clean.

When a boil appears on someone's skin and it heals, and a white swelling or a reddish-white spot develops where the boil was, he must present himself to the priest. The priest shall examine it, and if it appears to be beneath the skin and the hair in it has turned white, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a diseased infection that has broken out in the boil.

But when the priest examines it, if there is no white hair in it, and it is not beneath the skin and has faded, the priest shall isolate him for seven days. If it spreads any further on the skin, the priest must pronounce him unclean; it is an infection. But if the spot remains unchanged and does not spread, it is only the scar from the boil, and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

When there is a burn on someone's skin and the raw area of the burn becomes reddish-white or white, the priest must examine it. If the hair in the spot has turned white and the spot appears to be deeper than the skin, it is a disease that has broken out in the burn. The priest must pronounce him unclean; it is a diseased infection.

But if the priest examines it and there is no white hair in the spot, and it is not beneath the skin but has faded, the priest shall isolate him for seven days. On the seventh day the priest is to reexamine him, and if it has spread further on the skin, the priest must pronounce him unclean; it is a diseased infection. But if the spot is unchanged and has not spread on the skin but has faded, it is a swelling from the burn, and the priest is to pronounce him clean; for it is only the scar from the burn.

If a man or woman has an infection on the head or chin, the priest shall examine the infection, and if it appears to be deeper than the skin and the hair in it is yellow and thin, the priest must pronounce him unclean; it is a scaly outbreak, an infectious disease of the head or chin.

But if the priest examines the scaly infection and it does not appear to be deeper than the skin, and there is no black hair in it, the priest shall isolate the infected person for seven days. On the seventh day the priest is to reexamine the infection, and if the scaly outbreak has not spread and there is no yellow hair in it, and it does not appear to be deeper than the skin, then the person must shave himself except for the scaly area. Then the priest shall isolate him for another seven days. On the seventh day the priest shall examine the scaly outbreak, and if it has not spread on the skin and does not appear to be deeper than the skin, the priest is to pronounce him clean. He must wash his clothes, and he will be clean.

If, however, the scaly outbreak spreads further on the skin after his cleansing, the priest is to examine him, and if the scaly outbreak has spread on the skin, the priest need not look for yellow hair; the person is unclean.

If, however, in his sight the scaly outbreak is unchanged and black hair has grown in it, then it has healed. He is clean, and the priest is to pronounce him clean.

When a man or a woman has white spots on the skin, the priest shall examine them, and if the spots are dull white, it is a harmless rash that has broken out on the skin; the person is clean.

Now if a man loses his hair and is bald, he is still clean. Or if his hairline recedes and he is bald on his forehead, he is still clean. But if there is a reddish-white sore on the bald head or forehead, it is an infectious disease breaking out on it. The priest is to examine him, and if the swelling of the infection on his bald head or forehead is reddish-white like a skin disease, the man is diseased; he is unclean. The priest must pronounce him unclean because of the infection on his head.

A diseased person must wear torn clothes and let his hair hang loose, and he must cover his mouth and cry out, 'Unclean, unclean!' As long as he has the infection, he remains unclean. He must live alone in a place outside the camp.

If any fabric is contaminated with mildew— any wool or linen garment, any weave or knit of linen or wool, or any article of leather— and if the mark in the fabric, leather, weave, knit, or leather article is green or red, then it is contaminated with mildew and must be shown to the priest. And the priest is to examine the mildew and isolate the contaminated fabric for seven days.

On the seventh day the priest shall reexamine it, and if the mildew has spread in the fabric, weave, knit, or leather, then regardless of how it is used, it is a harmful mildew; the article is unclean. He is to burn the fabric, weave, or knit, whether the contaminated item is wool or linen or leather. Since the mildew is harmful, the article must be burned up.

But when the priest reexamines it, if the mildew has not spread in the fabric, weave, knit, or leather article, the priest is to order the contaminated article to be washed and isolated for another seven days. After it has been washed, the priest is to reexamine it, and if the mildewed article has not changed in appearance, it is unclean. Even though the mildew has not spread, you must burn it, whether the rot is on the front or back.

If the priest examines it and the mildew has faded after it has been washed, he must cut the contaminated section out of the fabric, leather, weave, or knit. But if it reappears in the fabric, weave, or knit, or on any leather article, it is spreading. You must burn the contaminated article.

If the mildew disappears from the fabric, weave, or knit, or any leather article after washing, then it is to be washed again, and it will be clean.

This is the law concerning a mildew contamination in wool or linen fabric, weave, or knit, or any leather article, for pronouncing it clean or unclean."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "This is the law for the one afflicted with a skin disease on the day of his cleansing, when he is brought to the priest. The priest is to go outside the camp to examine him, and if the skin disease of the afflicted person has healed, the priest shall order that two live clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet yarn, and hyssop be brought for the one to be cleansed.

Then the priest shall command that one of the birds be slaughtered over fresh water in a clay pot. And he is to take the live bird together with the cedar wood, scarlet yarn, and hyssop, and dip them into the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the fresh water.

Seven times he shall sprinkle the one to be cleansed of the skin disease. Then he shall pronounce him clean and release the live bird into the open field.

The one being cleansed must wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and bathe with water; then he will be ceremonially clean. Afterward, he may enter the camp, but he must remain outside his tent for seven days. On the seventh day he must shave off all his hair — his head, his beard, his eyebrows, and the rest of his hair. He must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water, and he will be clean.

On the eighth day he is to bring two unblemished male lambs, an unblemished ewe lamb a year old, a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with olive oil, and one log of olive oil. The priest who performs the cleansing shall present the one to be cleansed, together with these offerings, before the LORD at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

Then the priest is to take one of the male lambs and present it as a guilt offering, along with the log of olive oil; and he must wave them as a wave offering before the LORD. Then he is to slaughter the lamb in the sanctuary area where the sin offering and burnt offering are slaughtered. Like the sin offering, the guilt offering belongs to the priest; it is most holy.

The priest is to take some of the blood from the guilt offering and put it on the right earlobe of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. Then the priest shall take some of the log of olive oil, pour it into his left palm, dip his right forefinger into the oil in his left palm, and sprinkle some of the oil with his finger seven times before the LORD. And the priest is to put some of the oil remaining in his palm on the right earlobe of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on top of the blood of the guilt offering.

The rest of the oil in his palm, the priest is to put on the head of the one to be cleansed, to make atonement for him before the LORD. Then the priest is to sacrifice the sin offering and make atonement for the one to be cleansed from his uncleanness. After that, the priest shall slaughter the burnt offering and offer it on the altar, with the grain offering, to make atonement for him, and he will be clean.

If, however, the person is poor and cannot afford these offerings, he is to take one male lamb as a guilt offering to be waved to make atonement for him, along with a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with olive oil for a grain offering, a log of olive oil, and two turtledoves or two young pigeons, whichever he can afford, one to be a sin offering and the other a burnt offering.

On the eighth day he is to bring them for his cleansing to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting before the LORD. The priest shall take the lamb for the guilt offering, along with the log of olive oil, and wave them as a wave offering before the LORD.

And after he slaughters the lamb for the guilt offering, the priest is to take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on the right earlobe of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. Then the priest is to pour some of the oil into his left palm and sprinkle with his right forefinger some of the oil in his left palm seven times before the LORD. The priest shall also put some of the oil in his palm on the right earlobe of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot — on the same places as the blood of the guilt offering.

The rest of the oil in his palm, the priest is to put on the head of the one to be cleansed, to make atonement for him before the LORD. Then he must sacrifice the turtledoves or young pigeons, whichever he can afford, one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, together with the grain offering. In this way the priest will make atonement before the LORD for the one to be cleansed.

This is the law for someone who has a skin disease and cannot afford the cost of his cleansing."

Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "When you enter the land of Canaan, which I am giving you as your possession, and I put a contamination of mildew into a house in that land, the owner of the house shall come and tell the priest, 'Something like mildew has appeared in my house.'

The priest must order that the house be cleared before he enters it to examine the mildew, so that nothing in the house will become unclean. After this, the priest shall go in to inspect the house.

He is to examine the house, and if the mildew on the walls consists of green or red depressions that appear to be beneath the surface of the wall, the priest shall go outside the doorway of the house and close it up for seven days.

On the seventh day the priest is to return and inspect the house. If the mildew has spread on the walls, he must order that the contaminated stones be pulled out and thrown into an unclean place outside the city. And he shall have the inside of the house scraped completely and the plaster that is scraped off dumped into an unclean place outside the city.

So different stones must be obtained to replace the contaminated ones, as well as additional mortar to replaster the house.

If the mildew reappears in the house after the stones have been torn out and the house has been scraped and replastered, the priest must come and inspect it.

If the mildew has spread in the house, it is a destructive mildew; the house is unclean. It must be torn down with its stones, its timbers, and all its plaster, and taken outside the city to an unclean place. Anyone who enters the house during any of the days that it is closed up will be unclean until evening. And anyone who sleeps in the house or eats in it must wash his clothes.

If, however, the priest comes and inspects it, and the mildew has not spread after the house has been replastered, he shall pronounce the house clean, because the mildew is gone.

He is to take two birds, cedar wood, scarlet yarn, and hyssop to purify the house; and he shall slaughter one of the birds over fresh water in a clay pot.

Then he shall take the cedar wood, the hyssop, the scarlet yarn, and the live bird, dip them in the blood of the slaughtered bird and the fresh water, and sprinkle the house seven times. And he shall cleanse the house

with the bird's blood, the fresh water, the live bird, the cedar wood, the hyssop, and the scarlet yarn.

Finally, he is to release the live bird into the open fields outside the city. In this way he will make atonement for the house, and it will be clean.

This is the law for any infectious skin disease, for a scaly outbreak, for mildew in clothing or in a house, and for a swelling, rash, or spot, to determine when something is clean or unclean. This is the law regarding skin diseases and mildew."

And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Say to the Israelites, 'When any man has a bodily discharge, the discharge is unclean. This uncleanness is from his discharge, whether his body allows the discharge to flow or blocks it. So his discharge will bring about uncleanness.

Any bed on which the man with the discharge lies will be unclean, and any furniture on which he sits will be unclean. Anyone who touches his bed must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean until evening. Whoever sits on furniture on which the man with the discharge was sitting must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean until evening.

Whoever touches the body of the man with a discharge must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean until evening. If the man with the discharge spits on one who is clean, that person must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean until evening.

Any saddle on which the man with the discharge rides will be unclean. Whoever touches anything that was under him will be unclean until evening, and whoever carries such things must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean until evening.

If the man with the discharge touches anyone without first rinsing his hands with water, the one who was touched must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean until evening. Any clay pot that the man with the discharge touches must be broken, and any wooden utensil must be rinsed with water.

When the man has been cleansed from his discharge, he must count off seven days for his cleansing, wash his clothes, and bathe himself in fresh water, and he shall be clean. On the eighth day he is to take two turtledoves or two young pigeons, come before the LORD at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, and give them to the priest. The priest is to sacrifice them, one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for the man before the LORD because of his discharge.

When a man has an emission of semen, he must bathe his whole body with water, and he will be unclean until evening. Any clothing or leather on which there is an emission of semen must be washed with water, and it will remain unclean until evening. If a man lies with a woman and there is an emission of semen, both must bathe with water, and they will remain unclean until evening.

When a woman has a discharge consisting of blood from her body, she will be unclean due to her menstruation for seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean until evening. Anything on which she lies or sits during her menstruation will be unclean, and anyone who touches her bed must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean until evening.

Whoever touches any furniture on which she was sitting must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean until evening. And whether it is a bed or furniture on which she was sitting, whoever touches it will be unclean until evening.

If a man lies with her and her menstrual flow touches him, he will be unclean for seven days, and any bed on which he lies will become unclean.

When a woman has a discharge of her blood for many days at a time other than her menstrual period, or if it continues beyond her period, she will be unclean all the days of her unclean discharge, just as she is during the days of her menstruation. Any bed on which she lies or any furniture on which she sits during the days of her discharge will be unclean, like her bed during her menstrual period. Anyone who touches these things will be unclean; he must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean until evening.

When a woman is cleansed of her discharge, she must count off seven days, and after that she will be ceremonially clean. On the eighth day she is to take two turtledoves or two young pigeons and bring them to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. The priest is to sacrifice one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for her before the LORD for her unclean discharge.

You must keep the children of Israel separate from their uncleanness, so that they do not die by defiling My tabernacle, which is among them.

This is the law of him who has a discharge, of the man who has an emission of semen whereby he is unclean, of a woman in her menstrual period, of any male or female who has a discharge, and of a man who lies with an unclean woman.'"

Now the LORD spoke to Moses after the death of two of Aaron's sons when they approached the presence of the LORD. And the LORD said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron not to enter freely into the Most Holy Place behind the veil in front of the mercy seat on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud above the mercy seat.

This is how Aaron is to enter the Holy Place: with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. He is to wear the sacred linen tunic, with linen undergarments. He must tie a linen sash around him and put on the linen turban. These are holy garments, and he must bathe himself with water before he wears them. And he shall take from the congregation of Israel two male goats for a sin offering and one ram for a burnt offering.

Aaron is to present the bull for his sin offering and make atonement for himself and his household. Then he shall take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

After Aaron casts lots for the two goats, one for the LORD and the other for the scapegoat, he shall present the goat chosen by lot for the LORD and sacrifice it as a sin offering. But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD to

make atonement by sending it into the wilderness as the scapegoat.

When Aaron presents the bull for his sin offering and makes atonement for himself and his household, he is to slaughter the bull for his own sin offering. Then he must take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the LORD, and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense, and take them inside the veil. He is to put the incense on the fire before the LORD, and the cloud of incense will cover the mercy seat above the Testimony, so that he will not die. And he is to take some of the bull's blood and sprinkle it with his finger on the east side of the mercy seat; then he shall sprinkle some of it with his finger seven times before the mercy seat.

Aaron shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and bring its blood behind the veil, and with its blood he must do as he did with the bull's blood: He is to sprinkle it against the mercy seat and in front of it.

So he shall make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the impurities and rebellious acts of the Israelites in regard to all their sins. He is to do the same for the Tent of Meeting which abides among them in the midst of their impurities. No one may be in the Tent of Meeting from the time Aaron goes in to make atonement in the Most Holy Place until he leaves, after he has made atonement for himself, his household, and the whole assembly of Israel.

Then he shall go out to the altar that is before the LORD and make atonement for it. He is to take some of the bull's blood and some of the goat's blood and put it on all the horns of the altar. He is to sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times to cleanse it and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the Israelites.

When Aaron has finished purifying the Most Holy Place, the Tent of Meeting, and the altar, he is to bring forward the live goat. Then he is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the iniquities and rebellious acts of the Israelites in regard to all their sins. He is to put them on the goat's head and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man appointed for the task. The goat will carry on itself all their iniquities into a solitary place, and the man will release it into the wilderness.

Then Aaron is to enter the Tent of Meeting, take off the linen garments he put on before entering the Most Holy Place, and leave them there. He is to bathe himself with water in a holy place and put on his own clothes. Then he must go out and sacrifice his burnt offering and the people's burnt offering to make atonement for himself and for the people. He is also to burn the fat of the sin offering on the altar.

The man who released the goat as the scapegoat must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water; afterward he may reenter the camp.

The bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought into the Most Holy Place to make atonement, must be taken outside the camp; and their hides, flesh, and dung must be burned up. The one who burns them must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water, and afterward he may reenter the camp.

This is to be a permanent statute for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month, you shall humble yourselves and not do any work — whether the native or the foreigner who resides among you — because on this day atonement will be made for you to cleanse you, and you will be clean from all your sins before the LORD. It is a Sabbath of complete rest for you, that you may humble yourselves; it is a permanent statute.

The priest who is anointed and ordained to succeed his father as high priest shall make atonement. He will put on the sacred linen garments and make atonement for the Most Holy Place, the Tent of Meeting, and the altar, and for the priests and all the people of the assembly. This is to be a permanent statute for you, to make atonement once a year for the Israelites because of all their sins."

And all this was done as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to Aaron, his sons, and all the Israelites and tell them this is what the LORD has commanded: 'Anyone from the house of Israel who slaughters an ox, a lamb, or a goat in the camp or outside of it instead of bringing it to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting to present it as an offering to the LORD before His tabernacle— that man shall incur bloodguilt. He has shed blood and must be cut off from among his people.

For this reason the Israelites will bring to the LORD the sacrifices they have been offering in the open fields. They are to bring them to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and offer them as sacrifices of peace offerings to the LORD. The priest will then splatter the blood on the altar of the LORD at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and burn the fat as a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

They must no longer offer their sacrifices to the goat demons to which they have prostituted themselves. This will be a permanent statute for them for the generations to come.'

Tell them that if anyone from the house of Israel or any foreigner living among them offers a burnt offering or a sacrifice but does not bring it to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting to sacrifice it to the LORD, that man must be cut off from his people.

If anyone from the house of Israel or a foreigner living among them eats any blood, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for your souls upon the altar; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul. Therefore I say to the Israelites, 'None of you may eat blood, nor may any foreigner living among you eat blood.'

And if any Israelite or foreigner living among them hunts down a wild animal or bird that may be eaten, he must drain its blood and cover it with dirt. For the life of all flesh is its blood. Therefore I have told the Israelites, 'You must not eat the blood of any living thing, because the life of all flesh is its blood; whoever eats it must be cut off.'

And any person, whether native or foreigner, who eats anything found dead or mauled by wild beasts must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will

be unclean until evening; then he will be clean. But if he does not wash his clothes and bathe himself, then he shall bear his iniquity."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and tell them: I am the LORD your God. You must not follow the practices of the land of Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not follow the practices of the land of Canaan, into which I am bringing you. You must not walk in their customs.

You are to practice My judgments and keep My statutes by walking in them. I am the LORD your God. Keep My statutes and My judgments, for the man who does these things will live by them. I am the LORD.

None of you are to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the LORD.

You must not expose the nakedness of your father by having sexual relations with your mother. She is your mother; you must not have sexual relations with her.

You must not have sexual relations with your father's wife; it would dishonor your father.

You must not have sexual relations with your sister, either your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether she was born in the same home or elsewhere.

You must not have sexual relations with your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter, for that would shame your family.

You must not have sexual relations with the daughter of your father's wife, born to your father; she is your sister.

You must not have sexual relations with your father's sister; she is your father's close relative.

You must not have sexual relations with your mother's sister, for she is your mother's close relative.

You must not dishonor your father's brother by approaching his wife to have sexual relations with her; she is your aunt.

You must not have sexual relations with your daughter-in-law. She is your son's wife; you are not to have sexual relations with her.

You must not have sexual relations with your brother's wife; that would shame your brother.

You must not have sexual relations with both a woman and her daughter. You are not to marry her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter and have sexual relations with her. They are close relatives; it is depraved.

You must not take your wife's sister as a rival wife and have sexual relations with her while your wife is still alive.

You must not approach a woman to have sexual relations with her during her menstrual period.

You must not lie carnally with your neighbor's wife and thus defile yourself with her.

You must not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.

You must not lie with a man as with a woman; that is an abomination.

You must not lie carnally with any animal, thus defiling yourself with it; a woman must not stand before an animal to mate with it; that is a perversion.

Do not defile yourselves by any of these practices, for by all these things the nations I am driving out before you have defiled themselves. Even the land has become defiled, so I am punishing it for its sin, and the land will vomit out its inhabitants.

But you are to keep My statutes and ordinances, and you must not commit any of these abominations — neither your native-born nor the foreigner who lives among you. For the men who were in the land before you committed all these abominations, and the land has become defiled. So if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it spewed out the nations before you.

Therefore anyone who commits any of these abominations must be cut off from among his people. You must keep My charge not to practice any of the abominable customs that were practiced before you, so that you do not defile yourselves by them. I am the LORD your God."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the whole congregation of Israel and tell them: Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.

Each of you must respect his mother and father, and you must keep My Sabbaths. I am the LORD your God.

Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves molten gods. I am the LORD your God.

When you sacrifice a peace offering to the LORD, you shall offer it for your acceptance. It shall be eaten on the day you sacrifice it, or on the next day; but what remains on the third day must be burned up. If any of it is eaten on the third day, it is tainted and will not be accepted. Whoever eats it will bear his iniquity, for he has profaned what is holy to the LORD. That person must be cut off from his people.

When you reap the harvest of your land, you are not to reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You must not strip your vineyard bare or gather its fallen grapes. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the LORD your God.

You must not steal. You must not lie or deceive one another.

You must not swear falsely by My name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.

You must not defraud your neighbor or rob him.

You must not withhold until morning the wages due a hired hand.

You must not curse the deaf or place a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God. I am the LORD.

You must not pervert justice; you must not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the rich; you are to judge your neighbor fairly.

You must not go about spreading slander among your people.

You must not endanger the life of your neighbor. I am the LORD.

You must not harbor hatred against your brother in your heart. Directly rebuke your neighbor, so that you will not incur guilt on account of him. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against any of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

You are to keep My statutes. You shall not cross-breed two different kinds of livestock; you shall not sow

your fields with two kinds of seed; and you shall not wear clothing made of two kinds of material.

If a man lies carnally with a slave girl promised to another man but who has not been redeemed or given her freedom, there must be due punishment. But they are not to be put to death, because she had not been freed. The man, however, must bring a ram to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting as his guilt offering to the LORD. The priest shall make atonement on his behalf before the LORD with the ram of the guilt offering for the sin he has committed, and he will be forgiven the sin he has committed.

When you enter the land and plant any kind of tree for food, you shall regard the fruit as forbidden. For three years it will be forbidden to you and must not be eaten. In the fourth year all its fruit must be consecrated as a praise offering to the LORD. But in the fifth year you may eat its fruit; thus your harvest will be increased. I am the LORD your God.

You must not eat anything with blood still in it.

You must not practice divination or sorcery.

You must not cut off the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard.

You must not make any cuts in your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the LORD.

You must not defile your daughter by making her a prostitute, or the land will be prostituted and filled with depravity.

You must keep My Sabbaths and have reverence for My sanctuary. I am the LORD.

You must not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out, or you will be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God.

You are to rise in the presence of the elderly, honor the aged, and fear your God. I am the LORD.

When a foreigner resides with you in your land, you must not oppress him. You must treat the foreigner living among you as native-born and love him as yourself, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

You must not use dishonest measures of length, weight, or volume. You shall maintain honest scales and weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

You must keep all My statutes and all My ordinances and follow them. I am the LORD."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites, 'Any Israelite or foreigner living in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech must be put to death. The people of the land are to stone him. And I will set My face against that man and cut him off from his people, because by giving his offspring to Molech, he has defiled My sanctuary and profaned My holy name.

And if the people of the land ever hide their eyes and fail to put to death the man who gives one of his children to Molech, then I will set My face against that man and his family and cut off from among their people both him and all who follow him in prostituting themselves with Molech.

Whoever turns to mediums or spiritists to prostitute himself with them, I will also set My face against that person and cut him off from his people.

Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy, because I am the LORD your God. And you shall keep My statutes and practice them. I am the LORD who sanctifies you.

If anyone curses his father or mother, he must be put to death. He has cursed his father or mother; his blood shall be upon him.

If a man commits adultery with another man's wife — with the wife of his neighbor— both the adulterer and the adulteress must surely be put to death.

If a man lies with his father's wife, he has uncovered his father's nakedness. Both must surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both must surely be put to death. They have acted perversely; their blood is upon them.

If a man lies with a man as with a woman, they have both committed an abomination. They must surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

If a man marries both a woman and her mother, it is depraved. Both he and they must be burned in the fire, so that there will be no depravity among you.

If a man lies carnally with an animal, he must be put to death. And you are also to kill the animal.

If a woman approaches any animal to mate with it, you must kill both the woman and the animal. They must surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

If a man marries his sister, whether the daughter of his father or of his mother, and they have sexual relations, it is a disgrace. They must be cut off in the sight of their people. He has uncovered the nakedness of his sister; he shall bear his iniquity.

If a man lies with a menstruating woman and has sexual relations with her, he has exposed the source of her flow, and she has uncovered the source of her blood. Both of them must be cut off from among their people.

You must not have sexual relations with the sister of your mother or your father, for it is exposing one's own kin; both shall bear their iniquity.

If a man lies with his uncle's wife, he has uncovered the nakedness of his uncle. They will bear their sin; they shall die childless.

If a man marries his brother's wife, it is an act of impurity. He has uncovered the nakedness of his brother; they shall be childless.

You are therefore to keep all My statutes and ordinances, so that the land where I am bringing you to live will not vomit you out. You must not follow the statutes of the nations I am driving out before you. Because they did all these things, I abhorred them.

But I have told you that you will inherit their land, since I will give it to you as an inheritance — a land flowing with milk and honey. I am the LORD your God, who has set you apart from the peoples.

You are therefore to distinguish between clean and unclean animals and birds. Do not become contaminated by any animal or bird, or by anything that crawls on the ground; I have set these apart as unclean for you. You are to be holy to Me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be My own.

A man or a woman who is a medium or spiritist must surely be put to death. They shall be stoned; their blood is upon them.'"

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Speak to Aaron’s sons, the priests, and tell them that a priest is not to defile himself for a dead person among his people, except for his immediate family — his mother, father, son, daughter, or brother, or his unmarried sister who is near to him, since she has no husband. He is not to defile himself for those related to him by marriage, and so profane himself.

Priests must not make bald spots on their heads, shave off the edges of their beards, or make cuts in their bodies. They must be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God. Because they present to the LORD the food offerings, the food of their God, they must be holy.

A priest must not marry a woman defiled by prostitution or divorced by her husband, for the priest is holy to his God. You are to regard him as holy, since he presents the food of your God. He shall be holy to you, because I the LORD am holy — I who set you apart. If a priest’s daughter defiles herself by prostituting herself, she profanes her father; she must be burned in the fire.

The priest who is highest among his brothers, who has had the anointing oil poured on his head and has been ordained to wear the priestly garments, must not let his hair hang loose or tear his garments. He must not go near any dead body; he must not defile himself, even for his father or mother. He must not leave or desecrate the sanctuary of his God, for the consecration of the anointing oil of his God is on him. I am the LORD.

The woman he marries must be a virgin. He is not to marry a widow, a divorced woman, or one defiled by prostitution. He is to marry a virgin from his own people, so that he does not defile his offspring among his people, for I am the LORD who sanctifies him.”

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘For the generations to come, none of your descendants who has a physical defect may approach to offer the food of his God.

No man who has any defect may approach — no man who is blind, lame, disfigured, or deformed; no man who has a broken foot or hand, or who is a hunchback or dwarf, or who has an eye defect, a festering rash, scabs, or a crushed testicle.

No descendant of Aaron the priest who has a defect shall approach to present the food offerings to the LORD. Since he has a defect, he is not to come near to offer the food of his God. He may eat the most holy food of his God as well as the holy food, but because he has a defect, he must not go near the veil or approach the altar, so as not to desecrate My sanctuaries. For I am the LORD who sanctifies them.’”

Moses told this to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites.

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron and his sons to treat with respect the sacred offerings that the Israelites have consecrated to Me, so that they do not profane My holy name. I am the LORD.

Tell them that for the generations to come, if any of their descendants in a state of uncleanness approaches the sacred offerings that the Israelites consecrate to the LORD, that person must be cut off from My presence. I am the LORD.

If a descendant of Aaron has a skin disease or a discharge, he may not eat the sacred offerings until he is clean. Whoever touches anything defiled by a corpse or by a man who has an emission of semen, or whoever touches a crawling creature or a person that makes him unclean, whatever the uncleanness may be — the man who touches any of these will remain unclean until evening. He must not eat from the sacred offerings unless he has bathed himself with water.

When the sun has set, he will become clean, and then he may eat from the sacred offerings, for they are his food. He must not eat anything found dead or torn by wild animals, which would make him unclean. I am the LORD. The priests must keep My charge, lest they bear the guilt and die because they profane it. I am the LORD who sanctifies them.

No one outside a priest’s family may eat the sacred offering, nor may the guest of a priest or his hired hand eat it. But if a priest buys a slave with his own money, or if a slave is born in his household, that slave may eat his food.

If the priest’s daughter is married to a man other than a priest, she is not to eat of the sacred contributions. But if a priest’s daughter with no children becomes widowed or divorced and returns to her father’s house, she may share her father’s food as in her youth. But no outsider may share it.

If anyone eats a sacred offering in error, he must add a fifth to its value and give the sacred offering to the priest. The priests must not profane the sacred offerings that the Israelites present to the LORD by allowing the people to eat the sacred offerings and thus to bear the punishment for guilt. For I am the LORD who sanctifies them.”

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Speak to Aaron and his sons and all the Israelites and tell them, ‘Any man of the house of Israel or any foreign resident who presents a gift for a burnt offering to the LORD, whether to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering, must offer an unblemished male from the cattle, sheep, or goats in order for it to be accepted on your behalf. You must not present anything with a defect, because it will not be accepted on your behalf.

When a man presents a peace offering to the LORD from the herd or flock to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering, it must be without blemish or defect to be acceptable. You are not to present to the LORD any animal that is blind, injured, or maimed, or anything with a running sore, a festering rash, or a scab; you must not put any of these on the altar as a food offering to the LORD.

You may present as a freewill offering an ox or sheep that has a deformed or stunted limb, but it is not acceptable in fulfillment of a vow. You are not to present to the LORD an animal whose testicles are bruised, crushed, torn, or cut; you are not to sacrifice them in your land. Neither you nor a foreigner shall present food to your God from any such animal. They will not be accepted on your behalf, because they are deformed and flawed.’”

Then the LORD said to Moses, “When an ox, a sheep, or a goat is born, it must remain with its mother for seven days. From the eighth day on, it will be accept-

able as a food offering presented to the LORD. But you must not slaughter an ox or a sheep on the same day as its young.

When you sacrifice a thank offering to the LORD, offer it so that it may be acceptable on your behalf. It must be eaten that same day. Do not leave any of it until morning. I am the LORD.

You are to keep My commandments and practice them. I am the LORD. You must not profane My holy name. I must be acknowledged as holy among the Israelites. I am the LORD who sanctifies you, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God. I am the LORD."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them, 'These are My appointed feasts, the feasts of the LORD that you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies.

For six days work may be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of complete rest, a day of sacred assembly. You must not do any work; wherever you live, it is a Sabbath to the LORD.

These are the LORD's appointed feasts, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times. The Passover to the LORD begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. On the fifteenth day of the same month begins the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD. For seven days you must eat unleavened bread. On the first day you are to hold a sacred assembly; you are not to do any regular work. For seven days you are to present a food offering to the LORD. On the seventh day there shall be a sacred assembly; you must not do any regular work.'"

And the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and say, 'When you enter the land that I am giving you and you reap its harvest, you are to bring to the priest a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest. And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD so that it may be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath.

On the day you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a year-old lamb without blemish as a burnt offering to the LORD, along with its grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil — a food offering to the LORD, a pleasing aroma — and its drink offering of a quarter hin of wine.

You must not eat any bread or roasted or new grain until the very day you have brought this offering to your God. This is to be a permanent statute for the generations to come, wherever you live.

From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, you are to count off seven full weeks. You shall count off fifty days until the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the LORD.

Bring two loaves of bread from your dwellings as a wave offering, each made from two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour, baked with leaven, as the firstfruits to the LORD.

Along with the bread you are to present seven unblemished male lambs a year old, one young bull, and two rams. They will be a burnt offering to the LORD, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings — a food offering, a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

You shall also prepare one male goat as a sin offering and two male lambs a year old as a peace offering. The priest is to wave the lambs as a wave offering before the LORD, together with the bread of the firstfruits. The bread and the two lambs shall be holy to the LORD for the priest.

On that same day you are to proclaim a sacred assembly, and you must not do any regular work. This is to be a permanent statute wherever you live for the generations to come.

When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap all the way to the edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and the foreign resident. I am the LORD your God.'"

The LORD also said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and say, 'On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of rest, a sacred assembly announced by trumpet blasts. You must not do any regular work, but you are to present a food offering to the LORD.'"

Again the LORD said to Moses, "The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. You shall hold a sacred assembly and humble yourselves, and present a food offering to the LORD.

On this day you are not to do any work, for it is the Day of Atonement, when atonement is made for you before the LORD your God. If anyone does not humble himself on this day, he must be cut off from his people. I will destroy from among his people anyone who does any work on this day.

You are not to do any work at all. This is a permanent statute for the generations to come, wherever you live. It will be a Sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall humble yourselves. From the evening of the ninth day of the month until the following evening you are to keep your Sabbath."

And the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and say, 'On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the Feast of Tabernacles to the LORD begins, and it continues for seven days. On the first day there shall be a sacred assembly. You must not do any regular work. For seven days you are to present a food offering to the LORD. On the eighth day you are to hold a sacred assembly and present a food offering to the LORD. It is a solemn assembly; you must not do any regular work.

These are the LORD's appointed feasts, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies for presenting food offerings to the LORD — burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its designated day. These offerings are in addition to the offerings for the LORD's Sabbaths, and in addition to your gifts, to all your vow offerings, and to all the freewill offerings you give to the LORD.

On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the produce of the land, you are to celebrate a feast to the LORD for seven days. There shall be complete rest on the first day and also on the eighth day.

On the first day you are to gather the fruit of majestic trees, the branches of palm trees, and the boughs of leafy trees and of willows of the brook. And you are to rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. You are to celebrate this as a feast to the LORD for

seven days each year. This is a permanent statute for the generations to come; you are to celebrate it in the seventh month.

You are to dwell in booths for seven days. All the native-born of Israel must dwell in booths, so that your descendants may know that I made the Israelites dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.'"

So Moses announced to the Israelites the appointed feasts of the LORD.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Command the Israelites to bring you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to keep the lamps burning continually.

Outside the veil of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, Aaron is to tend the lamps continually before the LORD from evening until morning. This is to be a permanent statute for the generations to come. He shall tend the lamps on the pure gold lampstand before the LORD continually.

You are also to take fine flour and bake twelve loaves, using two-tenths of an ephah for each loaf, and set them in two rows — six per row — on the table of pure gold before the LORD. And you are to place pure frankincense near each row, so that it may serve as a memorial portion for the bread, a food offering to the LORD.

Every Sabbath day the bread is to be set out before the LORD on behalf of the Israelites as a permanent covenant. It belongs to Aaron and his sons, who are to eat it in a holy place; for it is to him a most holy part of the food offerings to the LORD — his portion forever."

Now the son of an Israelite mother and an Egyptian father went out among the Israelites, and a fight broke out in the camp between him and an Israelite. The son of the Israelite woman blasphemed the Name with a curse. So they brought him to Moses. (His mother's name was Shelomith daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan.)

They placed him in custody until the will of the LORD should be made clear to them.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take the blasphemer outside the camp, and have all who heard him lay their hands on his head; then have the whole assembly stone him.

And you are to tell the Israelites, 'If anyone curses his God, he shall bear the consequences of his sin. Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD must surely be put to death; the whole assembly must surely stone him, whether he is a foreign resident or native; if he blasphemes the Name, he must be put to death.

And if a man takes the life of anyone else, he must surely be put to death. Whoever kills an animal must make restitution — life for life. If anyone injures his neighbor, whatever he has done must be done to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. Just as he injured the other person, the same must be inflicted on him.

Whoever kills an animal must make restitution, but whoever kills a man must be put to death. You are to have the same standard of law for the foreign resident and the native; for I am the LORD your God.'"

Then Moses spoke to the Israelites, and they took the blasphemer outside the camp and stoned him. So the Israelites did as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Then the LORD said to Moses on Mount Sinai, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you, the land itself must observe a Sabbath to the LORD.

For six years you may sow your field and prune your vineyard and gather its crops. But in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of complete rest for the land — a Sabbath to the LORD.

You are not to sow your field or prune your vineyard. You are not to reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your untended vines. The land must have a year of complete rest. Whatever the land yields during the Sabbath year shall be food for you— for yourself, your manservant and maidservant, the hired hand or foreigner who stays with you, and for your livestock and the wild animals in your land. All its growth may serve as food.

And you shall count off seven Sabbaths of years — seven times seven years — so that the seven Sabbaths of years amount to forty-nine years. Then you are to sound the horn far and wide on the tenth day of the seventh month, the Day of Atonement. You shall sound it throughout your land.

So you are to consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty in the land for all its inhabitants. It shall be your Jubilee, when each of you is to return to his property and to his clan.

The fiftieth year will be a Jubilee for you; you are not to sow the land or reap its aftergrowth or harvest the untended vines. For it is a Jubilee; it shall be holy to you. You may eat only the crops taken directly from the field.

In this Year of Jubilee, each of you shall return to his own property.

If you make a sale to your neighbor or a purchase from him, you must not take advantage of each other. You are to buy from your neighbor according to the number of years since the last Jubilee; he is to sell to you according to the number of harvest years remaining. You shall increase the price in proportion to a greater number of years, or decrease it in proportion to a lesser number of years; for he is selling you a given number of harvests.

Do not take advantage of each other, but fear your God; for I am the LORD your God.

You are to keep My statutes and carefully observe My judgments, so that you may dwell securely in the land. Then the land will yield its fruit, so that you can eat your fill and dwell in safety in the land.

Now you may wonder, 'What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not sow or gather our produce?' But I will send My blessing upon you in the sixth year, so that the land will yield a crop sufficient for three years. While you are sowing in the eighth year, you will be eating from the previous harvest, until the ninth year's harvest comes in.

The land must not be sold permanently, because it is Mine, and you are but foreigners and residents with Me. Thus for every piece of property you possess, you must provide for the redemption of the land.

If your brother becomes impoverished and sells some of his property, his nearest of kin may come and redeem what his brother has sold. Or if a man has no

one to redeem it for him, but he prospers and acquires enough to redeem his land, he shall calculate the years since its sale, repay the balance to the man to whom he sold it, and return to his property. But if he cannot obtain enough to repay him, what he sold will remain in possession of the buyer until the Year of Jubilee. In the Jubilee, however, it is to be released, so that he may return to his property.

If a man sells a house in a walled city, he retains his right of redemption until a full year after its sale; during that year it may be redeemed. If it is not redeemed by the end of a full year, then the house in the walled city is permanently transferred to its buyer and his descendants. It is not to be released in the Jubilee. But houses in villages with no walls around them are to be considered as open fields. They may be redeemed, and they shall be released in the Jubilee.

As for the cities of the Levites, the Levites always have the right to redeem their houses in the cities they possess. So whatever belongs to the Levites may be redeemed— a house sold in a city they possess— and must be released in the Jubilee, because the houses in the cities of the Levites are their possession among the Israelites. But the open pastureland around their cities may not be sold, for this is their permanent possession.

Now if your countryman becomes destitute and cannot support himself among you, then you are to help him as you would a foreigner or stranger, so that he can continue to live among you. Do not take any interest or profit from him, but fear your God, that your countryman may live among you. You must not lend him your silver at interest or sell him your food for profit. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God.

If a countryman among you becomes destitute and sells himself to you, then you must not force him into slave labor. Let him stay with you as a hired worker or temporary resident; he is to work for you until the Year of Jubilee. Then he and his children are to be released, and he may return to his clan and to the property of his fathers.

Because the Israelites are My servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt, they are not to be sold as slaves. You are not to rule over them harshly, but you shall fear your God.

Your menservants and maidservants shall come from the nations around you, from whom you may purchase them. You may also purchase them from the foreigners residing among you or their clans living among you who are born in your land. These may become your property. You may leave them to your sons after you to inherit as property; you can make them slaves for life. But as for your brothers, the Israelites, no man may rule harshly over his brother.

If a foreigner residing among you prospers, but your countryman dwelling near him becomes destitute and sells himself to the foreigner or to a member of his clan, he retains the right of redemption after he has sold himself. One of his brothers may redeem him: either his uncle or cousin or any close relative from his clan may redeem him. Or if he prospers, he may redeem himself.

He and his purchaser will then count the time from the year he sold himself up to the Year of Jubilee. The price of his sale will be determined by the number of years, based on the daily wages of a hired hand. If many years remain, he must pay for his redemption in proportion to his purchase price. If only a few years remain until the Year of Jubilee, he is to calculate and pay his redemption according to his remaining years. He shall be treated like a man hired from year to year, but a foreign owner must not rule over him harshly in your sight.

Even if he is not redeemed in any of these ways, he and his children shall be released in the Year of Jubilee. For the Israelites are My servants. They are My servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.”

“You must not make idols for yourselves or set up a carved image or sacred pillar; you must not place a sculpted stone in your land to bow down to it. For I am the LORD your God.

You must keep My Sabbaths and have reverence for My sanctuary. I am the LORD.

If you follow My statutes and carefully keep My commandments, I will give you rains in their season, and the land will yield its produce, and the trees of the field will bear their fruit. Your threshing will continue until the grape harvest, and the grape harvest will continue until sowing time; you will have your fill of food to eat and will dwell securely in your land.

And I will give peace to the land, and you will lie down with nothing to fear. I will rid the land of dangerous animals, and no sword will pass through your land. You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall by the sword before you. Five of you will pursue a hundred, and a hundred of you will pursue ten thousand, and your enemies will fall by the sword before you.

I will turn toward you and make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will establish My covenant with you. You will still be eating the old supply of grain when you need to clear it out to make room for the new.

And I will make My dwelling place among you, and My soul will not despise you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be My people. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt so that you would no longer be slaves to the Egyptians. I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to walk in uprightness.

If, however, you fail to obey Me and to carry out all these commandments, and if you reject My statutes, despise My ordinances, and neglect to carry out all My commandments, and so break My covenant, then this is what I will do to you: I will bring upon you sudden terror, wasting disease, and fever that will destroy your sight and drain your life. You will sow your seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it. And I will set My face against you, so that you will be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee when no one pursues you.

And if after all this you will not obey Me, I will proceed to punish you sevenfold for your sins. I will break down your stubborn pride and make your sky like iron and your land like bronze, and your strength will be spent in vain. For your land will not yield its produce, and the trees of the land will not bear their fruit.

If you walk in hostility toward Me and refuse to obey Me, I will multiply your plagues seven times, according to your sins. I will send wild animals against you to rob you of your children, destroy your livestock, and reduce your numbers, until your roads lie desolate.

And if in spite of these things you do not accept My discipline, but continue to walk in hostility toward Me, then I will act with hostility toward you, and I will strike you sevenfold for your sins. And I will bring a sword against you to execute the vengeance of the covenant. Though you withdraw into your cities, I will send a plague among you, and you will be delivered into the hand of the enemy. When I cut off your supply of bread, ten women will bake your bread in a single oven and dole out your bread by weight, so that you will eat but not be satisfied.

But if in spite of all this you do not obey Me, but continue to walk in hostility toward Me, then I will walk in fury against you, and I, even I, will punish you sevenfold for your sins. You will eat the flesh of your own sons and daughters. I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars, and heap your lifeless bodies on the lifeless remains of your idols; and My soul will despise you.

I will reduce your cities to rubble and lay waste your sanctuaries, and I will refuse to smell the pleasing aroma of your sacrifices. And I will lay waste the land, so that your enemies who dwell in it will be appalled. But I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out a sword after you as your land becomes desolate and your cities are laid waste.

Then the land shall enjoy its Sabbaths all the days it lies desolate, while you are in the land of your enemies. At that time the land will rest and enjoy its Sabbaths. As long as it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not receive during the Sabbaths when you lived in it.

As for those of you who survive, I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies, so that even the sound of a windblown leaf will put them to flight. And they will flee as one flees the sword, and fall when no one pursues them. They will stumble over one another as before the sword, though no one is behind them. So you will not be able to stand against your enemies.

You will perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies will consume you. Those of you who survive in the lands of your enemies will waste away in their iniquity and will decay in the sins of their fathers.

But if they will confess their iniquity and that of their fathers in the unfaithfulness that they practiced against Me, by which they have also walked in hostility toward Me— and I acted with hostility toward them and brought them into the land of their enemies— and if their uncircumcised hearts will be humbled and they will make amends for their iniquity, then I will remember My covenant with Jacob and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land.

For the land will be abandoned by them, and it will enjoy its Sabbaths by lying desolate without them. And they will pay the penalty for their iniquity, because they rejected My ordinances and abhorred My statutes.

Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject or despise them so as to destroy them and break My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God. But for their sake I will remember the covenant with their fathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the LORD."

These are the statutes, ordinances, and laws that the LORD established between Himself and the Israelites through Moses on Mount Sinai.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them, 'When someone makes a special vow to the LORD involving the value of persons, if the valuation concerns a male from twenty to sixty years of age, then your valuation shall be fifty shekels of silver, according to the sanctuary shekel. Or if it is a female, then your valuation shall be thirty shekels. And if the person is from five to twenty years of age, then your valuation for the male shall be twenty shekels, and for the female ten shekels.

Now if the person is from one month to five years of age, then your valuation for the male shall be five shekels of silver, and for the female three shekels of silver. And if the person is sixty years of age or older, then your valuation shall be fifteen shekels for the male and ten shekels for the female. But if the one making the vow is too poor to pay the valuation, he is to present the person before the priest, who shall set the value according to what the one making the vow can afford.

If he vows an animal that may be brought as an offering to the LORD, any such animal given to the LORD shall be holy. He must not replace it or exchange it, either good for bad or bad for good. But if he does substitute one animal for another, both that animal and its substitute will be holy.

But if the vow involves any of the unclean animals that may not be brought as an offering to the LORD, the animal must be presented before the priest. The priest shall set its value, whether high or low; as the priest values it, the price will be set. If, however, the owner decides to redeem the animal, he must add a fifth to its value.

Now if a man consecrates his house as holy to the LORD, then the priest shall value it either as good or bad. The price will stand just as the priest values it. But if he who consecrated his house redeems it, he must add a fifth to the assessed value, and it will belong to him.

If a man consecrates to the LORD a parcel of his land, then your valuation shall be proportional to the seed required for it — fifty shekels of silver for every homer of barley seed. If he consecrates his field during the Year of Jubilee, the price will stand according to your valuation.

But if he consecrates his field after the Jubilee, the priest is to calculate the price in proportion to the years left until the next Year of Jubilee, so that your valuation will be reduced. And if the one who consecrated the field decides to redeem it, he must add a fifth to the assessed value, and it shall belong to him.

If, however, he does not redeem the field, or if he has sold it to another man, it may no longer be redeemed. When the field is released in the Jubilee, it

will become holy, like a field devoted to the LORD; it becomes the property of the priests.

Now if a man consecrates to the LORD a field he has purchased, which is not a part of his own property, then the priest shall calculate for him the value up to the Year of Jubilee, and the man shall pay the assessed value on that day as a sacred offering to the LORD. In the Year of Jubilee the field shall return to the one from whom it was bought — the original owner of the land. Every valuation will be according to the sanctuary shekel, twenty gerahs to the shekel.

But no one may consecrate a firstborn of the livestock, because a firstborn belongs to the LORD. Whether it is an ox or a sheep, it is the LORD's. But if it is among the unclean animals, then he may redeem it according to your valuation and add a fifth of its value. If it is not redeemed, then it shall be sold according to your valuation.

Nothing that a man sets apart to the LORD from all he owns — whether a man, an animal, or his inherited land — can be sold or redeemed; everything so devoted is most holy to the LORD.

No person set apart for destruction may be ransomed; he must surely be put to death.

Thus any tithe from the land, whether from the seed of the land or the fruit of the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. If a man wishes to redeem part of his tithe, he must add a fifth to its value.

Every tenth animal from the herd or flock that passes under the shepherd's rod will be holy to the LORD. He must not inspect whether it is good or bad, and he shall not make any substitution. But if he does make a substitution, both the animal and its substitute shall become holy; they cannot be redeemed.'"

These are the commandments that the LORD gave to Moses for the Israelites on Mount Sinai.

Numbers

Book of Numbers

On the first day of the second month of the second year after the Israelites had come out of the land of Egypt, the LORD spoke to Moses in the Tent of Meeting in the Wilderness of Sinai. He said: “Take a census of the whole congregation of Israel by their clans and families, listing every man by name, one by one.

You and Aaron are to number those who are twenty years of age or older by their divisions— everyone who can serve in Israel’s army. And one man from each tribe, the head of each family, must be there with you.

These are the names of the men who are to assist you:

From the tribe of Reuben, Elizur son of Shedeur;
from Simeon, Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai;
from Judah, Nahshon son of Amminadab;
from Issachar, Nethanel son of Zuar;
from Zebulun, Eliab son of Helon;
from the sons of Joseph:
from Ephraim, Elishama son of Ammihud,
and from Manasseh, Gamaliel son of Pedahzur;
from Benjamin, Abidan son of Gideoni;
from Dan, Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai;
from Asher, Pagiel son of Ocran;
from Gad, Eliasaph son of Deuel;
and from Naphtali, Ahira son of Enan.”

These men were appointed from the congregation; they were the leaders of the tribes of their fathers, the heads of the clans of Israel.

So Moses and Aaron took these men who had been designated by name, and on the first day of the second month they assembled the whole congregation and recorded their ancestry by clans and families, counting one by one the names of those twenty years of age or older, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

So Moses numbered them in the Wilderness of Sinai:

From the sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel, according to the records of their clans and families, counting one by one the names of every male twenty years of age or older who could serve in the army, those registered to the tribe of Reuben numbered 46,500.

From the sons of Simeon, according to the records of their clans and families, counting one by one the names of every male twenty years of age or older who could serve in the army, those registered to the tribe of Simeon numbered 59,300.

From the sons of Gad, according to the records of their clans and families, counting the names of all those twenty years of age or older who could serve in the army, those registered to the tribe of Gad numbered 45,650.

From the sons of Judah, according to the records of their clans and families, counting the names of all those twenty years of age or older who could serve in the army, those registered to the tribe of Judah numbered 74,600.

From the sons of Issachar, according to the records of their clans and families, counting the names of all those twenty years of age or older who could serve in the army, those registered to the tribe of Issachar numbered 54,400.

From the sons of Zebulun, according to the records of their clans and families, counting the names of all those twenty years of age or older who could serve in the army, those registered to the tribe of Zebulun numbered 57,400.

From the sons of Joseph:

From the sons of Ephraim, according to the records of their clans and families, counting the names of all those twenty years of age or older who could serve in the army, those registered to the tribe of Ephraim numbered 40,500.

And from the sons of Manasseh, according to the records of their clans and families, counting the names of all those twenty years of age or older who could serve in the army, those registered to the tribe of Manasseh numbered 32,200.

From the sons of Benjamin, according to the records of their clans and families, counting the names of all those twenty years of age or older who could serve in the army, those registered to the tribe of Benjamin numbered 35,400.

From the sons of Dan, according to the records of their clans and families, counting the names of all those twenty years of age or older who could serve in the army, those registered to the tribe of Dan numbered 62,700.

From the sons of Asher, according to the records of their clans and families, counting the names of all those twenty years of age or older who could serve in the army, those registered to the tribe of Asher numbered 41,500.

From the sons of Naphtali, according to the records of their clans and families, counting the names of all those twenty years of age or older who could serve in the army, those registered to the tribe of Naphtali numbered 53,400.

These were the men numbered by Moses and Aaron, with the assistance of the twelve leaders of Israel, each one representing his family. So all the Israelites twenty years of age or older who could serve in Israel’s army were counted according to their families. And all those counted totaled 603,550.

The Levites, however, were not numbered along with them by the tribe of their fathers. For the LORD had said to Moses: “Do not number the tribe of Levi in the census with the other Israelites. Instead, you are to appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the Testimony, all its furnishings, and everything in it. They shall carry the tabernacle and all its articles, care for it, and camp around it.

Whenever the tabernacle is to move, the Levites are to take it down, and whenever it is to be pitched, the Levites are to set it up. Any outsider who goes near it must be put to death.

The Israelites are to camp by their divisions, each man in his own camp and under his own standard. But

the Levites are to camp around the tabernacle of the Testimony and watch over it, so that no wrath will fall on the congregation of Israel. So the Levites are responsible for the tabernacle of the Testimony."

Thus the Israelites did everything just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron: "The Israelites are to camp around the Tent of Meeting at a distance from it, each man under his standard, with the banners of his family.

On the east side, toward the sunrise, the divisions of Judah are to camp under their standard:

The leader of the Judahites is Nahshon son of Amminadab, and his division numbers 74,600.

The tribe of Issachar will camp next to it. The leader of the Issacharites is Nethanel son of Zuar, and his division numbers 54,400.

Next will be the tribe of Zebulun. The leader of the Zebulunites is Eliab son of Helon, and his division numbers 57,400.

The total number of men in the divisions of the camp of Judah is 186,400; they shall set out first.

On the south side, the divisions of Reuben are to camp under their standard:

The leader of the Reubenites is Elizur son of Shedeur, and his division numbers 46,500.

The tribe of Simeon will camp next to it. The leader of the Simeonites is Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, and his division numbers 59,300.

Next will be the tribe of Gad. The leader of the Gadites is Eliasaph son of Deuel, and his division numbers 45,650.

The total number of men in the divisions of the camp of Reuben is 151,450; they shall set out second.

In the middle of the camps, the Tent of Meeting is to travel with the camp of the Levites. They are to set out in the order they encamped, each in his own place under his standard.

On the west side, the divisions of Ephraim are to camp under their standard:

The leader of the Ephraimites is Elishama son of Ammihud, and his division numbers 40,500.

The tribe of Manasseh will be next to it. The leader of the Manassites is Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, and his division numbers 32,200.

Next will be the tribe of Benjamin. The leader of the Benjamites is Abidan son of Gideoni, and his division numbers 35,400.

The total number of men in the divisions of the camp of Ephraim is 108,100; they shall set out third.

On the north side, the divisions of Dan are to camp under their standard:

The leader of the Danites is Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, and his division numbers 62,700.

The tribe of Asher will camp next to it. The leader of the Asherites is Pagiel son of Ocran, and his division numbers 41,500.

Next will be the tribe of Naphtali. The leader of the Naphtalites is Ahira son of Enan, and his division numbers 53,400.

The total number of men in the camp of Dan is 157,600; they shall set out last, under their standards."

These are the Israelites, numbered according to their families. The total of those counted in the camps, by their divisions, was 603,550. But the Levites were not counted among the other Israelites, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

So the Israelites did everything the LORD commanded Moses; they camped under their standards in this way and set out in the same way, each man with his clan and his family.

This is the account of Aaron and Moses at the time the LORD spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai.

These are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab the firstborn, then Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. These were Aaron's sons, the anointed priests, who were ordained to serve as priests.

Nadab and Abihu, however, died in the presence of the LORD when they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD in the Wilderness of Sinai. And since they had no sons, only Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests during the lifetime of their father Aaron.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Bring the tribe of Levi and present them to Aaron the priest to assist him. They are to perform duties for him and for the whole congregation before the Tent of Meeting, attending to the service of the tabernacle. They shall take care of all the furnishings of the Tent of Meeting and fulfill obligations for the Israelites by attending to the service of the tabernacle.

Assign the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they have been given exclusively to him from among the Israelites. So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons to carry out the duties of the priesthood; but any outsider who approaches the tabernacle must be put to death."

Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel in place of every firstborn Israelite from the womb. The Levites belong to Me, for all the firstborn are Mine. On the day I struck down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, I consecrated to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast. They are Mine; I am the LORD."

Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, saying, "Number the Levites by their families and clans. You are to count every male a month old or more."

So Moses numbered them according to the word of the LORD, as he had been commanded.

These were the sons of Levi by name: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. These were the names of the sons of Gershon by their clans: Libni and Shimei. The sons of Kohath by their clans were Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. And the sons of Merari by their clans were Mahli and Mushi. These were the clans of the Levites, according to their families.

From Gershon came the Libnite clan and the Shimeite clan; these were the Gershonite clans. The number of all the males a month old or more was 7,500.

The Gershonite clans were to camp on the west, behind the tabernacle, and the leader of the families of the Gershonites was Eliasaph son of Lael.

The duties of the Gershonites at the Tent of Meeting were the tabernacle and tent, its covering, the curtain for the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the curtains of the courtyard, the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard that surrounds the tabernacle and altar, and the cords— all the service for these items.

From Kohath came the clans of the Amramites, the Izharites, the Hebronites, and the Uzzielites; these were the clans of the Kohathites. The number of all the males a month old or more was 8,600. They were responsible for the duties of the sanctuary.

The clans of the Kohathites were to camp on the south side of the tabernacle, and the leader of the families of the Kohathites was Elizaphan son of Uzziel.

Their duties were the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the articles of the sanctuary used with them, and the curtain— all the service for these items.

The chief of the leaders of the Levites was Eleazar son of Aaron the priest; he oversaw those responsible for the duties of the sanctuary.

From Merari came the clans of the Mahlites and Mushites; these were the Merarite clans. The number of all the males a month old or more was 6,200.

The leader of the families of the Merarites was Zuriel son of Abihail; they were to camp on the north side of the tabernacle.

The duties assigned to the sons of Merari were the tabernacle's frames, crossbars, posts, bases, and all its equipment— all the service for these items, as well as the posts of the surrounding courtyard with their bases, tent pegs, and ropes.

Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's sons were to camp to the east of the tabernacle, toward the sunrise, before the Tent of Meeting. They were to perform the duties of the sanctuary as a service on behalf of the Israelites; but any outsider who approached the sanctuary was to be put to death.

The total number of Levites that Moses and Aaron counted by their clans at the LORD's command, including all the males a month old or more, was 22,000.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Number every firstborn male of the Israelites a month old or more, and list their names. You are to take the Levites for Me— I am the LORD— in place of all the firstborn of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites in place of all the firstborn of the livestock of the Israelites."

So Moses numbered all the firstborn of the Israelites, as the LORD had commanded him. The total number of the firstborn males a month old or more, listed by name, was 22,273.

Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Take the Levites in place of all the firstborn of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites in place of their livestock. The Levites belong to Me; I am the LORD. To redeem the 273 firstborn Israelites who outnumber the Levites, you are to collect five shekels for each one, according to the sanctuary shekel of twenty gerahs. Give the money to Aaron and his sons as the redemption price for the excess among the Israelites."

So Moses collected the redemption money from those in excess of the number redeemed by the Levites. He collected the money from the firstborn of the Israelites: 1,365 shekels, according to the sanctuary shekel. And Moses gave the redemption money to Aaron and his sons in obedience to the word of the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded him.

Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Take a census of the Kohathites among the Levites by their clans and families, men from thirty to fifty years old— everyone who is qualified to serve in the work at the Tent of Meeting.

This service of the Kohathites at the Tent of Meeting regards the most holy things. Whenever the camp sets out, Aaron and his sons are to go in, take down the veil of the curtain, and cover the ark of the Testimony with it. They are to place over this a covering of fine leather, spread a solid blue cloth over it, and insert its poles.

Over the table of the Presence they are to spread a blue cloth and place the plates and cups on it, along with the bowls and pitchers for the drink offering. The regular bread offering is to remain on it. And they shall spread a scarlet cloth over them, cover them with fine leather, and insert the poles.

They are to take a blue cloth and cover the lampstand used for light, together with its lamps, wick trimmers, and trays, as well as the jars of oil with which to supply it. Then they shall wrap it and all its utensils inside a covering of fine leather and put it on the carrying frame.

Over the gold altar they are to spread a blue cloth, cover it with fine leather, and insert the poles. They are to take all the utensils for serving in the sanctuary, place them in a blue cloth, cover them with fine leather, and put them on the carrying frame.

Then they shall remove the ashes from the bronze altar, spread a purple cloth over it, and place on it all the vessels used to serve there: the firepans, meat forks, shovels, and sprinkling bowls— all the equipment of the altar. They are to spread over it a covering of fine leather and insert the poles.

When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy objects and all their equipment, as soon as the camp is ready to move, the Kohathites shall come and do the carrying. But they must not touch the holy objects, or they will die. These are the transportation duties of the Kohathites regarding the Tent of Meeting.

Eleazar son of Aaron the priest shall oversee the oil for the light, the fragrant incense, the daily grain offering, and the anointing oil. He has oversight of the entire tabernacle and everything in it, including the holy objects and their utensils."

Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Do not allow the Kohathite tribal clans to be cut off from among the Levites. In order that they may live and not die when they come near the most holy things, do this for them: Aaron and his sons are to go in and assign each man his task and what he is to carry. But the Kohathites are not to go in and look at the holy objects, even for a moment, or they will die."

And the LORD said to Moses, "Take a census of the Gershonites as well, by their families and clans, from thirty to fifty years old, counting everyone who comes to serve in the work at the Tent of Meeting.

This is the service of the Gershonite clans regarding work and transport: They are to carry the curtains of the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting with the covering of fine leather over it, the curtains for the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the curtains of the courtyard, and the curtains for the entrance at the gate of the courtyard that surrounds the tabernacle and altar, along with their ropes and all the equipment for their service. The

Gershonites will do all that needs to be done with these items.

All the service of the Gershonites — all their transport duties and other work — is to be done at the direction of Aaron and his sons; you are to assign to them all that they are responsible to carry. This is the service of the Gershonite clans at the Tent of Meeting, and their duties shall be under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.

As for the sons of Merari, you are to number them by their clans and families, from thirty to fifty years old, counting everyone who comes to serve in the work of the Tent of Meeting.

This is the duty for all their service at the Tent of Meeting: to carry the frames of the tabernacle with its crossbars, posts, and bases, and the posts of the surrounding courtyard with their bases, tent pegs, and ropes, including all their equipment and everything related to their use. You shall assign by name the items that they are responsible to carry.

This is the service of the Merarite clans according to all their work at the Tent of Meeting, under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest."

So Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of the congregation numbered the Kohathites by their clans and families, everyone from thirty to fifty years old who came to serve in the work at the Tent of Meeting. And those numbered by their clans totaled 2,750. These were counted from the Kohathite clans, everyone who could serve at the Tent of Meeting. Moses and Aaron numbered them according to the command of the LORD through Moses.

Then the Gershonites were numbered by their clans and families, everyone from thirty to fifty years old who came to serve in the work at the Tent of Meeting. And those numbered by their clans and families totaled 2,630. These were counted from the Gershonite clans who served at the Tent of Meeting, whom Moses and Aaron counted at the LORD's command.

And the Merarites were numbered by their clans and families, everyone from thirty to fifty years old who came to serve in the work at the Tent of Meeting. The men registered by their clans numbered 3,200. These were counted from the Merarite clans, whom Moses and Aaron numbered at the LORD's command through Moses.

So Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of Israel numbered by their clans and families all the Levites from thirty to fifty years old who came to do the work of serving and carrying the Tent of Meeting. And the number of men was 8,580. At the LORD's command through Moses they were numbered, and each one was assigned his work and burden, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Command the Israelites to send away from the camp anyone with a skin disease, anyone who has a bodily discharge, and anyone who is defiled by a dead body. You must send away male and female alike; send them outside the camp so they will not defile their camp, where I dwell among them."

So the Israelites did this, sending such people outside the camp. They did just as the LORD had instructed Moses.

And the LORD said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites that when a man or woman acts unfaithfully against the LORD by committing any sin against another, that person is guilty and must confess the sin he has committed. He must make full restitution, add a fifth to its value, and give all this to the one he has wronged.

But if the man has no relative to whom restitution can be made for the wrong, the restitution belongs to the LORD and must be given to the priest along with the ram of atonement, by which the atonement is made for him.

Every sacred contribution the Israelites bring to the priest shall belong to him. Each man's sacred gifts are his own, but whatever he gives to the priest will belong to the priest."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and tell them that if any man's wife goes astray and is unfaithful to him by sleeping with another man, and it is concealed from her husband and her impurity is undetected (since there is no witness against her and she was not caught in the act), and if a feeling of jealousy comes over her husband and he suspects his wife who has defiled herself— or if a feeling of jealousy comes over him and he suspects her even though she has not defiled herself— then he is to bring his wife to the priest.

He must also bring for her an offering of a tenth of an ephah of barley flour. He is not to pour oil over it or put frankincense on it, because it is a grain offering for jealousy, an offering of memorial as a reminder of iniquity.

The priest is to bring the wife forward and have her stand before the LORD. Then he is to take some holy water in a clay jar and put some of the dust from the tabernacle floor into the water.

After the priest has the woman stand before the LORD, he is to let down her hair and place in her hands the grain offering of memorial, which is the grain offering for jealousy. The priest is to hold the bitter water that brings a curse. And he is to put the woman under oath and say to her, 'If no other man has slept with you and you have not gone astray and become defiled while under your husband's authority, may you be immune to this bitter water that brings a curse. But if you have gone astray while under your husband's authority and have defiled yourself and lain carnally with a man other than your husband'— and the priest shall have the woman swear under the oath of the curse— 'then may the LORD make you an attested curse among your people by making your thigh shrivel and your belly swell. May this water that brings a curse enter your stomach and cause your belly to swell and your thigh to shrivel.'

Then the woman is to say, 'Amen, Amen.'

And the priest shall write these curses on a scroll and wash them off into the bitter water. He is to have the woman drink the bitter water that brings a curse, and it will enter her and may cause her bitter suffering. The priest shall take from her hand the grain offering for jealousy, wave it before the LORD, and bring it to the

altar. Then the priest is to take a handful of the grain offering as a memorial portion and burn it on the altar; after that he is to have the woman drink the water.

When he has made her drink the water, if she has defiled herself and been unfaithful to her husband, then the water that brings a curse will enter her and cause bitter suffering; her belly will swell, her thigh will shrivel, and she will become accursed among her people. But if the woman has not defiled herself and is clean, she will be unaffected and able to conceive children.

This is the law of jealousy when a wife goes astray and defiles herself while under her husband's authority, or when a feeling of jealousy comes over a husband and he suspects his wife. He is to have the woman stand before the LORD, and the priest is to apply to her this entire law. The husband will be free from guilt, but the woman shall bear her iniquity."

And the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and tell them that if a man or woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the LORD, he is to abstain from wine and strong drink. He must not drink vinegar made from wine or strong drink, and he must not drink any grape juice or eat fresh grapes or raisins. All the days of his separation, he is not to eat anything that comes from the grapevine, not even the seeds or skins.

For the entire period of his vow of separation, no razor shall touch his head. He must be holy until the time of his separation to the LORD is complete; he must let the hair of his head grow long.

Throughout the days of his separation to the LORD, he must not go near a dead body. Even if his father or mother or brother or sister should die, he is not to defile himself, because the symbol of consecration to his God is upon his head. Throughout the time of his separation, he is holy to the LORD.

If someone suddenly dies in his presence and defiles his consecrated head of hair, he must shave his head on the day of his cleansing — the seventh day. On the eighth day he must bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. And the priest is to offer one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering to make atonement for him, because he has sinned by being in the presence of the dead body. On that day he must consecrate his head again. He must rededicate his time of separation to the LORD and bring a year-old male lamb as a guilt offering. But the preceding days shall not be counted, because his separation was defiled.

Now this is the law of the Nazirite when his time of separation is complete: He must be brought to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, and he is to present an offering to the LORD of an unblemished year-old male lamb as a burnt offering, an unblemished year-old female lamb as a sin offering, and an unblemished ram as a peace offering — together with their grain offerings and drink offerings — and a basket of unleavened cakes made from fine flour mixed with oil and unleavened wafers coated with oil.

The priest is to present all these before the LORD and make the sin offering and the burnt offering. He shall also offer the ram as a peace offering to the LORD, along with the basket of unleavened bread. And the priest is to offer the accompanying grain offering and drink offering.

Then at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the Nazirite is to shave his consecrated head, take the hair, and put it on the fire under the peace offering. And the priest is to take the boiled shoulder from the ram, one unleavened cake from the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and put them into the hands of the Nazirite who has just shaved the hair of his consecration. The priest shall then wave them as a wave offering before the LORD. This is a holy portion for the priest, in addition to the breast of the wave offering and the thigh that was presented. After that, the Nazirite may drink wine.

This is the law of the Nazirite who vows his offering to the LORD for his separation, in addition to whatever else he can afford; he must fulfill whatever vow he makes, according to the law of his separation."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron and his sons:This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:

> 'May the LORD bless you and keep you; may the LORD cause His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; may the LORD lift up His countenance toward you and give you peace.'

So they shall put My name on the Israelites, and I will bless them."

On the day Moses finished setting up the tabernacle, he anointed and consecrated it and all its furnishings, along with the altar and all its utensils. And the leaders of Israel, the heads of their families, presented an offering. These men were the tribal leaders who had supervised the registration. They brought as their offering before the LORD six covered carts and twelve oxen — an ox from each leader and a cart from every two leaders — and presented them before the tabernacle.

And the LORD said to Moses, "Accept these gifts from them, that they may be used in the work of the Tent of Meeting. And give them to the Levites, to each man according to his service."

So Moses took the carts and oxen and gave them to the Levites. He gave the Gershonites two carts and four oxen, as their service required, and he gave the Merarites four carts and eight oxen, as their service required, all under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest. But he did not give any to the Kohathites, since they were to carry on their shoulders the holy objects for which they were responsible.

When the altar was anointed, the leaders approached with their offerings for its dedication and presented them before the altar. And the LORD said to Moses, "Each day one leader is to present his offering for the dedication of the altar."

On the first day Nahshon son of Amminadab from the tribe of Judah drew near with his offering. His offering was one silver platter weighing a hundred and thirty shekels, and one silver bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel and filled with fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and a peace offering of two oxen, five rams, five male

goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Nahshon son of Amminadab.

On the second day Nethanel son of Zuar, the leader of Issachar, drew near. The offering he presented was one silver platter weighing a hundred and thirty shekels, and one silver bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel and filled with fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and a peace offering of two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Nethanel son of Zuar.

On the third day Eliab son of Helon, the leader of the Zebulunites, drew near. His offering was one silver platter weighing a hundred and thirty shekels, and one silver bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel and filled with fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and a peace offering of two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Eliab son of Helon.

On the fourth day Elizur son of Shedeur, the leader of the Reubenites, drew near. His offering was one silver platter weighing a hundred and thirty shekels, and one silver bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel and filled with fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and a peace offering of two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Elizur son of Shedeur.

On the fifth day Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, the leader of the Simeonites, drew near. His offering was one silver platter weighing a hundred and thirty shekels, and one silver bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel and filled with fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and a peace offering of two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai.

On the sixth day Eliasaph son of Deuel, the leader of the Gadites, drew near. His offering was one silver platter weighing a hundred and thirty shekels, and one silver bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel and filled with fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and a peace offering of two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Eliasaph son of Deuel.

On the seventh day Elishama son of Ammihud, the leader of the Ephraimites, drew near. His offering was one silver platter weighing a hundred and thirty shekels, and one silver bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel and filled with fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and a peace offering of two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Elishama son of Ammihud.

On the eighth day Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, the leader of the Manassites, drew near. His offering was one silver platter weighing a hundred and thirty shekels, and one silver bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel and filled with fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and a peace offering of two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Gamaliel son of Pedahzur.

On the ninth day Abidan son of Gideoni, the leader of the Benjamites, drew near. His offering was one silver platter weighing a hundred and thirty shekels, and one silver bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel and filled with fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and a peace offering of two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Abidan son of Gideoni.

On the tenth day Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, the leader of the Danites, drew near. His offering was one silver platter weighing a hundred and thirty shekels, and one silver bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel and filled with fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and a peace offering of two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai.

On the eleventh day Pagiel son of Ocran, the leader of the Asherites, drew near. His offering was one silver platter weighing a hundred and thirty shekels, and one silver bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel and filled with fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and a peace offering of two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Pagiel son of Ocran.

On the twelfth day Ahira son of Enan, the leader of the Naphtalites, drew near. His offering was one silver platter weighing a hundred and thirty shekels, and one silver bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel and filled with fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram,

and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and a peace offering of two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Ahira son of Enan.

So these were the offerings from the leaders of Israel for the dedication of the altar when it was anointed: twelve silver platters, twelve silver bowls, and twelve gold dishes.

Each silver platter weighed a hundred and thirty shekels, and each silver bowl seventy shekels. The total weight of the silver articles was two thousand four hundred shekels, according to the sanctuary shekel.

The twelve gold dishes filled with incense weighed ten shekels each, according to the sanctuary shekel. The total weight of the gold dishes was a hundred and twenty shekels.

All the livestock for the burnt offering totaled twelve bulls, twelve rams, and twelve male lambs a year old — together with their grain offerings — and twelve male goats for the sin offering.

All the livestock sacrificed for the peace offering totaled twenty-four bulls, sixty rams, sixty male goats, and sixty male lambs a year old. This was the dedication offering for the altar after it was anointed.

When Moses entered the Tent of Meeting to speak with the LORD, he heard the voice speaking to him from between the two cherubim above the mercy seat on the ark of the Testimony. Thus the LORD spoke to him.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to Aaron and tell him: 'When you set up the seven lamps, they are to light the area in front of the lampstand.'"

And Aaron did so; he set up the lamps facing toward the front of the lampstand, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

This is how the lampstand was constructed: it was made of hammered gold from its base to its blossoms, fashioned according to the pattern the LORD had shown Moses.

Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Take the Levites from among the Israelites and make them ceremonially clean. This is what you must do to cleanse them: Sprinkle them with the water of purification. Have them shave their whole bodies and wash their clothes, and so purify themselves.

Then have them take a young bull with its grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil, and you are to take a second young bull for a sin offering. Bring the Levites before the Tent of Meeting and assemble the whole congregation of Israel. You are to present the Levites before the LORD and have the Israelites lay their hands upon them. Aaron is to present the Levites before the LORD as a wave offering from the sons of Israel, so that they may perform the service of the LORD. And the Levites are to lay their hands on the heads of the bulls, and offer to the LORD one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, to make atonement for the Levites.

You are to have the Levites stand before Aaron and his sons and then present them before the LORD as a wave offering. In this way you shall separate the Levites from the rest of the Israelites, and the Levites will belong to Me. After you have cleansed them and presented them as a wave offering, they may come to serve at the Tent of Meeting.

For the Levites have been wholly given to Me from among the sons of Israel. I have taken them for Myself in place of all who come first from the womb, the firstborn of all the sons of Israel. For every firstborn male in Israel is Mine, both man and beast. I set them apart for Myself on the day I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt. But I have taken the Levites in place of all the firstborn among the sons of Israel. And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the Israelites, to perform the service for the Israelites at the Tent of Meeting and to make atonement on their behalf, so that no plague will come against the Israelites when they approach the sanctuary."

So Moses, Aaron, and the whole congregation of Israel did with the Levites everything that the LORD had commanded Moses they should do. The Levites purified themselves and washed their clothes, and Aaron presented them as a wave offering before the LORD. Aaron also made atonement for them to cleanse them. After that, the Levites came to perform their service at the Tent of Meeting in the presence of Aaron and his sons. Thus they did with the Levites just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

And the LORD said to Moses, "This applies to the Levites: Men twenty-five years of age or older shall enter to perform the service in the work at the Tent of Meeting. But at the age of fifty, they must retire from performing the work and no longer serve.

After that, they may assist their brothers in fulfilling their duties at the Tent of Meeting, but they themselves are not to do the work. This is how you are to assign responsibilities to the Levites."

In the first month of the second year after Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, the LORD spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai: "The Israelites are to observe the Passover at its appointed time. You are to observe it at the appointed time, at twilight on the fourteenth day of this month, in accordance with its statutes and ordinances."

So Moses told the Israelites to observe the Passover, and they did so in the Wilderness of Sinai, at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. The Israelites did everything just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

But there were some men who were unclean due to a dead body, so they could not observe the Passover on that day. And they came before Moses and Aaron that same day and said to Moses, "We are unclean because of a dead body, but why should we be excluded from presenting the LORD's offering with the other Israelites at the appointed time?"

"Wait here until I find out what the LORD commands concerning you," Moses replied.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites: 'When any one of you or your descendants is unclean because of a dead body, or is away on a journey, he may still observe the Passover to the LORD. Such people are to observe it at twilight on the fourteenth day of the second month. They are to eat the lamb, together with unleavened bread and bitter herbs; they may not leave any of it until morning or break any of its bones. They must observe the Passover according to all its statutes.

But if a man who is ceremonially clean and is not on a journey still fails to observe the Passover, he must

be cut off from his people, because he did not present the LORD's offering at its appointed time. That man will bear the consequences of his sin.

If a foreigner dwelling among you wants to observe the Passover to the LORD, he is to do so according to the Passover statute and its ordinances. You are to apply the same statute to both the foreigner and the native of the land.'"

On the day that the tabernacle, the Tent of the Testimony, was set up, the cloud covered it and appeared like fire above the tabernacle from evening until morning. It remained that way continually; the cloud would cover the tabernacle by day, and at night it would appear like fire. Whenever the cloud was lifted from above the Tent, the Israelites would set out, and wherever the cloud settled, there the Israelites would camp. At the LORD's command the Israelites set out, and at the LORD's command they camped. As long as the cloud remained over the tabernacle, they remained encamped.

Even when the cloud lingered over the tabernacle for many days, the Israelites kept the LORD's charge and did not set out. Sometimes the cloud remained over the tabernacle for only a few days, and they would camp at the LORD's command and set out at the LORD's command. Sometimes the cloud remained only from evening until morning, and when it lifted in the morning, they would set out. Whether it was by day or by night, when the cloud was taken up, they would set out.

Whether the cloud lingered for two days, a month, or longer, the Israelites camped and did not set out as long as the cloud remained over the tabernacle; but when it was lifted, they would set out. They camped at the LORD's command, and they set out at the LORD's command; they carried out the LORD's charge according to His command through Moses.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make two trumpets of hammered silver to be used for calling the congregation and for having the camps set out. When both are sounded, the whole congregation is to assemble before you at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. But if only one is sounded, then the leaders, the heads of the clans of Israel, are to gather before you.

When you sound short blasts, the camps that lie on the east side are to set out. When you sound the short blasts a second time, the camps that lie on the south side are to set out. The blasts are to signal them to set out. To convene the assembly, you are to sound long blasts, not short ones. The sons of Aaron, the priests, are to sound the trumpets. This shall be a permanent statute for you and the generations to come.

When you enter into battle in your land against an adversary who attacks you, sound short blasts on the trumpets, and you will be remembered before the LORD your God and saved from your enemies. And on your joyous occasions, your appointed feasts, and the beginning of each month, you are to blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and peace offerings to serve as a reminder for you before your God. I am the LORD your God."

On the twentieth day of the second month of the second year, the cloud was lifted from above the tabernacle of the Testimony, and the Israelites set out from the Wilderness of Sinai, traveling from place to place until the cloud settled in the Wilderness of Paran. They set out this first time according to the LORD's command through Moses.

First, the divisions of the camp of Judah set out under their standard, with Nahshon son of Amminadab in command. Nethanel son of Zuar was over the division of the tribe of Issachar, and Eliab son of Helon was over the division of the tribe of Zebulun. Then the tabernacle was taken down, and the Gershonites and the Merarites set out, transporting it.

Then the divisions of the camp of Reuben set out under their standard, with Elizur son of Shedeur in command. Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai was over the division of the tribe of Simeon, and Eliasaph son of Deuel was over the division of the tribe of Gad. Then the Kohathites set out, transporting the holy objects; the tabernacle was to be set up before their arrival.

Next, the divisions of the camp of Ephraim set out under their standard, with Elishama son of Ammihud in command. Gamaliel son of Pedahzur was over the division of the tribe of Manasseh, and Abidan son of Gideoni was over the division of the tribe of Benjamin.

Finally, the divisions of the camp of Dan set out under their standard, serving as the rear guard for all units, with Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai in command. Pagiel son of Ocran was over the division of the tribe of Asher, and Ahira son of Enan was over the division of the tribe of Naphtali.

This was the order of march for the Israelite divisions as they set out.

Then Moses said to Hobab, the son of Moses' father-in-law Reuel the Midianite, "We are setting out for the place of which the LORD said: 'I will give it to you.' Come with us, and we will treat you well, for the LORD has promised good things to Israel."

"I will not go," Hobab replied. "Instead, I am going back to my own land and my own people."

"Please do not leave us," Moses said, "since you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you can serve as our eyes. If you come with us, we will share with you whatever good things the LORD gives us."

So they set out on a three-day journey from the mountain of the LORD, with the ark of the covenant of the LORD traveling ahead of them for those three days to seek a resting place for them. And the cloud of the LORD was over them by day when they set out from the camp.

Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say,

> "Rise up, O LORD! May Your enemies be scattered; may those who hate You flee before You."

And when it came to rest, he would say:

> "Return, O LORD, to the countless thousands of Israel."

Soon the people began to complain about their hardship in the hearing of the LORD, and when He heard them, His anger was kindled, and fire from the LORD blazed among them and consumed the outskirts of the camp. And the people cried out to Moses, and he prayed to the LORD, and the fire died down. So that place was called Taberah, because the fire of the LORD had burned among them.

Meanwhile, the rabble among them had a strong craving for other food, and again the Israelites wept and said, “Who will feed us meat? We remember the fish we ate freely in Egypt, along with the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic. But now our appetite is gone; there is nothing to see but this manna!”

Now the manna resembled coriander seed, and its appearance was like that of gum resin. The people walked around and gathered it, ground it on a handmill or crushed it in a mortar, then boiled it in a cooking pot or shaped it into cakes. It tasted like pastry baked with fine oil. When the dew fell on the camp at night, the manna would fall with it.

Then Moses heard the people of family after family weeping at the entrances to their tents, and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly, and Moses was also displeased.

So Moses asked the LORD, “Why have You brought this trouble on Your servant? Why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid upon me the burden of all these people? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth, so that You should tell me, ‘Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries an infant,’ to the land that You swore to give their fathers?

Where can I get meat for all these people? For they keep crying out to me, ‘Give us meat to eat!’

I cannot carry all these people by myself; it is too burdensome for me. If this is how You are going to treat me, please kill me right now — if I have found favor in Your eyes — and let me not see my own wretchedness.”

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Bring Me seventy of the elders of Israel known to you as leaders and officers of the people. Bring them to the Tent of Meeting and have them stand there with you.

And I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put that Spirit on them. They will help you bear the burden of the people, so that you do not have to bear it by yourself.

And say to the people: Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you will eat meat, because you have cried out in the hearing of the LORD, saying: ‘Who will feed us meat? For we were better off in Egypt!’ Therefore the LORD will give you meat, and you will eat. You will eat it not for one or two days, nor for five or ten or twenty days, but for a whole month— until it comes out of your nostrils and makes you nauseous— because you have rejected the LORD, who is among you, and have cried out before Him, saying, ‘Why did we ever leave Egypt?’”

But Moses replied, “Here I am among 600,000 men on foot, yet You say, ‘I will give them meat, and they will eat for a month.’ If all our flocks and herds were slaughtered for them, would they have enough? Or if all the fish in the sea were caught for them, would they have enough?”

The LORD answered Moses, “Is the LORD’s arm too short? Now you will see whether or not My word will come to pass.”

So Moses went out and relayed to the people the words of the LORD, and he gathered seventy of the elders of the people and had them stand around the tent. Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and He took some of the Spirit that was on Moses and placed that Spirit on the seventy elders. As the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied — but they never did so again.

Two men, however, had remained in the camp — one named Eldad and the other Medad — and the Spirit rested on them. They were among those listed, but they had not gone out to the tent, and they prophesied in the camp. A young man ran and reported to Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.”

Joshua son of Nun, the attendant to Moses since youth, spoke up and said, “Moses, my lord, stop them!”

But Moses replied, “Are you jealous on my account? I wish that all the LORD’s people were prophets and that the LORD would place His Spirit on them!”

Then Moses returned to the camp, along with the elders of Israel.

Now a wind sent by the LORD came up, drove in quail from the sea, and brought them near the camp, about two cubits above the surface of the ground, for a day’s journey in every direction around the camp. All that day and night, and all the next day, the people stayed up gathering the quail. No one gathered less than ten homers, and they spread them out all around the camp.

But while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the anger of the LORD burned against the people, and the LORD struck them with a severe plague. So they called that place Kibroth-hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had craved other food.

From Kibroth-hattaavah the people moved on to Hazeroth, where they remained for some time.

Then Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses because of the Cushite woman he had married, for he had taken a Cushite wife. “Does the LORD speak only through Moses?” they said. “Does He not also speak through us?” And the LORD heard this.

Now Moses was a very humble man, more so than any man on the face of the earth.

And suddenly the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, “You three, come out to the Tent of Meeting.” So the three went out, and the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud, stood at the entrance to the Tent, and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When both of them had stepped forward, He said, “Hear now My words:

> If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, will reveal Myself to him in a vision; I will speak to him in a dream. But this is not so with My servant Moses; he is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD.

Why then were you unafraid to speak against My servant Moses?” So the anger of the LORD burned against them, and He departed.

As the cloud lifted from above the Tent, suddenly Miriam became leprous, white as snow. Aaron turned toward her, saw that she was leprous, and said to Moses, “My lord, please do not hold against us this sin we have so foolishly committed. Please do not let her be like a stillborn infant whose flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother’s womb.”

So Moses cried out to the LORD, “O God, please heal her!”

But the LORD answered Moses, “If her father had but spit in her face, would she not have been in disgrace for seven days? Let her be confined outside the camp for seven days; after that she may be brought back in.”

So Miriam was confined outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not move on until she was brought in again. After that, the people set out from Hazeroth and camped in the Wilderness of Paran.

And the LORD said to Moses, “Send out for yourself men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each of their fathers’ tribes send one man who is a leader among them.”

So at the command of the LORD, Moses sent them out from the Wilderness of Paran. All the men were leaders of the Israelites, and these were their names:

From the tribe of Reuben, Shammua son of Zaccur;
from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat son of Hori;
from the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh;
from the tribe of Issachar, Igal son of Joseph;
from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea son of Nun;
from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti son of Raphu;
from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel son of Sodi;
from the tribe of Manasseh (a tribe of Joseph), Gaddi son of Susi;
from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel son of Gemalli;
from the tribe of Asher, Sethur son of Michael;
from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi son of Vophsi;
and from the tribe of Gad, Geuel son of Machi.

These were the names of the men Moses sent to spy out the land; and Moses gave to Hoshea son of Nun the name Joshua.

When Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, he told them, “Go up through the Negev and into the hill country. See what the land is like and whether its people are strong or weak, few or many. Is the land where they live good or bad? Are the cities where they dwell open camps or fortifications? Is the soil fertile or unproductive? Are there trees in it or not? Be courageous and bring back some of the fruit of the land.” (It was the season for the first ripe grapes.)

So they went up and spied out the land from the Wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob, toward Lebo-hamath. They went up through the Negev and came to Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the descendants of Anak, dwelled. It had been built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.

When they came to the Valley of Eshcol, they cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes, which they carried on a pole between two men. They also took some pomegranates and figs. Because of the cluster of grapes the Israelites cut there, that place was called the Valley of Eshcol.

After forty days the men returned from spying out the land, and they went back to Moses, Aaron, and the whole congregation of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran at Kadesh. They brought back a report for the whole congregation and showed them the fruit of the land.

And they gave this account to Moses: “We went into the land to which you sent us, and indeed, it is flowing with milk and honey. Here is some of its fruit! Nevertheless, the people living in the land are strong, and the cities are large and fortified. We even saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites live in the land of the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live by the sea and along the Jordan.”

Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, “We must go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly conquer it!”

But the men who had gone up with him replied, “We cannot go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are!”

So they gave the Israelites a bad report about the land that they had spied out: “The land we explored devours its inhabitants, and all the people we saw there are great in stature. We even saw the Nephilim there—the descendants of Anak that come from the Nephilim! We seemed like grasshoppers in our own sight, and we must have seemed the same to them!”

Then the whole congregation lifted up their voices and cried out, and that night the people wept. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt, or if only we had died in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and children will become plunder. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?”

So they said to one another, “Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt.”

Then Moses and Aaron fell facedown before the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel.

Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes and said to the whole congregation of Israel, “The land we passed through and explored is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD delights in us, He will bring us into this land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and He will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the LORD, and do not be afraid of the people of the land, for they will be like bread for us. Their protection has been removed, and the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them!”

But the whole congregation threatened to stone Joshua and Caleb.

Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the Israelites at the Tent of Meeting. And the LORD said to Moses, “How long will this people treat Me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in Me, despite all the signs I have performed among them? I will strike them with a plague and destroy them — and I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they are.”

But Moses said to the LORD, “The Egyptians will hear of it, for by Your strength You brought this people from among them. And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have already heard that You, O LORD, are in the midst of this people, that You, O LORD, have been seen face to face, that Your cloud stands over them, and that You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

If You kill this people as one man, the nations who have heard of Your fame will say, ‘Because the LORD was unable to bring this people into the land He swore to give them, He has slaughtered them in the wilderness.’

So now I pray, may the power of my Lord be magnified, just as You have declared: 'The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in loving devotion, forgiving iniquity and transgression. Yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished; He will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon their children to the third and fourth generation.'

Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people, in keeping with the greatness of Your loving devotion, just as You have forgiven them ever since they left Egypt."

"I have pardoned them as you requested," the LORD replied. "Yet as surely as I live and as surely as the whole earth is filled with the glory of the LORD, not one of the men who have seen My glory and the signs I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness — yet have tested Me and disobeyed Me these ten times — not one will ever see the land that I swore to give their fathers. None of those who have treated Me with contempt will see it.

But because My servant Caleb has a different spirit and has followed Me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he has entered, and his descendants will inherit it.

Now since the Amalekites and Canaanites are living in the valleys, turn back tomorrow and head for the wilderness along the route to the Red Sea."

Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "How long will this wicked congregation grumble against Me? I have heard the complaints that the Israelites are making against Me. So tell them: As surely as I live, declares the LORD, I will do to you exactly as I heard you say. Your bodies will fall in this wilderness— all who were numbered in the census, everyone twenty years of age or older— because you have grumbled against Me.

Surely none of you will enter the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. But I will bring your children, whom you said would become plunder, into the land you have rejected — and they will enjoy it. As for you, however, your bodies will fall in this wilderness.

Your children will be shepherds in the wilderness for forty years, and they will suffer for your unfaithfulness until the last of your bodies lies in the wilderness. In keeping with the forty days you spied out the land, you shall bear your guilt forty years — a year for each day — and you will experience My alienation.

I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will surely do these things to this entire wicked congregation, which has conspired against Me. They will meet their end in the wilderness, and there they will die."

So the men Moses had sent to spy out the land, who had returned and made the whole congregation grumble against him by bringing out a bad report about the land— those men who had brought out the bad report about the land— were struck down by a plague before the LORD. Of those men who had gone to spy out the land, only Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh remained alive.

And when Moses relayed these words to all the Israelites, the people mourned bitterly.

Early the next morning they got up and went up toward the ridge of the hill country. "We have indeed sinned," they said, "but we will go to the place the LORD has promised."

But Moses said, "Why are you transgressing the commandment of the LORD? This will not succeed! Do not go up, lest you be struck down by your enemies, because the LORD is not among you. For there the Amalekites and Canaanites will face you, and you will fall by the sword. Because you have turned away from the LORD, He will not be with you."

But they dared to go up to the ridge of the hill country, though neither Moses nor the ark of the covenant of the LORD moved from the camp. Then the Amalekites and Canaanites who lived in that part of the hill country came down, attacked them, and routed them all the way to Hormah.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and tell them: After you enter the land that I am giving you as a home and you present a food offering to the LORD from the herd or flock to produce a pleasing aroma to the LORD — either a burnt offering or a sacrifice, for a special vow or freewill offering or appointed feast— then the one presenting his offering to the LORD shall also present a grain offering of a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with a quarter hin of olive oil. With the burnt offering or sacrifice of each lamb, you are to prepare a quarter hin of wine as a drink offering.

With a ram you are to prepare a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with a third of a hin of olive oil, and a third of a hin of wine as a drink offering, a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

When you prepare a young bull as a burnt offering or sacrifice to fulfill a vow or as a peace offering to the LORD, present with the bull a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with half a hin of olive oil. Also present half a hin of wine as a drink offering. It is a food offering, a pleasing aroma to the LORD. This is to be done for each bull, ram, lamb, or goat. This is how you must prepare each one, no matter how many.

Everyone who is native-born shall prepare these things in this way when he presents a food offering as a pleasing aroma to the LORD. And for the generations to come, if a foreigner residing with you or someone else among you wants to prepare a food offering as a pleasing aroma to the LORD, he is to do exactly as you do. The assembly is to have the same statute both for you and for the foreign resident; it is a permanent statute for the generations to come. You and the foreigner shall be the same before the LORD. The same law and the same ordinance will apply both to you and to the foreigner residing with you."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and tell them: When you enter the land to which I am bringing you and you eat the food of the land, you shall lift up an offering to the LORD. From the first of your dough, you are to lift up a cake as a contribution; offer it just like an offering from the threshing floor. Throughout your generations, you are to give the LORD an offering from the first of your dough.

Now if you stray unintentionally and do not obey all these commandments that the LORD has spoken to Moses— all that the LORD has commanded you through Moses from the day the LORD gave them and

continuing through the generations to come— and if it was done unintentionally without the knowledge of the congregation, then the whole congregation is to prepare one young bull as a burnt offering, a pleasing aroma to the LORD, with its grain offering and drink offering according to the regulation, and one male goat as a sin offering.

The priest is to make atonement for the whole congregation of Israel, so that they may be forgiven; for the sin was unintentional and they have brought to the LORD a food offering and a sin offering, presented before the LORD for their unintentional sin. Then the whole congregation of Israel and the foreigners residing among them will be forgiven, since it happened to all the people unintentionally.

Also, if one person sins unintentionally, he is to present a year-old female goat as a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement before the LORD on behalf of the person who erred by sinning unintentionally; and when atonement has been made for him, he will be forgiven. You shall have the same law for the one who acts in error, whether he is a native-born Israelite or a foreigner residing among you.

But the person who sins defiantly, whether a native or foreigner, blasphemes the LORD. That person shall be cut off from among his people. He shall certainly be cut off, because he has despised the word of the LORD and broken His commandment; his guilt remains on him."

While the Israelites were in the wilderness, a man was found gathering wood on the Sabbath day. Those who found the man gathering wood brought him to Moses, Aaron, and the whole congregation, and because it had not been declared what should be done to him, they placed him in custody.

And the LORD said to Moses, "The man must surely be put to death. The whole congregation is to stone him outside the camp."

So the whole congregation took the man outside the camp and stoned him to death, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

And the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and tell them that throughout the generations to come they are to make for themselves tassels for the corners of their garments, with a blue cord on each tassel. These will serve as tassels for you to look at, so that you may remember all the commandments of the LORD, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by following your own heart and your own eyes.

Then you will remember and obey all My commandments, and you will be holy to your God. I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God. I am the LORD your God."

Now Korah son of Izhar, the son of Kohath son of Levi, along with some Reubenites — Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth — conducted a rebellion against Moses, along with 250 men of Israel renowned as leaders of the congregation and representatives in the assembly. They came together against Moses and Aaron and told them, "You have taken too much upon yourselves! For everyone in the entire congregation is holy, and the LORD is in their midst. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"

When Moses heard this, he fell facedown. Then he said to Korah and all his followers, "Tomorrow morning the LORD will reveal who belongs to Him and who is holy, and He will bring that person near to Himself. The one He chooses He will bring near to Himself. You, Korah, and all your followers are to do as follows: Take censers, and tomorrow you are to place fire and incense in them in the presence of the LORD. Then the man the LORD chooses will be the one who is holy. It is you sons of Levi who have taken too much upon yourselves!"

Moses also said to Korah, "Now listen, you sons of Levi! Is it not enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel and brought you near to Himself to perform the work at the LORD's tabernacle, and to stand before the congregation to minister to them? He has brought you near, you and all your fellow Levites, but you are seeking the priesthood as well. Therefore, it is you and all your followers who have conspired against the LORD! As for Aaron, who is he that you should grumble against him?"

Then Moses summoned Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, but they said, "We will not come! Is it not enough that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the wilderness? Must you also appoint yourself as ruler over us? Moreover, you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey or given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you gouge out the eyes of these men? No, we will not come!"

Then Moses became very angry and said to the LORD, "Do not regard their offering. I have not taken one donkey from them or mistreated a single one of them."

And Moses said to Korah, "You and all your followers are to appear before the LORD tomorrow— you and they and Aaron. Each man is to take his censer, place incense in it, and present it before the LORD— 250 censers. You and Aaron are to present your censers as well."

So each man took his censer, put fire and incense in it, and stood with Moses and Aaron at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. When Korah had gathered his whole assembly against them at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the glory of the LORD appeared to the whole congregation.

And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Separate yourselves from this congregation so that I may consume them in an instant."

But Moses and Aaron fell facedown and said, "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, when one man sins, will You be angry with the whole congregation?"

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell the congregation to move away from the dwellings of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram."

So Moses got up and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him. And he warned the congregation, "Move away now from the tents of these wicked men. Do not touch anything that belongs to them, or you will be swept away because of all their sins."

So they moved away from the dwellings of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Meanwhile, Dathan and Abiram had come out and stood at the entrances to their tents with their wives and children and infants.

Then Moses said, "This is how you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these things, for it was not my own doing: If these men die a natural death, or if they suffer the fate of all men, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD brings about something unprecedented, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them and all that belongs to them so that they go down alive into Sheol, then you will know that these men have treated the LORD with contempt."

As soon as Moses had finished saying all this, the ground beneath them split open, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households — all Korah's men and all their possessions. They went down alive into Sheol with all they owned. The earth closed over them, and they vanished from the assembly.

At their cries, all the people of Israel who were around them fled, saying, "The earth may swallow us too!" And fire came forth from the LORD and consumed the 250 men who were offering the incense.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Eleazar son of Aaron the priest to remove the censers from the flames and to scatter the coals far away, because the censers are holy. As for the censers of those who sinned at the cost of their own lives, hammer them into sheets to overlay the altar, for these were presented before the LORD, and so have become holy. They will serve as a sign to the Israelites."

So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers brought by those who had been burned up, and he had them hammered out to overlay the altar, just as the LORD commanded him through Moses. This was to be a reminder to the Israelites that no outsider who is not a descendant of Aaron should approach to offer incense before the LORD, lest he become like Korah and his followers.

The next day the whole congregation of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have killed the LORD's people!" But when the congregation gathered against them, Moses and Aaron turned toward the Tent of Meeting, and suddenly the cloud covered it and the glory of the LORD appeared.

Then Moses and Aaron went to the front of the Tent of Meeting, and the LORD said to Moses, "Get away from this congregation so that I may consume them in an instant." And Moses and Aaron fell facedown.

Moses said to Aaron, "Take your censer, place fire from the altar in it, and add incense. Go quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them, because wrath has come out from the LORD; the plague has begun."

So Aaron took the censer as Moses had ordered and ran into the midst of the assembly. And seeing that the plague had begun among the people, he offered the incense and made atonement for the people. He stood between the living and the dead, and the plague was halted. But those who died from the plague numbered 14,700, in addition to those who had died on account of Korah.

Then Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, since the plague had been halted.

And the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and take from them twelve staffs, one from the leader of each tribe. Write each man's name on his staff, and write Aaron's name on the staff of Levi, because there must be one staff for the head of each tribe. Place the staffs in the Tent of Meeting in front of the Testimony, where I meet with you. The staff belonging to the man I choose will sprout, and I will rid Myself of the constant grumbling of the Israelites against you."

So Moses spoke to the Israelites, and each of their leaders gave him a staff — one for each of the leaders of their tribes, twelve staffs in all. And Aaron's staff was among them. Then Moses placed the staffs before the LORD in the Tent of the Testimony.

The next day Moses entered the Tent of the Testimony and saw that Aaron's staff, representing the house of Levi, had sprouted, put forth buds, blossomed, and produced almonds. Then Moses brought out all the staffs from the LORD's presence to all the Israelites. They saw them, and each man took his own staff.

The LORD said to Moses, "Put Aaron's staff back in front of the Testimony, to be kept as a sign for the rebellious, so that you may put an end to their grumbling against Me, lest they die." So Moses did as the LORD had commanded him.

Then the Israelites declared to Moses, "Look, we are perishing! We are lost; we are all lost! Anyone who comes near the tabernacle of the LORD will die. Are we all going to perish?"

So the LORD said to Aaron, "You and your sons and your father's house must bear the iniquity involving the sanctuary. And you and your sons alone must bear the iniquity involving your priesthood. But bring with you also your brothers from the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, that they may join you and assist you and your sons before the Tent of the Testimony. And they shall attend to your duties and to all the duties of the Tent; but they must not come near to the furnishings of the sanctuary or the altar, or both they and you will die. They are to join you and attend to the duties of the Tent of Meeting, doing all the work at the Tent; but no outsider may come near you.

And you shall attend to the duties of the sanctuary and of the altar, so that wrath may not fall on the Israelites again. Behold, I Myself have selected your fellow Levites from the Israelites as a gift to you, dedicated to the LORD to perform the service for the Tent of Meeting. But only you and your sons shall attend to your priesthood for everything concerning the altar and what is inside the veil, and you are to perform that service. I am giving you the work of the priesthood as a gift, but any outsider who comes near the sanctuary must be put to death."

Then the LORD said to Aaron, "Behold, I have put you in charge of My offerings. As for all the sacred offerings of the Israelites, I have given them to you and your sons as a portion and a permanent statute. A portion of the most holy offerings reserved from the fire will be yours. From all the offerings they render to Me as most holy offerings, whether grain offerings or sin offerings or guilt offerings, that part belongs to you

and your sons. You are to eat it as a most holy offering, and every male may eat it. You shall regard it as holy.

And this is yours as well: the offering of their gifts, along with all the wave offerings of the Israelites. I have given this to you and your sons and daughters as a permanent statute. Every ceremonially clean person in your household may eat it. I give you all the freshest olive oil and all the finest new wine and grain that the Israelites give to the LORD as their firstfruits. The firstfruits of everything in their land that they bring to the LORD will belong to you. Every ceremonially clean person in your household may eat them.

Every devoted thing in Israel belongs to you. The firstborn of every womb, whether man or beast, that is offered to the LORD belongs to you. But you must surely redeem every firstborn son and every firstborn male of unclean animals. You are to pay the redemption price for a month-old male according to your valuation: five shekels of silver, according to the sanctuary shekel, which is twenty gerahs.

But you must not redeem the firstborn of an ox, a sheep, or a goat; they are holy. You are to splatter their blood on the altar and burn their fat as a food offering, a pleasing aroma to the LORD. And their meat belongs to you, just as the breast and right thigh of the wave offering belong to you.

All the holy offerings that the Israelites present to the LORD I give to you and to your sons and daughters as a permanent statute. It is a permanent covenant of salt before the LORD for you and your offspring."

Then the LORD said to Aaron, "You will have no inheritance in their land, nor will you have any portion among them. I am your portion and your inheritance among the Israelites.

Behold, I have given to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work they do, the service of the Tent of Meeting. No longer may the Israelites come near to the Tent of Meeting, or they will incur guilt and die.

The Levites are to perform the work of the Tent of Meeting, and they must bear their iniquity. This is a permanent statute for the generations to come. The Levites will not receive an inheritance among the Israelites. For I have given to the Levites as their inheritance the tithe that the Israelites present to the LORD as a contribution. That is why I told them that they would not receive an inheritance among the Israelites."

And the LORD instructed Moses, "Speak to the Levites and tell them: 'When you receive from the Israelites the tithe that I have given you as your inheritance, you must present part of it as an offering to the LORD— a tithe of the tithe. Your offering will be reckoned to you as grain from the threshing floor or juice from the winepress. So you are to present an offering to the LORD from all the tithes you receive from the Israelites, and from these you are to give the LORD's offering to Aaron the priest. You must present the offering due the LORD from all the best of every gift, the holiest part of it.'

Therefore say to the Levites, 'When you have presented the best part, it will be reckoned to you as the produce of the threshing floor or winepress. And you and your households may eat the rest of it anywhere; it is the compensation for your work at the Tent of Meeting. Once you have presented the best part of it, you will not incur guilt because of it. But you must not defile the sacred offerings of the Israelites, or else you will die.'"

Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the statute of the law that the LORD has commanded: Instruct the Israelites to bring you an unblemished red heifer that has no defect and has never been placed under a yoke. Give it to Eleazar the priest, and he will have it brought outside the camp and slaughtered in his presence.

Eleazar the priest is to take some of its blood on his finger and sprinkle it seven times toward the front of the Tent of Meeting. Then the heifer must be burned in his sight. Its hide, its flesh, and its blood are to be burned, along with its dung. The priest is to take cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet wool and throw them onto the burning heifer.

Then the priest must wash his clothes and bathe his body in water; after that he may enter the camp, but he will be ceremonially unclean until evening. The one who burned the heifer must also wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and he too will be ceremonially unclean until evening.

Then a man who is ceremonially clean is to gather up the ashes of the heifer and store them in a ceremonially clean place outside the camp. They must be kept by the congregation of Israel for preparing the water of purification; this is for purification from sin. The man who has gathered up the ashes of the heifer must also wash his clothes, and he will be ceremonially unclean until evening. This is a permanent statute for the Israelites and for the foreigner residing among them.

Whoever touches any dead body will be unclean for seven days. He must purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; then he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third and seventh days, he will not be clean. Anyone who touches a human corpse and fails to purify himself defiles the tabernacle of the LORD. That person must be cut off from Israel. He remains unclean, because the water of purification has not been sprinkled on him, and his uncleanness is still on him.

This is the law when a person dies in a tent: Everyone who enters the tent and everyone already in the tent will be unclean for seven days, and any open container without a lid fastened on it is unclean.

Anyone in the open field who touches someone who has been killed by the sword or has died of natural causes, or anyone who touches a human bone or a grave, will be unclean for seven days.

For the purification of the unclean person, take some of the ashes of the burnt sin offering, put them in a jar, and pour fresh water over them. Then a man who is ceremonially clean is to take some hyssop, dip it in the water, and sprinkle the tent, all the furnishings, and the people who were there. He is also to sprinkle the one who touched a bone, a grave, or a person who has died or been slain.

The man who is ceremonially clean is to sprinkle the unclean person on the third day and on the seventh day. After he purifies the unclean person on the seventh

day, the one being cleansed must wash his clothes and bathe in water, and that evening he will be clean. But if a person who is unclean does not purify himself, he will be cut off from the assembly, because he has defiled the sanctuary of the LORD. The water of purification has not been sprinkled on him; he is unclean.

This is a permanent statute for the people: The one who sprinkles the water of purification must wash his clothes, and whoever touches the water of purification will be unclean until evening. Anything the unclean person touches will become unclean, and anyone who touches it will be unclean until evening."

In the first month, the whole congregation of Israel entered the Wilderness of Zin and stayed in Kadesh. There Miriam died and was buried.

Now there was no water for the congregation, so they gathered against Moses and Aaron. The people quarreled with Moses and said, "If only we had perished with our brothers before the LORD! Why have you brought the LORD's assembly into this wilderness for us and our livestock to die here? Why have you led us up out of Egypt to bring us to this wretched place? It is not a place of grain, figs, vines, or pomegranates — and there is no water to drink!"

Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. They fell facedown, and the glory of the LORD appeared to them. And the LORD said to Moses, "Take the staff and assemble the congregation. You and your brother Aaron are to speak to the rock while they watch, and it will pour out its water. You will bring out water from the rock and provide drink for the congregation and their livestock."

So Moses took the staff from the LORD's presence, just as he had been commanded. Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly in front of the rock, and Moses said to them, "Listen now, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" Then Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff, so that a great amount of water gushed out, and the congregation and their livestock were able to drink.

But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust Me to show My holiness in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them."

These were the waters of Meribah, where the Israelites quarreled with the LORD, and He showed His holiness among them.

From Kadesh, Moses sent messengers to tell the king of Edom, "This is what your brother Israel says: You know all the hardship that has befallen us, how our fathers went down to Egypt, where we lived many years. The Egyptians mistreated us and our fathers, and when we cried out to the LORD, He heard our voice, sent an angel, and brought us out of Egypt.

Now look, we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your territory. Please let us pass through your land. We will not go through any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well. We will stay on the King's Highway; we will not turn to the right or to the left until we have passed through your territory."

But Edom answered, "You may not travel through our land, or we will come out and confront you with the sword."

"We will stay on the main road," the Israelites replied, "and if we or our herds drink your water, we will pay for it. There will be no problem; only let us pass through on foot."

But Edom insisted, "You may not pass through." And they came out to confront the Israelites with a large army and a strong hand. So Edom refused to allow Israel to pass through their territory, and Israel turned away from them.

After they had set out from Kadesh, the whole congregation of Israel came to Mount Hor. And at Mount Hor, near the border of the land of Edom, the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Aaron will be gathered to his people; he will not enter the land that I have given the Israelites, because both of you rebelled against My command at the waters of Meribah. Take Aaron and his son Eleazar and bring them up Mount Hor. Remove Aaron's priestly garments and put them on his son Eleazar. Aaron will be gathered to his people and will die there."

So Moses did as the LORD had commanded, and they climbed Mount Hor in the sight of the whole congregation. After Moses had removed Aaron's garments and put them on his son Eleazar, Aaron died there on top of the mountain. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain. When the whole congregation saw that Aaron had died, the entire house of Israel mourned for him thirty days.

When the Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev, heard that Israel was coming along the road to Atharim, he attacked Israel and captured some prisoners. So Israel made a vow to the LORD: "If You will deliver this people into our hands, we will devote their cities to destruction."

And the LORD heard Israel's plea and delivered up the Canaanites. Israel devoted them and their cities to destruction; so they named the place Hormah.

Then they set out from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, in order to bypass the land of Edom. But the people grew impatient on the journey and spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you led us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread or water, and we detest this wretched food!"

So the LORD sent venomous snakes among the people, and many of the Israelites were bitten and died.

Then the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you. Intercede with the LORD so He will take the snakes away from us." So Moses interceded for the people.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and mount it on a pole. When anyone who is bitten looks at it, he will live." So Moses made a bronze snake and mounted it on a pole. If anyone who was bitten looked at the bronze snake, he would live.

Then the Israelites set out and camped at Oboth. They journeyed from Oboth and camped at Iye-abarim in the wilderness opposite Moab to the east. From there they set out and camped in the Valley of Zered. From there they moved on and camped on the other side

of the Arnon, in the wilderness that extends into the Amorite territory.

Now the Arnon is the border between the Moabites and the Amorites. Therefore it is stated in the Book of the Wars of the LORD:

> "Waheb in Suphah and the wadis of the Arnon,
> even the slopes of the wadis that extend to the
> site of Ar and lie along the border of Moab."

From there they went on to Beer, the well where the LORD said to Moses, "Gather the people so that I may give them water." Then Israel sang this song:

> "Spring up, O well, all of you sing to it! The
> princes dug the well; the nobles of the people
> hollowed it out with their scepters and with
> their staffs."

From the wilderness the Israelites went on to Mattanah, and from Mattanah to Nahaliel, and from Nahaliel to Bamoth, and from Bamoth to the valley in Moab where the top of Pisgah overlooks the wasteland.

Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, "Let us pass through your land. We will not turn aside into any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well. We will stay on the King's Highway until we have passed through your territory."

But Sihon would not let Israel pass through his territory. Instead, he gathered his whole army and went out to confront Israel in the wilderness. When he came to Jahaz, he fought against Israel. And Israel put him to the sword and took possession of his land, from the Arnon to the Jabbok — but only up to the border of the Ammonites, because it was fortified.

Israel captured all the cities of the Amorites and occupied them, including Heshbon and all its villages. Heshbon was the city of Sihon king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab and taken all his land as far as the Arnon. That is why the poets say:

> "Come to Heshbon, let it be rebuilt; let the
> city of Sihon be restored. For a fire went
> out from Heshbon, a blaze from the city of
> Sihon. It consumed Ar of Moab, the rulers of
> Arnon's heights. Woe to you, O Moab! You are
> destroyed, O people of Chemosh! He gave up
> his sons as refugees, and his daughters into
> captivity to Sihon king of the Amorites. But we
> have overthrown them; Heshbon is destroyed
> as far as Dibon. We demolished them as far as
> Nophah, which reaches to Medeba."

So Israel lived in the land of the Amorites. After Moses had sent spies to Jazer, Israel captured its villages and drove out the Amorites who were there.

Then they turned and went up the road to Bashan, and Og king of Bashan and his whole army came out to meet them in battle at Edrei.

But the LORD said to Moses, "Do not fear him, for I have delivered him into your hand, along with all his people and his land. Do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon."

So they struck down Og, along with his sons and his whole army, until no remnant was left. And they took possession of his land.

Then the Israelites traveled on and camped in the plains of Moab near the Jordan, across from Jericho.

Now Balak son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites, and Moab was terrified of the people because they were numerous. Indeed, Moab dreaded the Israelites. So the Moabites said to the elders of Midian, "This horde will devour everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field."

Since Balak son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time, he sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor at Pethor, which is by the Euphrates in the land of his people.

"Behold, a people has come out of Egypt," said Balak. "They cover the face of the land and have settled next to me. So please come now and put a curse on this people, because they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I may be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land; for I know that those you bless are blessed, and those you curse are cursed."

The elders of Moab and Midian departed with the fees for divination in hand. They came to Balaam and relayed to him the words of Balak.

"Spend the night here," Balaam replied, "and I will give you the answer that the LORD speaks to me." So the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam.

Then God came to Balaam and asked, "Who are these men with you?"

And Balaam said to God, "Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, sent me this message: 'Behold, a people has come out of Egypt, and they cover the face of the land. Now come and put a curse on them for me. Perhaps I may be able to fight against them and drive them away.'"

But God said to Balaam, "Do not go with them. You are not to curse this people, for they are blessed."

So Balaam got up the next morning and said to Balak's princes, "Go back to your homeland, because the LORD has refused to let me go with you."

And the princes of Moab arose, returned to Balak, and said, "Balaam refused to come with us."

Then Balak sent other princes, more numerous and more distinguished than the first messengers. They came to Balaam and said, "This is what Balak son of Zippor says: 'Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me, for I will honor you richly and do whatever you say. So please come and put a curse on this people for me!'"

But Balaam replied to the servants of Balak, "If Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything small or great to go beyond the command of the LORD my God. So now, please stay here overnight as the others did, that I may find out what else the LORD has to tell me."

That night God came to Balaam and said, "Since these men have come to summon you, get up and go with them, but you must only do what I tell you." So in the morning Balaam got up, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab.

Then God's anger was kindled because Balaam was going along, and the angel of the LORD stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding his donkey, and his two servants were with him.

When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, she turned off the path and went into a field. So Balaam beat her to return her to the path.

Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow passage between two vineyards, with walls on either side. And the donkey saw the angel of the LORD and pressed herself against the wall, crushing Balaam's foot against it. So he beat her once again.

And the angel of the LORD moved on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn to the right or left. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam, and he became furious and beat her with his staff.

Then the LORD opened the donkey's mouth, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you that you have beaten me these three times?"

Balaam answered the donkey, "You have made a fool of me! If I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now!"

But the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not the donkey you have ridden all your life until today? Have I ever treated you this way before?"

"No," he replied.

Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand. And Balaam bowed low and fell facedown.

The angel of the LORD asked him, "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to oppose you, because your way is perverse before me. The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If she had not turned away, then by now I would surely have killed you and let her live."

"I have sinned," Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "for I did not realize that you were standing in the road to confront me. And now, if this is displeasing in your sight, I will go back home."

But the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but you are to speak only what I tell you." So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the Moabite city on the Arnon border, at the edge of his territory. And he said to Balaam, "Did I not send you an urgent summons? Why did you not come to me? Am I really not able to reward you richly?"

"See, I have come to you," Balaam replied, "but can I say just anything? I must speak only the word that God puts in my mouth."

So Balaam accompanied Balak, and they came to Kiriath-huzoth. Balak sacrificed cattle and sheep, and he gave portions to Balaam and the princes who were with him.

The next morning, Balak took Balaam and brought him up to Bamoth-baal. From there he could see the outskirts of the camp of the people.

Then Balaam said to Balak, "Build for me seven altars here, and prepare for me seven bulls and seven rams."

So Balak did as Balaam had instructed, and Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

"Stay here by your burnt offering while I am gone," Balaam said to Balak. "Perhaps the LORD will meet with me. And whatever He reveals to me, I will tell you."

So Balaam went off to a barren height, and God met with him. "I have set up seven altars," Balaam said, "and on each altar I have offered a bull and a ram."

Then the LORD put a message in Balaam's mouth, saying, "Return to Balak and give him this message."

So he returned to Balak, who was standing there beside his burnt offering, with all the princes of Moab.

And Balaam lifted up an oracle, saying:

> "Balak brought me from Aram, the king of Moab from the mountains of the east. 'Come,' he said, 'put a curse on Jacob for me; come and denounce Israel!' How can I curse those whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce those whom the LORD has not denounced? For I see them from atop the rocky cliffs, and I watch them from the hills. Behold, a people dwelling apart, not reckoning themselves among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob or number even a fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous; let my end be like theirs!"

Then Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I brought you here to curse my enemies, and behold, you have only blessed them!"

But Balaam replied, "Should I not speak exactly what the LORD puts in my mouth?"

Then Balak said to him, "Please come with me to another place where you can see them. You will only see the outskirts of their camp — not all of them. And from there, curse them for me."

So Balak took him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, where he built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

Balaam said to Balak, "Stay here beside your burnt offering while I meet the LORD over there."

And the LORD met with Balaam and put a message in his mouth, saying, "Return to Balak and speak what I tell you."

So he returned to Balak, who was standing there by his burnt offering with the princes of Moab.

"What did the LORD say?" Balak asked.

Then Balaam lifted up an oracle, saying:

> "Arise, O Balak, and listen; give ear to me, O son of Zippor. God is not a man, that He should lie, or a son of man, that He should change His mind. Does He speak and not act? Does He promise and not fulfill? I have indeed received a command to bless; He has blessed, and I cannot change it. He considers no disaster for Jacob; He sees no trouble for Israel. The LORD their God is with them, and the shout of the King is among them. God brought them out of Egypt with strength like a wild ox. For there is no spell against Jacob and no divination against Israel. It will now be said of Jacob and Israel, 'What great things God has done!' Behold, the people rise like a lioness; they rouse themselves like a lion, not resting until they devour their prey and drink the blood of the slain."

Now Balak said to Balaam, "Then neither curse them at all nor bless them at all!"

But Balaam replied, "Did I not tell you that whatever the LORD says, I must do?"

"Please come," said Balak, "I will take you to another place. Perhaps it will please God that you curse them for me from there."

And Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, which overlooks the wasteland.

Then Balaam said, "Build for me seven altars here, and prepare for me seven bulls and seven rams."

So Balak did as Balaam had instructed, and he offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

And when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not seek omens as on previous occasions, but he turned his face toward the wilderness. When Balaam looked up and saw Israel encamped tribe by tribe, the Spirit of God came upon him, and he lifted up an oracle, saying:

> "This is the prophecy of Balaam son of Beor, the prophecy of a man whose eyes are open, the prophecy of one who hears the words of God, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who bows down with eyes wide open: How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, your dwellings, O Israel! They spread out like palm groves, like gardens beside a stream, like aloes the LORD has planted, like cedars beside the waters. Water will flow from his buckets, and his seed will have abundant water. His king will be greater than Agag, and his kingdom will be exalted. God brought him out of Egypt with strength like a wild ox, to devour hostile nations and crush their bones, to pierce them with arrows. He crouches, he lies down like a lion, like a lioness— who dares to rouse him? Blessed are those who bless you and cursed are those who curse you."

Then Balak's anger burned against Balaam, and he struck his hands together and said to Balaam, "I summoned you to curse my enemies, but behold, you have persisted in blessing them these three times. Therefore, flee at once to your home! I said I would reward you richly, but instead the LORD has denied your reward."

Balaam answered Balak, "Did I not already tell the messengers you sent me that even if Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything of my own accord, good or bad, to go beyond the command of the LORD? I must speak whatever the LORD says. Now I am going back to my people, but come, let me warn you what this people will do to your people in the days to come."

Then Balaam lifted up an oracle, saying,

> "This is the prophecy of Balaam son of Beor, the prophecy of a man whose eyes are open, the prophecy of one who hears the words of God, who has knowledge from the Most High, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who bows down with eyes wide open: I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come forth from Jacob, and a scepter will arise from Israel. He will crush the skulls of Moab and strike down all the sons of Sheth. Edom will become a possession, as will Seir, his enemy; but Israel will perform with valor. A ruler will come from Jacob and destroy the survivors of the city."

Then Balaam saw Amalek and lifted up an oracle, saying:

> "Amalek was first among the nations, but his end is destruction."

Next he saw the Kenites and lifted up an oracle, saying:

> "Your dwelling place is secure, and your nest is set in a cliff. Yet Kain will be destroyed when Asshur takes you captive."

Once more Balaam lifted up an oracle, saying:

> "Ah, who can live unless God has ordained it? Ships will come from the coasts of Cyprus; they will subdue Asshur and Eber, but they too will perish forever."

Then Balaam arose and returned to his homeland, and Balak also went on his way.

While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with the daughters of Moab, who also invited them to the sacrifices for their gods. And the people ate and bowed down to these gods. So Israel joined in worshiping Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD burned against them.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and execute them in broad daylight before the LORD, so that His fierce anger may turn away from Israel."

So Moses told the judges of Israel, "Each of you must kill all of his men who have joined in worshiping Baal of Peor."

Just then an Israelite man brought to his family a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and the whole congregation of Israel while they were weeping at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. On seeing this, Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, got up from the assembly, took a spear in his hand, followed the Israelite into the tent, and drove the spear through both of them— through the Israelite and on through the belly of the woman.

So the plague against the Israelites was halted, but those who died in the plague numbered 24,000.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned My wrath away from the Israelites; for he was zealous for My sake among them, so that I did not consume the Israelites in My zeal. Declare, therefore, that I am granting him My covenant of peace. It will be a covenant of permanent priesthood for him and his descendants, because he was zealous for his God and made atonement for the Israelites."

The name of the Israelite who was slain with the Midianite woman was Zimri son of Salu, the leader of a Simeonite family. And the name of the slain Midianite woman was Cozbi, the daughter of Zur, a tribal chief of a Midianite family.

And the LORD said to Moses, "Attack the Midianites and strike them dead. For they assailed you deceitfully when they seduced you in the matter of Peor and their sister Cozbi, the daughter of the Midianite leader, the woman who was killed on the day the plague came because of Peor."

After the plague had ended, the LORD said to Moses and Eleazar son of Aaron the priest, "Take a census of the whole congregation of Israel by the houses of their fathers — all those twenty years of age or older who can serve in the army of Israel."

So on the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho, Moses and Eleazar the priest issued the instruction, “Take a census of the men twenty years of age or older, as the LORD has commanded Moses.”

And these were the Israelites who came out of the land of Egypt:

Reuben was the firstborn of Israel. These were the descendants of Reuben:

The Hanochite clan from Hanoch,
the Palluite clan from Pallu,
the Hezronite clan from Hezron,
and the Carmite clan from Carmi.

These were the clans of Reuben, and their registration numbered 43,730.

Now the son of Pallu was Eliab, and the sons of Eliab were Nemuel, Dathan, and Abiram.

It was Dathan and Abiram, chosen by the congregation, who rebelled against Moses and Aaron with the followers of Korah who rebelled against the LORD. And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them along with Korah, whose followers died when the fire consumed 250 men. They serve as a warning sign. However, the line of Korah did not die out.

These were the descendants of Simeon by their clans:

The Nemuelite clan from Nemuel,
the Jaminite clan from Jamin,
the Jachinite clan from Jachin,
the Zerahite clan from Zerah,
and the Shaulite clan from Shaul.

These were the clans of Simeon, and there were 22,200 men.

These were the descendants of Gad by their clans:

The Zephonite clan from Zephon,
the Haggite clan from Haggi,
the Shunite clan from Shuni,
the Oznite clan from Ozni,
the Erite clan from Eri,
the Arodite clan from Arod,
and the Arelite clan from Areli.

These were the clans of Gad, and their registration numbered . . . 40,500.

The sons of Judah were Er and Onan, but they died in the land of Canaan. These were the descendants of Judah by their clans:

The Shelanite clan from Shelah,
the Perezite clan from Perez,
and the Zerahite clan from Zerah.
And these were the descendants of Perez:
the Hezronite clan from Hezron
and the Hamulite clan from Hamul.

These were the clans of Judah, and their registration numbered . . . 76,500.

These were the descendants of Issachar by their clans:

The Tolaite clan from Tola,
the Punite clan from Puvah,
the Jashubite clan from Jashub,
and the Shimronite clan from Shimron.

These were the clans of Issachar, and their registration numbered . . . 64,300.

These were the descendants of Zebulun by their clans:

The Seredite clan from Sered,
the Elonite clan from Elon,
and the Jahleelite clan from Jahleel.

These were the clans of Zebulun, and their registration numbered . . . 60,500.

The descendants of Joseph included the clans of Manasseh and Ephraim.

These were the descendants of Manasseh:

The Machirite clan from Machir, the father of Gilead,
and the Gileadite clan from Gilead.
These were the descendants of Gilead:
the Iezerite clan from Iezer,
the Helekite clan from Helek,
the Asrielite clan from Asriel,
the Shechemite clan from Shechem,
the Shemidaite clan from Shemida,
and the Hepherite clan from Hepher.
Now Zelophehad son of Hepher had no sons but only daughters. The names of his daughters were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

These were the clans of Manasseh, and their registration numbered . . . 52,700.

These were the descendants of Ephraim by their clans:

The Shuthelahite clan from Shuthelah,
the Becherite clan from Becher,
and the Tahanite clan from Tahan.
And the descendants of Shuthelah were the Eranite clan from Eran.

These were the clans of Ephraim, and their registration numbered . . . 32,500.

These clans were the descendants of Joseph.

These were the descendants of Benjamin by their clans:

The Belaite clan from Bela,
the Ashbelite clan from Ashbel,
the Ahiramite clan from Ahiram,
the Shuphamite clan from Shupham,
and the Huphamite clan from Hupham.
And the descendants of Bela from Ard and Naaman were the Ardite clan from Ard and the Naamite clan from Naaman.

These were the clans of Benjamin, and their registration numbered . . . 45,600.

These were the descendants of Dan by their clans:

The Shuhamite clan from Shuham.

These were the clans of Dan. All of them were Shuhamite clans, and their registration numbered . . . 64,400.

These were the descendants of Asher by their clans:

The Imnite clan from Imnah,
the Ishvite clan from Ishvi,
and the Beriite clan from Beriah.
And these were the descendants of Beriah:
the Heberite clan from Heber
and the Malchielite clan from Malchiel.
And the name of Asher’s daughter was Serah.

These were the clans of Asher, and their registration numbered . . . 53,400.

These were the descendants of Naphtali by their clans:

The Jahzeelite clan from Jahzeel,
the Gunite clan from Guni,
the Jezerite clan from Jezer,
and the Shillemite clan from Shillem.

These were the clans of Naphtali, and their registration numbered . . . 45,400.

These men of Israel numbered 601,730 in all.

Then the LORD said to Moses, “The land is to be divided among the tribes as an inheritance, according to the number of names. Increase the inheritance for a large tribe and decrease it for a small one; each tribe is to receive its inheritance according to the number of those registered.

Indeed, the land must be divided by lot; they shall receive their inheritance according to the names of the tribes of their fathers. Each inheritance is to be divided by lot among the larger and smaller tribes.”

Now these were the Levites numbered by their clans:

The Gershonite clan from Gershon,
the Kohathite clan from Kohath,
and the Merarite clan from Merari.
These were the families of the Levites:
The Libnite clan,
the Hebronite clan,
the Mahlite clan,
the Mushite clan,
and the Korahite clan.

Now Kohath was the father of Amram, and Amram’s wife was named Jochebed. She was also a daughter of Levi, born to Levi in Egypt. To Amram she bore Aaron, Moses, and their sister Miriam. Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar were born to Aaron, but Nadab and Abihu died when they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD.

The registration of the Levites totaled 23,000, every male a month old or more; they were not numbered among the other Israelites, because no inheritance was given to them among the Israelites.

These were the ones numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest when they counted the Israelites on the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho.

Among all these, however, there was not one who had been numbered by Moses and Aaron the priest when they counted the Israelites in the Wilderness of Sinai. For the LORD had told them that they would surely die in the wilderness. Not one was left except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.

Now the daughters of Zelophehad son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, belonged to the clans of Manasseh son of Joseph. These were the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. They approached the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the leaders, and the whole congregation, and said, “Our father died in the wilderness, but he was not among the followers of Korah who gathered together against the LORD. Instead, he died because of his own sin, and he had no sons. Why should the name of our father disappear from his clan because he had no sons? Give us property among our father’s brothers.”

So Moses brought their case before the LORD, and the LORD answered him, “The daughters of Zelophehad speak correctly. You certainly must give them property as an inheritance among their father’s brothers and transfer their father’s inheritance to them.

Furthermore, you shall say to the Israelites, ‘If a man dies and leaves no son, you are to transfer his inheritance to his daughter. If he has no daughter, give his inheritance to his brothers. If he has no brothers, give his inheritance to his father’s brothers. And if his father has no brothers, give his inheritance to the next of kin from his clan, that he may take possession of it. This is to be a statutory ordinance for the Israelites, as the LORD has commanded Moses.’”

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go up this mountain of the Abarim range and see the land that I have given the Israelites. After you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was; for when the congregation contended in the Wilderness of Zin, both of you rebelled against My command to show My holiness in their sight regarding the waters.” Those were the waters of Meribah in Kadesh, in the Wilderness of Zin.

So Moses appealed to the LORD, “May the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation who will go out and come in before them, and who will lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the LORD will not be like sheep without a shepherd.”

And the LORD replied to Moses, “Take Joshua son of Nun, a man with the Spirit in him, and lay your hands on him. Have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation, and commission him in their sight. Confer on him some of your authority, so that the whole congregation of Israel will obey him. He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who will seek counsel for him before the LORD by the judgment of the Urim. At his command, he and all the Israelites with him— the entire congregation— will go out and come in.”

Moses did as the LORD had commanded him. He took Joshua, had him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation, and laid his hands on him and commissioned him, as the LORD had instructed through Moses.

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Command the Israelites and say to them: See that you present to Me at its appointed time the food for My food offerings, as a pleasing aroma to Me.

And tell them that this is the food offering you are to present to the LORD as a regular burnt offering each day: two unblemished year-old male lambs. Offer one lamb in the morning and the other at twilight, along with a tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering, mixed with a quarter hin of oil from pressed olives.

This is a regular burnt offering established at Mount Sinai as a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the LORD. The drink offering accompanying each lamb shall be a quarter hin. Pour out the offering of fermented drink to the LORD in the sanctuary area. And offer the second lamb at twilight, with the same grain offering and drink offering as in the morning. It is a food offering, a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

On the Sabbath day, present two unblemished year-old male lambs, accompanied by a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, as well as a drink offering.

This is the burnt offering for every Sabbath, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its drink offering.

At the beginning of every month, you are to present to the LORD a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram, and seven male lambs a year old, all unblemished,

along with three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering with each bull, two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering with the ram, and a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering with each lamb. This is a burnt offering, a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the LORD.

Their drink offerings shall be half a hin of wine with each bull, a third of a hin with the ram, and a quarter hin with each lamb. This is the monthly burnt offering to be made at each new moon throughout the year.

In addition to the regular burnt offering with its drink offering, one male goat is to be presented to the LORD as a sin offering.

The fourteenth day of the first month is the LORD's Passover. On the fifteenth day of this month, there shall be a feast; for seven days unleavened bread is to be eaten.

On the first day there is to be a sacred assembly; you must not do any regular work. Present to the LORD a food offering, a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram, and seven male lambs a year old, all unblemished. The grain offering shall consist of fine flour mixed with oil; offer three-tenths of an ephah with each bull, two-tenths of an ephah with the ram, and a tenth of an ephah with each of the seven lambs. Include one male goat as a sin offering to make atonement for you.

You are to present these in addition to the regular morning burnt offering. Offer the same food each day for seven days as a food offering, a pleasing aroma to the LORD. It is to be offered with its drink offering and the regular burnt offering.

On the seventh day you shall hold a sacred assembly; you must not do any regular work.

On the day of firstfruits, when you present an offering of new grain to the LORD during the Feast of Weeks, you are to hold a sacred assembly; you must not do any regular work.

Present a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram, and seven male lambs a year old as a pleasing aroma to the LORD, together with their grain offerings of fine flour mixed with oil— three-tenths of an ephah with each bull, two-tenths of an ephah with the ram, and a tenth of an ephah with each of the seven lambs.

Include one male goat to make atonement for you. Offer them with their drink offerings in addition to the regular burnt offering and its grain offering. The animals must be unblemished.''

"On the first day of the seventh month, you are to hold a sacred assembly, and you must not do any regular work. This will be a day for you to sound the trumpets.

As a pleasing aroma to the LORD, you are to present a burnt offering of one young bull, one ram, and seven male lambs a year old, all unblemished, together with their grain offerings of fine flour mixed with oil— three-tenths of an ephah with the bull, two-tenths of an ephah with the ram, and a tenth of an ephah with each of the seven male lambs.

Include one male goat as a sin offering to make atonement for you. These are in addition to the monthly and daily burnt offerings with their prescribed grain offerings and drink offerings. They are a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the LORD.

On the tenth day of this seventh month, you are to hold a sacred assembly, and you shall humble yourselves; you must not do any work.

Present as a pleasing aroma to the LORD a burnt offering of one young bull, one ram, and seven male lambs a year old, all unblemished, together with their grain offerings of fine flour mixed with oil— three-tenths of an ephah with the bull, two-tenths of an ephah with the ram, and a tenth of an ephah with each of the seven lambs.

Include one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the sin offering of atonement and the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offerings.

On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, you are to hold a sacred assembly; you must not do any regular work, and you shall observe a feast to the LORD for seven days.

As a pleasing aroma to the LORD, you are to present a food offering, a burnt offering of thirteen young bulls, two rams, and fourteen male lambs a year old, all unblemished, along with the grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil with each of the thirteen bulls, two-tenths of an ephah with each of the two rams, and a tenth of an ephah with each of the fourteen lambs. Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering.

On the second day you are to present twelve young bulls, two rams, and fourteen male lambs a year old, all unblemished, along with the grain and drink offerings for the bulls, rams, and lambs, according to the number prescribed. Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering.

On the third day you are to present eleven bulls, two rams, and fourteen male lambs a year old, all unblemished, along with the grain and drink offerings for the bulls, rams, and lambs, according to the number prescribed. Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering.

On the fourth day you are to present ten bulls, two rams, and fourteen male lambs a year old, all unblemished, along with the grain and drink offerings for the bulls, rams, and lambs, according to the number prescribed. Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering.

On the fifth day you are to present nine bulls, two rams, and fourteen male lambs a year old, all unblemished, along with the grain and drink offerings for the bulls, rams, and lambs, according to the number prescribed. Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering.

On the sixth day you are to present eight bulls, two rams, and fourteen male lambs a year old, all unblemished, along with the grain and drink offerings for the bulls, rams, and lambs, according to the number prescribed. Include one male goat as a sin offering, in

addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering.

On the seventh day you are to present seven bulls, two rams, and fourteen male lambs a year old, all unblemished, along with the grain and drink offerings for the bulls, rams, and lambs, according to the number prescribed. Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering.

On the eighth day you are to hold a solemn assembly; you must not do any regular work. As a pleasing aroma to the LORD, you are to present a food offering, a burnt offering of one bull, one ram, and seven male lambs a year old, all unblemished, along with the grain and drink offerings for the bulls, rams, and lambs, according to the number prescribed. Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering.

You are to present these offerings to the LORD at your appointed times, in addition to your vow and freewill offerings, whether burnt offerings, grain offerings, drink offerings, or peace offerings."

So Moses spoke all this to the Israelites just as the LORD had commanded him.

Then Moses said to the heads of the tribes of Israel, "This is what the LORD has commanded: If a man makes a vow to the LORD or swears an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word; he must do everything he has promised.

And if a woman in her father's house during her youth makes a vow to the LORD or obligates herself by a pledge, and her father hears about her vow or pledge but says nothing to her, then all the vows or pledges by which she has bound herself shall stand. But if her father prohibits her on the day he hears about it, then none of the vows or pledges by which she has bound herself shall stand. The LORD will absolve her because her father has prohibited her.

If a woman marries while under a vow or rash promise by which she has bound herself, and her husband hears of it but says nothing to her on that day, then the vows or pledges by which she has bound herself shall stand. But if her husband prohibits her when he hears of it, he nullifies the vow that binds her or the rash promise she has made, and the LORD will absolve her.

Every vow a widow or divorced woman pledges to fulfill is binding on her.

If a woman in her husband's house has made a vow or put herself under an obligation with an oath, and her husband hears of it but says nothing to her and does not prohibit her, then all the vows or pledges by which she has bound herself shall stand. But if her husband nullifies them on the day he hears of them, then nothing that came from her lips, whether her vows or pledges, shall stand. Her husband has nullified them, and the LORD will absolve her.

Her husband may confirm or nullify any vow or any sworn pledge to deny herself. But if her husband says nothing to her from day to day, then he confirms all the vows and pledges that bind her. He has confirmed them, because he said nothing to her on the day he heard about them. But if he nullifies them after he hears of them, then he will bear her iniquity."

These are the statutes that the LORD commanded Moses concerning the relationship between a man and his wife, and between a father and a young daughter still in his home.

And the LORD said to Moses, "Take vengeance on the Midianites for the Israelites. After that, you will be gathered to your people."

So Moses told the people, "Arm some of your men for war, that they may go against the Midianites and execute the LORD's vengeance on them. Send into battle a thousand men from each tribe of Israel."

So a thousand men were recruited from each tribe of Israel— twelve thousand armed for war. And Moses sent the thousand from each tribe into battle, along with Phinehas son of Eleazar the priest, who took with him the vessels of the sanctuary and the trumpets for signaling.

Then they waged war against Midian, as the LORD had commanded Moses, and they killed every male. Among the slain were Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba— the five kings of Midian. They also killed Balaam son of Beor with the sword.

The Israelites captured the Midianite women and their children, and they plundered all their herds, flocks, and goods. Then they burned all the cities where the Midianites had lived, as well as all their encampments, and carried away all the plunder and spoils, both people and animals.

They brought the captives, spoils, and plunder to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation of Israel at the camp on the plains of Moab, by the Jordan across from Jericho. And Moses, Eleazar the priest, and all the leaders of the congregation went to meet them outside the camp.

But Moses was angry with the officers of the army — the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds — who were returning from the battle. "Have you spared all the women?" he asked them. "Look, these women caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to turn unfaithfully against the LORD at Peor, so that the plague struck the congregation of the LORD. So now, kill all the boys, as well as every woman who has had relations with a man, but spare for yourselves every girl who has never had relations with a man.

All of you who have killed a person or touched the dead are to remain outside the camp for seven days. On the third day and the seventh day you are to purify both yourselves and your captives. And purify every garment and leather good, everything made of goat's hair, and every article of wood."

Then Eleazar the priest said to the soldiers who had gone into battle, "This is the statute of the law which the LORD has commanded Moses: Only the gold, silver, bronze, iron, tin, and lead— everything that can withstand the fire— must be put through the fire, and it will be clean. But it must still be purified with the water of purification. And everything that cannot withstand the fire must pass through the water. On the seventh day you are to wash your clothes, and you will be clean. After that you may enter the camp."

The LORD said to Moses, "You and Eleazar the priest and the family heads of the congregation are to take a count of what was captured, both of man and beast. Then divide the captives between the troops who went out to battle and the rest of the congregation.

Set aside a tribute for the LORD from what belongs to the soldiers who went into battle: one out of every five hundred, whether persons, cattle, donkeys, or sheep. Take it from their half and give it to Eleazar the priest as an offering to the LORD.

From the Israelites' half, take one out of every fifty, whether persons, cattle, donkeys, sheep, or other animals, and give them to the Levites who keep charge of the tabernacle of the LORD."

So Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the LORD had commanded Moses, and this plunder remained from the spoils the soldiers had taken:

675,000 sheep,
72,000 cattle,
61,000 donkeys,
and 32,000 women who had not slept with a man.

This was the half portion for those who had gone to war:

337,500 sheep, including a tribute to the LORD of 675,
36,000 cattle, including a tribute to the LORD of 72,
30,500 donkeys, including a tribute to the LORD of 61,
and 16,000 people, including a tribute to the LORD of 32.

Moses gave the tribute to Eleazar the priest as an offering for the LORD, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

From the Israelites' half, which Moses had set apart from the men who had gone to war, this half belonged to the congregation:

337,500 sheep,
36,000 cattle,
30,500 donkeys,
and 16,000 people.

From the Israelites' half, Moses took one out of every fifty persons and animals and gave them to the Levites who kept charge of the tabernacle of the LORD, as the LORD had commanded him.

Then the officers who were over the units of the army — the commanders of thousands and of hundreds — approached Moses and said, "Your servants have counted the soldiers under our command, and not one of us is missing. So we have brought to the LORD an offering of the gold articles each man acquired— armlets, bracelets, rings, earrings, and necklaces— to make atonement for ourselves before the LORD."

So Moses and Eleazar the priest received from them all the articles made out of gold. All the gold that the commanders of thousands and of hundreds presented as an offering to the LORD weighed 16,750 shekels. Each of the soldiers had taken plunder for himself. And Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from the commanders of thousands and of hundreds and brought it into the Tent of Meeting as a memorial for the Israelites before the LORD.

Now the Reubenites and Gadites, who had very large herds and flocks, surveyed the lands of Jazer and Gilead, and they saw that the region was suitable for livestock. So the Gadites and Reubenites came to Moses, Eleazar the priest, and the leaders of the congregation, and said, "Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo, and Beon, which the LORD conquered before the congregation of Israel, are suitable for livestock — and your servants have livestock."

"If we have found favor in your sight," they said, "let this land be given to your servants as a possession. Do not make us cross the Jordan."

But Moses asked the Gadites and Reubenites, "Shall your brothers go to war while you sit here? Why are you discouraging the Israelites from crossing into the land that the LORD has given them? This is what your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to inspect the land.

For when your fathers went up to the Valley of Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the Israelites from entering the land that the LORD had given them. So the anger of the LORD was kindled that day, and He swore an oath, saying, 'Because they did not follow Me wholeheartedly, not one of the men twenty years of age or older who came out of Egypt will see the land that I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob— not one except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua son of Nun— because they did follow the LORD wholeheartedly.' The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until the whole generation who had done evil in His sight was gone.

Now behold, you, a brood of sinners, have risen up in place of your fathers to further stoke the burning anger of the LORD against Israel. For if you turn away from following Him, He will once again leave this people in the wilderness, and you will be the cause of their destruction."

Then the Gadites and Reubenites approached Moses and said, "We want to build sheepfolds here for our livestock and cities for our little ones. But we will arm ourselves and be ready to go ahead of the Israelites until we have brought them into their place. Meanwhile, our little ones will remain in the fortified cities for protection from the inhabitants of the land. We will not return to our homes until every Israelite has taken possession of his inheritance. Yet we will not have an inheritance with them across the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance has come to us on the east side of the Jordan."

Moses replied, "If you will do this— if you will arm yourselves before the LORD for battle, and if every one of your armed men crosses the Jordan before the LORD, until He has driven His enemies out before Him, then when the land is subdued before the LORD, you may return and be free of obligation to the LORD and to Israel. And this land will belong to you as a possession before the LORD. But if you do not do this, you will certainly sin against the LORD — and be assured that your sin will find you out. Build cities for your little ones and folds for your flocks, but do what you have promised."

The Gadites and Reubenites said to Moses, "Your servants will do just as our lord commands. Our children, our wives, our livestock, and all our animals will remain here in the cities of Gilead. But your servants

are equipped for war, and every man will cross over to the battle before the LORD, just as our lord says."

So Moses gave orders about them to Eleazar the priest, to Joshua son of Nun, and to the family leaders of the tribes of Israel. And Moses said to them, "If the Gadites and Reubenites cross the Jordan with you, with every man armed for battle before the LORD, and the land is subdued before you, then you are to give them the land of Gilead as a possession. But if they do not arm themselves and go across with you, then they must accept their possession among you in the land of Canaan."

The Gadites and Reubenites replied, "As the LORD has spoken to your servants, so we will do. We will cross over into the land of Canaan armed before the LORD, that we may have our inheritance on this side of the Jordan."

So Moses gave to the Gadites, to the Reubenites, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh son of Joseph the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan — the land including its cities and the territory surrounding them.

And the Gadites built up Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, Atroth-shophan, Jazer, Jogbehah, Beth-nimrah, and Beth-haran as fortified cities, and they built folds for their flocks.

The Reubenites built up Heshbon, Elealeh, Kiriathaim, as well as Nebo and Baal-meon (whose names were changed), and Sibmah. And they renamed the cities they rebuilt.

The descendants of Machir son of Manasseh went to Gilead, captured it, and drove out the Amorites who were there. So Moses gave Gilead to the clan of Machir son of Manasseh, and they settled there. Jair, a descendant of Manasseh, went and captured their villages and called them Havvoth-jair. And Nobah went and captured Kenath and its villages and called it Nobah, after his own name.

These are the journeys of the Israelites when they came out of the land of Egypt by their divisions under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. At the LORD's command, Moses recorded the stages of their journey. These are the stages listed by their starting points:

On the fifteenth day of the first month, on the day after the Passover, the Israelites set out from Rameses. They marched out defiantly in full view of all the Egyptians, who were burying all their firstborn, whom the LORD had struck down among them; for the LORD had executed judgment against their gods. The Israelites set out from Rameses and camped at Succoth.

They set out from Succoth and camped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness.

They set out from Etham and turned back to Pi-hahiroth, opposite Baal-zephon, and they camped near Migdol.

They set out from Pi-hahiroth and crossed through the sea, into the wilderness, and they journeyed three days into the Wilderness of Etham and camped at Marah.

They set out from Marah and came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there.

They set out from Elim and camped by the Red Sea.

They set out from the Red Sea and camped in the Desert of Sin.

They set out from the Desert of Sin and camped at Dophkah.

They set out from Dophkah and camped at Alush.

They set out from Alush and camped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink.

They set out from Rephidim and camped in the Wilderness of Sinai.

They set out from the Wilderness of Sinai and camped at Kibroth-hattaavah.

They set out from Kibroth-hattaavah and camped at Hazeroth.

They set out from Hazeroth and camped at Rithmah.

They set out from Rithmah and camped at Rimmon-perez.

They set out from Rimmon-perez and camped at Libnah.

They set out from Libnah and camped at Rissah.

They set out from Rissah and camped at Kehelathah.

They set out from Kehelathah and camped at Mount Shepher.

They set out from Mount Shepher and camped at Haradah.

They set out from Haradah and camped at Makheloth.

They set out from Makheloth and camped at Tahath.

They set out from Tahath and camped at Terah.

They set out from Terah and camped at Mithkah.

They set out from Mithkah and camped at Hashmonah.

They set out from Hashmonah and camped at Moseroth.

They set out from Moseroth and camped at Bene-jaakan.

They set out from Bene-jaakan and camped at Hor-haggidgad.

They set out from Hor-haggidgad and camped at Jotbathah.

They set out from Jotbathah and camped at Abronah.

They set out from Abronah and camped at Ezion-geber.

They set out from Ezion-geber and camped at Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin.

They set out from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, on the outskirts of the land of Edom. At the LORD's command, Aaron the priest climbed Mount Hor and died there on the first day of the fifth month, in the fortieth year after the Israelites had come out of the land of Egypt. Aaron was 123 years old when he died on Mount Hor.

Now the Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev in the land of Canaan, heard that the Israelites were coming. And the Israelites set out from Mount Hor and camped at Zalmonah.

They set out from Zalmonah and camped at Punon.

They set out from Punon and camped at Oboth.

They set out from Oboth and camped at Iye-abarim on the border of Moab.

They set out from Iyim and camped at Dibon-gad.

They set out from Dibon-gad and camped at Almon-diblathaim.
They set out from Almon-diblathaim and camped in the mountains of Abarim facing Nebo.
They set out from the mountains of Abarim and camped on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho.
And there on the plains of Moab they camped by the Jordan, from Beth-jeshimoth to Abel-shittim.

On the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho, the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and tell them: When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, you must drive out before you all the inhabitants of the land, destroy all their carved images and cast idols, and demolish all their high places.

You are to take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given you the land to possess. And you are to divide the land by lot according to your clans. Give a larger inheritance to a larger clan and a smaller inheritance to a smaller one. Whatever falls to each one by lot will be his. You will receive an inheritance according to the tribes of your fathers.

But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land before you, those you allow to remain will become barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides; they will harass you in the land where you settle. And then I will do to you what I had planned to do to them."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Command the Israelites and say to them: When you enter the land of Canaan, it will be allotted to you as an inheritance with these boundaries:

Your southern border will extend from the Wilderness of Zin along the border of Edom. On the east, your southern border will run from the end of the Salt Sea, cross south of the Ascent of Akrabbim, continue to Zin, and go south of Kadesh-barnea. Then it will go on to Hazar-addar and proceed to Azmon, where it will turn from Azmon, join the Brook of Egypt, and end at the Sea.
Your western border will be the coastline of the Great Sea; this will be your boundary on the west.
Your northern border will run from the Great Sea directly to Mount Hor, and from Mount Hor to Lebo-hamath, then extend to Zedad, continue to Ziphron, and end at Hazar-enan. This will be your boundary on the north.
And your eastern border will run straight from Hazar-enan to Shepham, then go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain and continue along the slopes east of the Sea of Chinnereth. Then the border will go down along the Jordan and end at the Salt Sea.

This will be your land, defined by its borders on all sides."

So Moses commanded the Israelites, "Apportion this land by lot as an inheritance. The LORD has commanded that it be given to the nine and a half tribes. For the tribes of the Reubenites and Gadites, along with the half-tribe of Manasseh, have already received their inheritance. These two and a half tribes have received their inheritance across the Jordan from Jericho, toward the sunrise."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "These are the names of the men who are to assign the land as an inheritance for you: Eleazar the priest and Joshua son of Nun. Appoint one leader from each tribe to distribute the land. These are their names:

Caleb son of Jephunneh from the tribe of Judah;
Shemuel son of Ammihud from the tribe of Simeon;
Elidad son of Chislon from the tribe of Benjamin;
Bukki son of Jogli, a leader from the tribe of Dan;
Hanniel son of Ephod, a leader from the tribe of Manasseh son of Joseph;
Kemuel son of Shiphtan, a leader from the tribe of Ephraim;
Eli-zaphan son of Parnach, a leader from the tribe of Zebulun;
Paltiel son of Azzan, a leader from the tribe of Issachar;
Ahihud son of Shelomi, a leader from the tribe of Asher;
and Pedahel son of Ammihud, a leader from the tribe of Naphtali."

These are the ones whom the LORD commanded to apportion the inheritance to the Israelites in the land of Canaan.

Again the LORD spoke to Moses on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho: "Command the Israelites to give, from the inheritance they will possess, cities for the Levites to live in and pasturelands around the cities. The cities will be for them to live in, and the pasturelands will be for their herds, their flocks, and all their other livestock.

The pasturelands around the cities you are to give the Levites will extend a thousand cubits from the wall on every side. You are also to measure two thousand cubits outside the city on the east, two thousand on the south, two thousand on the west, and two thousand on the north, with the city in the center. These areas will serve as larger pasturelands for the cities.

Six of the cities you give the Levites are to be appointed as cities of refuge, to which a manslayer may flee. In addition to these, give the Levites forty-two other cities. The total number of cities you give the Levites will be forty-eight, with their corresponding pasturelands. The cities that you apportion from the territory of the Israelites should be given to the Levites in proportion to the inheritance of each tribe: more from a larger tribe and less from a smaller one."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and tell them: When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, designate cities to serve as your cities of refuge, so that a person who kills someone unintentionally may flee there. You are to have these cities as a refuge from the avenger, so that the manslayer will not die until he stands trial before the assembly.

The cities you select will be your six cities of refuge. Select three cities across the Jordan and three in the land of Canaan as cities of refuge. These six cities will serve as a refuge for the Israelites and for the foreigner or stranger among them, so that anyone who kills a person unintentionally may flee there.

If, however, anyone strikes a person with an iron object and kills him, he is a murderer; the murderer must surely be put to death. Or if anyone has in his hand a stone of deadly size, and he strikes and kills another,

he is a murderer; the murderer must surely be put to death. If anyone has in his hand a deadly object of wood, and he strikes and kills another, he is a murderer; the murderer must surely be put to death.

The avenger of blood is to put the murderer to death; when he finds him, he is to kill him.

Likewise, if anyone maliciously pushes another or intentionally throws an object at him and kills him, or if in hostility he strikes him with his hand and he dies, the one who struck him must surely be put to death; he is a murderer. When the avenger of blood finds the murderer, he is to kill him.

But if anyone pushes a person suddenly, without hostility, or throws an object at him unintentionally, or without looking drops a heavy stone that kills him, but he was not an enemy and did not intend to harm him, then the congregation must judge between the slayer and the avenger of blood according to these ordinances. The assembly is to protect the manslayer from the hand of the avenger of blood. Then the assembly will return him to the city of refuge to which he fled, and he must live there until the death of the high priest, who was anointed with the holy oil.

But if the manslayer ever goes outside the limits of the city of refuge to which he fled and the avenger of blood finds him outside of his city of refuge and kills him, then the avenger will not be guilty of bloodshed, because the manslayer must remain in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest. Only after the death of the high priest may he return to the land he owns. This will be a statutory ordinance for you for the generations to come, wherever you live.

If anyone kills a person, the murderer is to be put to death on the testimony of the witnesses. But no one is to be put to death based on the testimony of a lone witness.

You are not to accept a ransom for the life of a murderer who deserves to die; he must surely be put to death. Nor should you accept a ransom for the person who flees to a city of refuge and allow him to return and live on his own land before the death of the high priest.

Do not pollute the land where you live, for bloodshed pollutes the land, and no atonement can be made for the land on which the blood is shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it. Do not defile the land where you live and where I dwell. For I, the LORD, dwell among the Israelites."

Now the family heads of the clan of Gilead son of Machir son of Manasseh, one of the clans of Joseph, approached Moses and the leaders who were the heads of the Israelite families and addressed them, saying, "When the LORD commanded my lord to give the land as an inheritance to the Israelites by lot, He also commanded him to give the inheritance of our brother Zelophehad to his daughters. But if they marry any of the men from the other tribes of Israel, their inheritance will be withdrawn from the portion of our fathers and added to the tribe into which they marry. So our allotted inheritance would be taken away. And when the Jubilee for the Israelites comes, their inheritance will be added to the tribe into which they marry and taken away from the tribe of our fathers."

So at the word of the LORD, Moses commanded the Israelites: "The tribe of the sons of Joseph speaks correctly. This is what the LORD has commanded concerning the daughters of Zelophehad: They may marry anyone they please, provided they marry within a clan of the tribe of their father. No inheritance in Israel may be transferred from tribe to tribe, because each of the Israelites is to retain the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. Every daughter who possesses an inheritance from any Israelite tribe must marry within a clan of the tribe of her father, so that every Israelite will possess the inheritance of his fathers. No inheritance may be transferred from one tribe to another, for each tribe of Israel must retain its inheritance."

So the daughters of Zelophehad did as the LORD had commanded Moses. Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married to cousins on their father's side. They married within the clans of the descendants of Manasseh son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained within the tribe of their father's clan.

These are the commandments and ordinances that the LORD gave the Israelites through Moses on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho.

Deuteronomy

Book of Deuteronomy

These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel in the wilderness east of the Jordan — in the Arabah opposite Suph — between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab.

It is an eleven-day journey from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea by way of Mount Seir. In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses proclaimed to the Israelites all that the LORD had commanded him concerning them. This was after he had defeated Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon, and then at Edrei had defeated Og king of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth.

On the east side of the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses began to explain this law, saying:

The LORD our God said to us at Horeb: "You have stayed at this mountain long enough. Resume your journey and go to the hill country of the Amorites; go to all the neighboring peoples in the Arabah, in the hill country, in the foothills, in the Negev, and along the seacoast to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great River Euphrates.

See, I have placed the land before you. Enter and possess the land that the LORD swore He would give to your fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to their descendants after them."

At that time I said to you, "I cannot carry the burden for you alone. The LORD your God has multiplied you, so that today you are as numerous as the stars in the sky. May the LORD, the God of your fathers, increase you a thousand times over and bless you as He has promised. But how can I bear your troubles, burdens, and disputes all by myself? Choose for yourselves wise, understanding, and respected men from each of your tribes, and I will appoint them as your leaders."

And you answered me and said, "What you propose to do is good."

So I took the leaders of your tribes, wise and respected men, and appointed them as leaders over you — as commanders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens, and as officers for your tribes.

At that time I charged your judges: "Hear the disputes between your brothers, and judge fairly between a man and his brother or a foreign resident. Show no partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be intimidated by anyone, for judgment belongs to God. And bring to me any case too difficult for you, and I will hear it."

And at that time I commanded you all the things you were to do.

And just as the LORD our God had commanded us, we set out from Horeb and went toward the hill country of the Amorites, through all the vast and terrifying wilderness you have seen. When we reached Kadesh-barnea, I said: "You have reached the hill country of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving us. See, the LORD your God has placed the land before you. Go up and take possession of it as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has told you. Do not be afraid or discouraged."

Then all of you approached me and said, "Let us send men ahead of us to search out the land and bring us word of what route to follow and which cities to enter."

The plan seemed good to me, so I selected twelve men from among you, one from each tribe. They left and went up into the hill country, and came to the Valley of Eshcol and spied out the land. They took some of the fruit of the land in their hands, carried it down to us, and brought us word: "It is a good land that the LORD our God is giving us."

But you were unwilling to go up; you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God. You grumbled in your tents and said, "Because the LORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to be annihilated. Where can we go? Our brothers have made our hearts melt, saying: 'The people are larger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the heavens. We even saw the descendants of the Anakim there.'"

So I said to you: "Do not be terrified or afraid of them! The LORD your God, who goes before you, will fight for you, just as you saw Him do for you in Egypt and in the wilderness, where the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, all the way by which you traveled until you reached this place."

But in spite of all this, you did not trust the LORD your God, who went before you on the journey, in the fire by night and in the cloud by day, to seek out a place for you to camp and to show you the road to travel.

When the LORD heard your words, He grew angry and swore an oath, saying, "Not one of the men of this evil generation shall see the good land I swore to give your fathers, except Caleb son of Jephunneh. He will see it, and I will give him and his descendants the land on which he has set foot, because he followed the LORD wholeheartedly."

The LORD was also angry with me on your account, and He said, "Not even you shall enter the land. Joshua son of Nun, who stands before you, will enter it. Encourage him, for he will enable Israel to inherit the land. And the little ones you said would become captives — your children who on that day did not know good from evil — will enter the land that I will give them, and they will possess it. But you are to turn back and head for the wilderness along the route to the Red Sea."

"We have sinned against the LORD," you replied. "We will go up and fight, as the LORD our God has commanded us." Then each of you put on his weapons of war, thinking it easy to go up into the hill country.

But the LORD said to me, "Tell them not to go up and fight, for I am not with you to keep you from defeat by your enemies."

So I spoke to you, but you would not listen. You rebelled against the command of the LORD and presumptuously went up into the hill country.

Then the Amorites who lived in the hills came out against you and chased you like a swarm of bees. They routed you from Seir all the way to Hormah. And you returned and wept before the LORD, but He would not listen to your voice or give ear to you.

For this reason you stayed in Kadesh for a long time — a very long time.

Then we turned back and headed for the wilderness by way of the Red Sea, as the LORD had instructed me, and for many days we wandered around Mount Seir.

At this time the LORD said to me, "You have been wandering around this hill country long enough; turn to the north and command the people: 'You will pass through the territory of your brothers, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. They will be afraid of you, so you must be very careful. Do not provoke them, for I will not give you any of their land, not even a footprint, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as his possession. You are to pay them in silver for the food you eat and the water you drink.'"

Indeed, the LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast wilderness. The LORD your God has been with you these forty years, and you have lacked nothing.

So we passed by our brothers, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. We turned away from the Arabah road, which comes up from Elath and Ezion-geber, and traveled along the road of the Wilderness of Moab. Then the LORD said to me, "Do not harass the Moabites or provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land, because I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as their possession."

(The Emites used to live there, a people great and many, as tall as the Anakites. Like the Anakites, they were also regarded as Rephaim, though the Moabites called them Emites. The Horites used to live in Seir, but the descendants of Esau drove them out. They destroyed the Horites from before them and settled in their place, just as Israel did in the land that the LORD gave them as their possession.)

"Now arise and cross over the Brook of Zered."

So we crossed over the Brook of Zered.

The time we spent traveling from Kadesh-barnea until we crossed over the Brook of Zered was thirty-eight years, until that entire generation of fighting men had perished from the camp, as the LORD had sworn to them. Indeed, the LORD's hand was against them, to eliminate them from the camp, until they had all perished.

Now when all the fighting men among the people had died, the LORD said to me, "Today you are going to cross the border of Moab at Ar. But when you get close to the Ammonites, do not harass them or provoke them, for I will not give you any of the land of the Ammonites. I have given it to the descendants of Lot as their possession."

(That too was regarded as the land of the Rephaim, who used to live there, though the Ammonites called them Zamzummites. They were a people great and many, as tall as the Anakites. But the LORD destroyed them from before the Ammonites, who drove them out and settled in their place, just as He had done for the descendants of Esau who lived in Seir, when He destroyed the Horites from before them. They drove them out and have lived in their place to this day. And the Avvim, who lived in villages as far as Gaza, were destroyed by the Caphtorites, who came out of Caphtor and settled in their place.)

"Arise, set out, and cross the Arnon Valley. See, I have delivered into your hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land. Begin to take possession of it and engage him in battle. This very day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon all the nations under heaven. They will hear the reports of you and tremble in anguish because of you."

So from the Wilderness of Kedemoth I sent messengers with an offer of peace to Sihon king of Heshbon, saying, "Let us pass through your land; we will stay on the main road. We will not turn to the right or to the left. You can sell us food to eat and water to drink in exchange for silver. Only let us pass through on foot, just as the descendants of Esau who live in Seir and the Moabites who live in Ar did for us, until we cross the Jordan into the land that the LORD our God is giving us."

But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass through, for the LORD your God had made his spirit stubborn and his heart obstinate, that He might deliver him into your hand, as is the case this day.

Then the LORD said to me, "See, I have begun to deliver Sihon and his land over to you. Now begin to conquer and possess his land."

So Sihon and his whole army came out for battle against us at Jahaz. And the LORD our God delivered him over to us, and we defeated him and his sons and his whole army.

At that time we captured all his cities and devoted to destruction the people of every city, including women and children. We left no survivors. We carried off for ourselves only the livestock and the plunder from the cities we captured.

From Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Valley, along with the city in the valley, even as far as Gilead, not one city had walls too high for us. The LORD our God gave us all of them. But you did not go near the land of the Ammonites, or the land along the banks of the Jabbok River, or the cities of the hill country, or any place that the LORD our God had forbidden.

Then we turned and went up the road to Bashan, and Og king of Bashan and his whole army came out to meet us in battle at Edrei. But the LORD said to me, "Do not fear him, for I have delivered him into your hand, along with all his people and his land. Do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon."

So the LORD our God also delivered Og king of Bashan and his whole army into our hands. We struck them down until no survivor was left.

At that time we captured all sixty of his cities. There was not a single city we failed to take — the entire region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. All these cities were fortified with high walls and gates and bars, and there were many more unwalled villages. We devoted them to destruction, as we had done to Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children of every city.

But all the livestock and plunder of the cities we carried off for ourselves.

At that time we took from the two kings of the Amorites the land across the Jordan, from the Arnon

Valley as far as Mount Hermon — which the Sidonians call Sirion but the Amorites call Senir — all the cities of the plateau, all of Gilead, and all of Bashan as far as the cities of Salecah and Edrei in the kingdom of Og.

(For only Og king of Bashan had remained of the remnant of the Rephaim. His bed of iron, nine cubits long and four cubits wide, is still in Rabbah of the Ammonites.)

So at that time we took possession of this land. To the Reubenites and Gadites I gave the land beyond Aroer along the Arnon Valley, and half the hill country of Gilead, along with its cities.

To the half-tribe of Manasseh I gave the rest of Gilead and all of Bashan, the kingdom of Og. (The entire region of Argob, the whole territory of Bashan, used to be called the land of the Rephaim.) Jair, a descendant of Manasseh, took the whole region of Argob as far as the border of the Geshurites and Maacathites. He renamed Bashan after himself, Havvoth-jair, by which it is called to this day.

To Machir I gave Gilead, and to the Reubenites and Gadites I gave the territory from Gilead to the Arnon Valley (the middle of the valley was the border) and up to the Jabbok River, the border of the Ammonites. The Jordan River in the Arabah bordered it from Chinnereth to the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea) with the slopes of Pisgah to the east.

At that time I commanded you: “The LORD your God has given you this land to possess. All your men of valor are to cross over, armed for battle, ahead of your brothers, the Israelites. But your wives, your children, and your livestock— I know that you have much livestock— may remain in the cities I have given you, until the LORD gives rest to your brothers as He has to you, and they too have taken possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving them across the Jordan. Then each of you may return to the possession I have given you.”

And at that time I commanded Joshua: “Your own eyes have seen all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings. The LORD will do the same to all the kingdoms you are about to enter. Do not be afraid of them, for the LORD your God Himself will fight for you.”

At that time I also pleaded with the LORD: “O Lord GOD, You have begun to show Your greatness and power to Your servant. For what god in heaven or on earth can perform such works and mighty acts as Yours? Please let me cross over and see the good land beyond the Jordan — that pleasant hill country as well as Lebanon!”

But the LORD was angry with me on account of you, and He would not listen to me. “That is enough,” the LORD said to me. “Do not speak to Me again about this matter. Go to the top of Pisgah and look to the west and north and south and east. See the land with your own eyes, for you will not cross this Jordan. But commission Joshua, encourage him, and strengthen him, for he will cross over ahead of the people and enable them to inherit the land that you will see.”

So we stayed in the valley opposite Beth-peor.

Hear now, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances I am teaching you to follow, so that you may live and may enter and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. You must not add to or subtract from what I command you, so that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I am giving you.

Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at Baal-peor, for the LORD your God destroyed from among you all who followed Baal of Peor. But you who held fast to the LORD your God are alive to this day, every one of you.

See, I have taught you statutes and ordinances just as the LORD my God has commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land that you are about to enter and possess. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding in the sight of the peoples, who will hear of all these statutes and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.”

For what nation is great enough to have a god as near to them as the LORD our God is to us whenever we call on Him? And what nation is great enough to have righteous statutes and ordinances like this entire law I set before you today?

Only be on your guard and diligently watch yourselves, so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen, and so that they do not slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and grandchildren. The day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, the LORD said to me, “Gather the people before Me to hear My words, so that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach them to their children.”

You came near and stood at the base of the mountain, a mountain blazing with fire to the heavens, with black clouds and deep darkness. And the LORD spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of the words but saw no form; there was only a voice. He declared to you His covenant, which He commanded you to follow — the Ten Commandments that He wrote on two tablets of stone.

At that time the LORD commanded me to teach you the statutes and ordinances you are to follow in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess.

So since you saw no form of any kind on the day the LORD spoke to you out of the fire at Horeb, be careful that you do not act corruptly and make an idol for yourselves of any form or shape, whether in the likeness of a male or female, of any beast that is on the earth or bird that flies in the air, or of any creature that crawls on the ground or fish that is in the waters below.

When you look to the heavens and see the sun and moon and stars— all the host of heaven— do not be enticed to bow down and worship what the LORD your God has apportioned to all the nations under heaven. Yet the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be the people of His inheritance, as you are today.

The LORD, however, was angry with me on account of you, and He swore that I would not cross the Jordan to enter the good land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance. For I will not be crossing the Jordan, because I must die in this land. But you shall cross over and take possession of that good land.

Be careful that you do not forget the covenant of the LORD your God that He made with you; do not make an idol for yourselves in the form of anything He has forbidden you. For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

After you have children and grandchildren and you have been in the land a long time, if you then act corruptly and make an idol of any form— doing evil in the sight of the LORD your God and provoking Him to anger— I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you this day that you will quickly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess. You will not live long upon it, but will be utterly destroyed.

Then the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and only a few of you will survive among the nations to which the LORD will drive you. And there you will serve man-made gods of wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or eat or smell.

But if from there you will seek the LORD your God, you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice. For the LORD your God is a merciful God; He will not abandon you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers, which He swore to them by oath.

Indeed, ask now from one end of the heavens to the other about the days that long preceded you, from the day that God created man on earth: Has anything as great as this ever happened or been reported? Has a people ever heard the voice of God speaking out of the fire, as you have, and lived? Or has any god tried to take as his own a nation out of another nation — by trials, signs, wonders, and war, by a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors — as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt, before your eyes?

You were shown these things so that you would know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides Him.

He let you hear His voice from heaven to discipline you, and on earth He showed you His great fire, and you heard His words out of the fire. Because He loved your fathers, He chose their descendants after them and brought you out of Egypt by His presence and great power, to drive out before you nations greater and mightier than you, and to bring you into their land and give it to you for your inheritance, as it is this day.

Know therefore this day and take to heart that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other. Keep His statutes and commandments, which I am giving you today, so that you and your children after you may prosper, and that you may live long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time.

Then Moses set aside three cities across the Jordan to the east to which a manslayer could flee after killing his neighbor unintentionally without prior malice.

To save one's own life, he could flee to one of these cities: Bezer in the wilderness on the plateau belonging to the Reubenites, Ramoth in Gilead belonging to the Gadites, or Golan in Bashan belonging to the Manassites.

This is the law that Moses set before the Israelites. These are the testimonies, statutes, and ordinances that Moses proclaimed to them after they had come out of Egypt, while they were in the valley across the Jordan facing Beth-peor in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon and was defeated by Moses and the Israelites after they had come out of Egypt.

They took possession of the land belonging to Sihon and to Og king of Bashan — the two Amorite kings across the Jordan to the east — extending from Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Valley as far as Mount Siyon (that is, Hermon), including all the Arabah on the east side of the Jordan and as far as the Sea of the Arabah, below the slopes of Pisgah.

Then Moses summoned all Israel and said to them:

Hear, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances that I declare in your hearing this day. Learn them and observe them carefully. The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb.

He did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with all of us who are alive here today. The LORD spoke with you face to face out of the fire on the mountain.

At that time I was standing between the LORD and you to declare to you the word of the LORD, because you were afraid of the fire and would not go up the mountain. And He said: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

You shall have no other gods before Me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in the heavens above, on the earth below, or in the waters beneath. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on their children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing loving devotion to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments.

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave anyone unpunished who takes His name in vain.

Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God, on which you must not do any work— neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your ox or donkey or any of your livestock, nor the foreigner within your gates, so that your manservant and maidservant may rest as you do. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. That is why the LORD your God has commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not covet your neighbor's house or field, or his manservant or maidservant, or his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

The LORD spoke these commandments in a loud voice to your whole assembly out of the fire, the cloud, and the deep darkness on the mountain; He added nothing more. And He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me.

And when you heard the voice out of the darkness while the mountain was blazing with fire, all the heads of your tribes and your elders approached me, and you said, "Behold, the LORD our God has shown us His glory and greatness, and we have heard His voice out of the fire. Today we have seen that a man can live even if God speaks with him. But now, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us, and we will die, if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer. For who of all flesh has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the fire, as we have, and survived? Go near and listen to all that the LORD our God says. Then you can tell us everything the LORD our God tells you; we will listen and obey."

And the LORD heard the words you spoke to me, and He said to me, "I have heard the words that these people have spoken to you. They have done well in all that they have spoken. If only they had such a heart to fear Me and keep all My commandments always, so that it might be well with them and with their children forever. Go and tell them: 'Return to your tents.' But you stand here with Me, that I may speak to you all the commandments and statutes and ordinances you are to teach them to follow in the land that I am giving them to possess."

So be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; you are not to turn aside to the right or to the left. You must walk in all the ways that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.

These are the commandments and statutes and ordinances that the LORD your God has instructed me to teach you to follow in the land that you are about to enter and possess, so that you and your children and grandchildren may fear the LORD your God all the days of your lives by keeping all His statutes and commandments that I give you, and so that your days may be prolonged. Hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe them, so that you may prosper and multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is One. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

These words I am commanding you today are to be upon your hearts. And you shall teach them diligently to your children and speak of them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as reminders on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.

And when the LORD your God brings you into the land He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that He would give you— a land with great and splendid cities that you did not build, with houses full of every good thing with which you did not fill them, with wells that you did not dig, and with vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant— and when you eat and are satisfied, be careful not to forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Fear the LORD your God, serve Him only, and take your oaths in His name. Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you. For the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God. Otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth.

Do not test the LORD your God as you tested Him at Massah. You are to diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God and the testimonies and statutes He has given you. Do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, so that it may be well with you and that you may enter and possess the good land that the LORD your God swore to give your fathers, driving out all your enemies before you, as the LORD has said.

In the future, when your son asks, "What is the meaning of the decrees and statutes and ordinances that the LORD our God has commanded you?" then you are to tell him, "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Before our eyes the LORD inflicted great and devastating signs and wonders on Egypt, on Pharaoh, and on all his household. But He brought us out from there to lead us in and give us the land that He had sworn to our fathers.

And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes and to fear the LORD our God, that we may always be prosperous and preserved, as we are to this day. And if we are careful to observe every one of these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us, then that will be our righteousness."

When the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to possess, and He drives out before you many nations— the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you— and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you to defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. Make no treaty with them and show them no mercy.

Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, because they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and He will swiftly destroy you.

Instead, this is what you are to do to them: tear down their altars, smash their sacred pillars, cut down their Asherah poles, and burn their idols in the fire. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His prized possession out of all peoples on the face of the earth.

The LORD did not set His affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than the other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But because the LORD loved you and kept the oath He swore to your fathers, He brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps His covenant of loving devotion for a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commandments. But those who hate Him He repays to their faces with destruction; He will not hesitate to repay to his face the one who hates Him.

So keep the commandments and statutes and ordinances that I am giving you to follow this day.

If you listen to these ordinances and keep them carefully, then the LORD your God will keep His covenant and the loving devotion that He swore to your fathers. He will love you and bless you and multiply you. He will bless the fruit of your womb and the produce of your land— your grain, new wine, and oil, the young of your herds and the lambs of your flocks— in the land that He swore to your fathers to give you. You will be blessed above all peoples; among you there will be no barren man or woman or livestock.

And the LORD will remove from you all sickness. He will not lay upon you any of the terrible diseases you knew in Egypt, but He will inflict them on all who hate you. You must destroy all the peoples the LORD your God will deliver to you. Do not look on them with pity. Do not worship their gods, for that will be a snare to you.

You may say in your heart, “These nations are greater than we are; how can we drive them out?” But do not be afraid of them. Be sure to remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and all Egypt: the great trials that you saw, the signs and wonders, and the mighty hand and outstretched arm by which the LORD your God brought you out. The LORD your God will do the same to all the peoples you now fear.

Moreover, the LORD your God will send the hornet against them until even the survivors hiding from you have perished. Do not be terrified by them, for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a great and awesome God.

The LORD your God will drive out these nations before you little by little. You will not be enabled to eliminate them all at once, or the wild animals would multiply around you. But the LORD your God will give them over to you and throw them into great confusion, until they are destroyed. He will hand their kings over to you, and you will wipe out their names from under heaven. No one will be able to stand against you; you will annihilate them.

You must burn up the images of their gods; do not covet the silver and gold that is on them or take it for yourselves, or you will be ensnared by it; for it is detestable to the LORD your God. And you must not bring any detestable thing into your house, or you, like it, will be set apart for destruction. You are to utterly detest and abhor it, because it is set apart for destruction.

You must carefully follow every commandment I am giving you today, so that you may live and multiply, and enter and possess the land that the LORD swore to give your fathers. Remember that these forty years the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness, so that He might humble you and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commandments.

He humbled you, and in your hunger He gave you manna to eat, which neither you nor your fathers had known, so that you might understand that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. Your clothing did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years.

So know in your heart that just as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you. Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, walking in His ways and fearing Him.

For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks and fountains and springs that flow through the valleys and hills; a land of wheat, barley, vines, fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive oil and honey; a land where you will eat food without scarcity, where you will lack nothing; a land whose rocks are iron and whose hills are ready to be mined for copper. When you eat and are satisfied, you are to bless the LORD your God for the good land that He has given you.

Be careful not to forget the LORD your God by failing to keep His commandments and ordinances and statutes, which I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses in which to dwell, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud, and you will forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

He led you through the vast and terrifying wilderness with its venomous snakes and scorpions, a thirsty and waterless land. He brought you water from the rock of flint. He fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers had not known, in order to humble you and test you, so that in the end He might cause you to prosper.

You might say in your heart, “The power and strength of my hands have made this wealth for me.” But remember that it is the LORD your God who gives you the power to gain wealth, in order to confirm His covenant that He swore to your fathers even to this day.

If you ever forget the LORD your God and go after other gods to worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish. Like the nations that the LORD has destroyed before you, so you will perish if you do not obey the LORD your God.

Hear, O Israel: Today you are about to cross the Jordan to go in and dispossess nations greater and stronger than you, with large cities fortified to the heavens. The people are strong and tall, the descendants of the Anakim. You know about them, and you have heard it said, “Who can stand up to the sons of Anak?” But understand that today the LORD your God goes across ahead of you as a consuming fire; He will destroy them and subdue them before you. And you will drive

them out and annihilate them swiftly, as the LORD has promised you.

When the LORD your God has driven them out before you, do not say in your heart, "Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land." Rather, the LORD is driving out these nations before you because of their wickedness.

It is not because of your righteousness or uprightness of heart that you are going in to possess their land, but it is because of their wickedness that the LORD your God is driving out these nations before you, to keep the promise He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people.

Remember this, and never forget how you provoked the LORD your God in the wilderness. From the day you left the land of Egypt until you reached this place, you have been rebelling against the LORD.

At Horeb you provoked the LORD, and He was angry enough to destroy you. When I went up on the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant that the LORD made with you, I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights. I ate no bread and drank no water.

Then the LORD gave me the two stone tablets, inscribed by the finger of God with the exact words that the LORD spoke to you out of the fire on the mountain on the day of the assembly. And at the end of forty days and forty nights, the LORD gave me the two stone tablets, the tablets of the covenant. And the LORD said to me, "Get up and go down from here at once, for your people, whom you brought out of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. How quickly they have turned aside from the way that I commanded them! They have made for themselves a molten image."

The LORD also said to me, "I have seen this people, and they are indeed a stiff-necked people. Leave Me alone, so that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven. Then I will make you into a nation mightier and greater than they are."

So I went back down the mountain while it was blazing with fire, with the two tablets of the covenant in my hands. And I saw how you had sinned against the LORD your God; you had made for yourselves a molten calf. You had turned aside quickly from the way that the LORD had commanded you. So I took the two tablets and threw them out of my hands, shattering them before your eyes.

Then I fell down before the LORD for forty days and forty nights, as I had done the first time. I did not eat bread or drink water because of all the sin you had committed in doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD and provoking Him to anger. For I was afraid of the anger and wrath that the LORD had directed against you, enough to destroy you. But the LORD listened to me this time as well.

The LORD was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him, but at that time I also prayed for Aaron. And I took that sinful thing, the calf you had made, and burned it in the fire. Then I crushed it and ground it to powder as fine as dust, and I cast it into the stream that came down from the mountain.

You continued to provoke the LORD at Taberah, at Massah, and at Kibroth-hattaavah. And when the LORD sent you out from Kadesh-barnea, He said, "Go up and possess the land that I have given you."

But you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God. You neither believed Him nor obeyed Him. You have been rebelling against the LORD since the day I came to know you. So I fell down before the LORD for forty days and forty nights, because the LORD had said He would destroy you.

And I prayed to the LORD and said, "O Lord GOD, do not destroy Your people, Your inheritance, whom You redeemed through Your greatness and brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Remember Your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Overlook the stubbornness of this people and the wickedness of their sin. Otherwise, those in the land from which You brought us out will say, 'Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land He had promised them, and because He hated them, He has brought them out to kill them in the wilderness.' But they are Your people, Your inheritance, whom You brought out by Your great power and outstretched arm."

At that time the LORD said to me, "Chisel out two stone tablets like the originals, come up to Me on the mountain, and make an ark of wood. And I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke; and you are to place them in the ark."

So I made an ark of acacia wood, chiseled out two stone tablets like the originals, and went up the mountain with the two tablets in my hands. And the LORD wrote on the tablets what had been written previously, the Ten Commandments that He had spoken to you on the mountain out of the fire on the day of the assembly. The LORD gave them to me, and I went back down the mountain and placed the tablets in the ark I had made, as the LORD had commanded me; and there they have remained.

The Israelites traveled from Beeroth Bene-jaakan to Moserah, where Aaron died and was buried, and Eleazar his son succeeded him as priest. From there they traveled to Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land with streams of water.

At that time the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to serve Him, and to pronounce blessings in His name, as they do to this day. That is why Levi has no portion or inheritance among his brothers; the LORD is his inheritance, as the LORD your God promised him.

I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights, like the first time, and that time the LORD again listened to me and agreed not to destroy you.

Then the LORD said to me, "Get up. Continue your journey ahead of the people, that they may enter and possess the land that I swore to their fathers to give them."

And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God by walking in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep

the commandments and statutes of the LORD that I am giving you this day for your own good?

Behold, to the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, and the earth and everything in it. Yet the LORD has set His affection on your fathers and loved them. And He has chosen you, their descendants after them, above all the peoples, even to this day.

Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and stiffen your necks no more. For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty, and awesome God, showing no partiality and accepting no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and widow, and He loves the foreigner, giving him food and clothing. So you also must love the foreigner, since you yourselves were foreigners in the land of Egypt.

You are to fear the LORD your God and serve Him. Hold fast to Him and take your oaths in His name. He is your praise and He is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome wonders that your eyes have seen. Your fathers went down to Egypt, seventy in all, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky.

You shall therefore love the LORD your God and always keep His charge, His statutes, His ordinances, and His commandments.

Know this day that it is not your children who have known and seen the discipline of the LORD your God: His greatness, His mighty hand, and His outstretched arm; the signs and works He did in Egypt to Pharaoh king of Egypt and all his land; what He did to the Egyptian army and horses and chariots when He made the waters of the Red Sea engulf them as they pursued you, and how He destroyed them completely, even to this day; what He did for you in the wilderness until you reached this place; and what He did in the midst of all the Israelites to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab the Reubenite, when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, their households, their tents, and every living thing that belonged to them.

For it is your own eyes that have seen every great work that the LORD has done.

You shall therefore keep every commandment I am giving you today, so that you may have the strength to go in and possess the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, and so that you may live long in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers to give them and their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey.

For the land that you are entering to possess is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and irrigated on foot, like a vegetable garden. But the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks in the rain from heaven. It is a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning to the end of the year.

So if you carefully obey the commandments I am giving you today, to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will provide rain for your land in season, the autumn and spring rains, that you may gather your grain, new wine, and oil. And I will provide grass in the fields for your livestock, and you will eat and be satisfied.

But be careful that you are not enticed to turn aside to worship and bow down to other gods, or the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you. He will shut the heavens so that there will be no rain, nor will the land yield its produce, and you will soon perish from the good land that the LORD is giving you.

Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as reminders on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, speaking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates, so that as long as the heavens are above the earth, your days and those of your children may be multiplied in the land that the LORD swore to give your fathers.

For if you carefully keep all these commandments I am giving you to follow— to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him— then the LORD will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations greater and stronger than you. Every place where the sole of your foot treads will be yours. Your territory will extend from the wilderness to Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the Western Sea. No man will be able to stand against you; the LORD your God will put the fear and dread of you upon all the land, wherever you set foot, as He has promised you.

See, today I am setting before you a blessing and a curse — a blessing if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am giving you today, but a curse if you disobey the commandments of the LORD your God and turn aside from the path I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known.

When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess, you are to proclaim the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. Are not these mountains across the Jordan, west of the road toward the sunset, in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah opposite Gilgal near the Oak of Moreh?

For you are about to cross the Jordan to enter and possess the land that the LORD your God is giving you. When you take possession of it and settle in it, be careful to follow all the statutes and ordinances that I am setting before you today.

These are the statutes and ordinances you must be careful to follow all the days you live in the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess.

Destroy completely all the places where the nations you are dispossessing have served their gods— atop the high mountains, on the hills, and under every green tree. Tear down their altars, smash their sacred pillars, burn up their Asherah poles, cut down the idols of their gods, and wipe out their names from every place. You shall not worship the LORD your God in this way.

Instead, you must seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to establish as a dwelling for His Name, and there you must go. To that place you are to bring your burnt offerings and

sacrifices, your tithes and heave offerings, your vow offerings and freewill offerings, as well as the firstborn of your herds and flocks. There, in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your households shall eat and rejoice in all you do, because the LORD your God has blessed you.

You are not to do as we are doing here today, where everyone does what seems right in his own eyes. For you have not yet come to the resting place and the inheritance that the LORD your God is giving you.

When you cross the Jordan and live in the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and He gives you rest from all the enemies around you and you dwell securely, then the LORD your God will choose a dwelling for His Name. And there you are to bring everything I command you: your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, and all the choice offerings you vow to the LORD. And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God— you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levite within your gates, since he has no portion or inheritance among you.

Be careful not to offer your burnt offerings in just any place you see; you must offer them only in the place the LORD will choose in one of your tribal territories, and there you shall do all that I command you.

But whenever you want, you may slaughter and eat meat within any of your gates, according to the blessing the LORD your God has given you. Both the ceremonially clean and unclean may eat it as they would a gazelle or deer, but you must not eat the blood; pour it on the ground like water.

Within your gates you must not eat the tithe of your grain or new wine or oil, the firstborn of your herds or flocks, any of the offerings that you have vowed to give, or your freewill offerings or special gifts. Instead, you must eat them in the presence of the LORD your God at the place the LORD your God will choose— you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levite within your gates. Rejoice before the LORD your God in all you do, and be careful not to neglect the Levites as long as you live in your land.

When the LORD your God expands your territory as He has promised, and you crave meat and say, "I want to eat meat," you may eat it whenever you want. If the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His Name is too far from you, then you may slaughter any of the herd or flock He has given you, as I have commanded you, and you may eat it within your gates whenever you want. Indeed, you may eat it as you would eat a gazelle or deer; both the ceremonially unclean and the clean may eat it. Only be sure not to eat the blood, because the blood is the life, and you must not eat the life with the meat. You must not eat the blood; pour it on the ground like water. Do not eat it, so that it may go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is right in the eyes of the LORD.

But you are to take your holy things and your vow offerings and go to the place the LORD will choose. Present the meat and blood of your burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD your God. The blood of your other sacrifices must be poured out beside the altar of the LORD your God, but you may eat the meat. Be careful to obey all these things I command you, so that it may always go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is good and right in the eyes of the LORD your God.

When the LORD your God cuts off before you the nations you are entering to dispossess, and you drive them out and live in their land, be careful not to be ensnared by their ways after they have been destroyed before you. Do not inquire about their gods, asking, "How do these nations serve their gods? I will do likewise."

You must not worship the LORD your God in this way, because they practice for their gods every abomination which the LORD hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods.

See that you do everything I command you; do not add to it or subtract from it.

If a prophet or dreamer of dreams arises among you and proclaims a sign or wonder to you, and if the sign or wonder he has spoken to you comes about, but he says, "Let us follow other gods (which you have not known) and let us worship them," you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. For the LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love Him with all your heart and with all your soul. You are to follow the LORD your God and fear Him. Keep His commandments and listen to His voice; serve Him and hold fast to Him.

Such a prophet or dreamer must be put to death, because he has advocated rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery; he has tried to turn you from the way in which the LORD your God has commanded you to walk. So you must purge the evil from among you.

If your very own brother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you embrace, or your closest friend secretly entices you, saying, "Let us go and worship other gods" (which neither you nor your fathers have known, the gods of the peoples around you, whether near or far, whether from one end of the earth or the other), you must not yield to him or listen to him. Show him no pity, and do not spare him or shield him.

Instead, you must surely kill him. Your hand must be the first against him to put him to death, and then the hands of all the people. Stone him to death for trying to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. Then all Israel will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such a wicked thing among you.

If, regarding one of the cities the LORD your God is giving you to inhabit, you hear it said that wicked men have arisen from among you and have led the people of their city astray, saying, "Let us go and serve other gods" (which you have not known), then you must inquire, investigate, and interrogate thoroughly. And if it is established with certainty that this abomination has been committed among you, you must surely put the inhabitants of that city to the sword. Devote to destruction all its people and livestock.

And you are to gather all its plunder in the middle of the public square, and completely burn the city and

all its plunder as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God. The city must remain a mound of ruins forever, never to be rebuilt.

Nothing devoted to destruction shall cling to your hands, so that the LORD will turn from His fierce anger, grant you mercy, show you compassion, and multiply you as He swore to your fathers, because you obey the LORD your God, keeping all His commandments I am giving you today and doing what is right in the eyes of the LORD your God.

You are sons of the LORD your God; do not cut yourselves or shave your foreheads on behalf of the dead, for you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD has chosen you to be a people for His prized possession out of all the peoples on the face of the earth.

You must not eat any detestable thing. These are the animals that you may eat:

The ox, the sheep, the goat,
the deer, the gazelle, the roe deer,
the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope,
and the mountain sheep.

You may eat any animal that has a split hoof divided in two and that chews the cud.

But of those that chew the cud or have a completely divided hoof, you are not to eat the following:

the camel,
the rabbit,
or the rock badger.

Although they chew the cud, they do not have a divided hoof. They are unclean for you, as well as the pig; though it has a divided hoof, it does not chew the cud. It is unclean for you. You must not eat its meat or touch its carcass.

Of all the creatures that live in the water, you may eat anything with fins and scales, but you may not eat anything that does not have fins and scales; it is unclean for you.

You may eat any clean bird, but these you may not eat:

the eagle, the bearded vulture, the black vulture,
the red kite, the falcon, any kind of kite,
any kind of raven,
the ostrich, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk,
the little owl, the great owl, the white owl,
the desert owl, the osprey, the cormorant,
the stork, any kind of heron,
the hoopoe, or the bat.

All flying insects are unclean for you; they may not be eaten. But you may eat any clean bird.

You are not to eat any carcass; you may give it to the foreigner residing within your gates, and he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner. For you are a holy people belonging to the LORD your God.

You must not cook a young goat in its mother's milk.

You must be sure to set aside a tenth of all the produce brought forth each year from your fields. And you are to eat a tenth of your grain, new wine, and oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks, in the presence of the LORD your God at the place He will choose as a dwelling for His Name, so that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.

But if the distance is too great for you to carry that with which the LORD your God has blessed you, because the place where the LORD your God will choose to put His Name is too far away, then exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place the LORD your God will choose. Then you may spend the money on anything you desire: cattle, sheep, wine, strong drink, or anything you wish. You are to feast there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice with your household. And do not neglect the Levite within your gates, since he has no portion or inheritance among you.

At the end of every three years, bring a tenth of all your produce for that year and lay it up within your gates. Then the Levite (because he has no portion or inheritance among you), the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widow within your gates may come and eat and be satisfied. And the LORD your God will bless you in all the work of your hands.

At the end of every seven years you must cancel debts. This is the manner of remission: Every creditor shall cancel what he has loaned to his neighbor. He is not to collect anything from his neighbor or brother, because the LORD's time of release has been proclaimed. You may collect something from a foreigner, but you must forgive whatever your brother owes you.

There will be no poor among you, however, because the LORD will surely bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, if only you obey the LORD your God and are careful to follow all these commandments I am giving you today. When the LORD your God blesses you as He has promised, you will lend to many nations but borrow from none; you will rule over many nations but be ruled by none.

If there is a poor man among your brothers within any of the gates in the land that the LORD your God is giving you, then you are not to harden your heart or shut your hand from your poor brother. Instead, you are to open your hand to him and freely loan him whatever he needs.

Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought in your heart: "The seventh year, the year of release, is near," so that you look upon your poor brother begrudgingly and give him nothing. He will cry out to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty of sin.

Give generously to him, and do not let your heart be grieved when you do so. And because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything to which you put your hand. For there will never cease to be poor in the land; that is why I am commanding you to open wide your hand to your brother and to the poor and needy in your land.

If a fellow Hebrew, a man or a woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you must set him free.

And when you release him, do not send him away empty-handed. You are to furnish him liberally from your flock, your threshing floor, and your winepress. You shall give to him as the LORD your God has blessed you. Remember that you were slaves in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; that is why I am giving you this command today.

But if your servant says to you, 'I do not want to leave you,' because he loves you and your household and is well off with you, then take an awl and pierce it

through his ear into the door, and he will become your servant for life. And treat your maidservant the same way.

Do not regard it as a hardship to set your servant free, because his six years of service were worth twice the wages of a hired hand. And the LORD your God will bless you in all you do.

You must set apart to the LORD your God every firstborn male produced by your herds and flocks. You are not to put the firstborn of your oxen to work, nor are you to shear the firstborn of your flock. Each year you and your household are to eat it before the LORD your God in the place the LORD will choose.

But if an animal has a defect, is lame or blind, or has any serious flaw, you must not sacrifice it to the LORD your God. Eat it within your gates; both the ceremonially unclean and clean may eat it as they would a gazelle or a deer. But you must not eat the blood; pour it on the ground like water.

Observe the month of Abib and celebrate the Passover to the LORD your God, because in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night.

You are to offer to the LORD your God the Passover sacrifice from the herd or flock in the place the LORD will choose as a dwelling for His Name. You must not eat leavened bread with it; for seven days you are to eat with it unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you left the land of Egypt in haste— so that you may remember for the rest of your life the day you left the land of Egypt.

No leaven is to be found in all your land for seven days, and none of the meat you sacrifice in the evening of the first day shall remain until morning.

You are not to sacrifice the Passover animal in any of the towns that the LORD your God is giving you. You must only offer the Passover sacrifice at the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for His Name. Do this in the evening as the sun sets, at the same time you departed from Egypt. And you shall roast it and eat it in the place the LORD your God will choose, and in the morning you shall return to your tents.

For six days you must eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day you shall hold a solemn assembly to the LORD your God, and you must not do any work.

You are to count off seven weeks from the time you first put the sickle to the standing grain. And you shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with a freewill offering that you give in proportion to how the LORD your God has blessed you, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in the place He will choose as a dwelling for His Name — you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levite within your gates, as well as the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widows among you.

Remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and carefully follow these statutes.

You are to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days after you have gathered the produce of your threshing floor and your winepress. And you shall rejoice in your feast— you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levite, as well as the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widows among you.

For seven days you shall celebrate a feast to the LORD your God in the place He will choose, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that your joy will be complete.

Three times a year all your men are to appear before the LORD your God in the place He will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles. No one should appear before the LORD empty-handed. Everyone must appear with a gift as he is able, according to the blessing the LORD your God has given you.

You are to appoint judges and officials for your tribes in every town that the LORD your God is giving you. They are to judge the people with righteous judgment.

Do not deny justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous.

Pursue justice, and justice alone, so that you may live, and you may possess the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

Do not set up any wooden Asherah pole next to the altar you will build for the LORD your God, and do not set up for yourselves a sacred pillar, which the LORD your God hates.

You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a sheep with any defect or serious flaw, for that is detestable to the LORD your God.

If a man or woman among you in one of the towns that the LORD your God gives you is found doing evil in the sight of the LORD your God by transgressing His covenant and going to worship other gods, bowing down to them or to the sun or moon or any of the host of heaven— which I have forbidden— and if it is reported and you hear about it, you must investigate it thoroughly.

If the report is true and such an abomination has happened in Israel, you must bring out to your gates the man or woman who has done this evil thing, and you must stone that person to death. On the testimony of two or three witnesses a man shall be put to death, but he shall not be executed on the testimony of a lone witness. The hands of the witnesses shall be the first in putting him to death, and after that, the hands of all the people. So you must purge the evil from among you.

If a case is too difficult for you to judge, whether the controversy within your gates is regarding bloodshed, lawsuits, or assaults, you must go up to the place the LORD your God will choose. You are to go to the Levitical priests and to the judge who presides at that time. Inquire of them, and they will give you a verdict in the case.

You must abide by the verdict they give you at the place the LORD will choose. Be careful to do everything they instruct you, according to the terms of law they give and the verdict they proclaim. Do not turn aside to the right or to the left from the decision they declare to you.

But the man who acts presumptuously, refusing to listen either to the priest who stands there to serve the

LORD your God, or to the judge, must be put to death. You must purge the evil from Israel. Then all the people will hear and be afraid, and will no longer behave arrogantly.

When you enter the land that the LORD your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us," you are to appoint over yourselves the king whom the LORD your God shall choose. Appoint a king from among your brothers; you are not to set over yourselves a foreigner who is not one of your brothers.

But the king must not acquire many horses for himself or send the people back to Egypt to acquire more horses, for the LORD has said, 'You are never to go back that way again.' He must not take many wives for himself, lest his heart go astray. He must not accumulate for himself large amounts of silver and gold.

When he is seated on his royal throne, he must write for himself a copy of this instruction on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. It is to remain with him, and he is to read from it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by carefully observing all the words of this instruction and these statutes. Then his heart will not be exalted above his countrymen, and he will not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or to the left, in order that he and his sons may reign many years over his kingdom in Israel.

The Levitical priests — indeed the whole tribe of Levi — shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel. They are to eat the food offerings to the LORD; that is their inheritance. Although they have no inheritance among their brothers, the LORD is their inheritance, as He promised them.

This shall be the priests' share from the people who offer a sacrifice, whether a bull or a sheep: the priests are to be given the shoulder, the jowls, and the stomach. You are to give them the firstfruits of your grain, new wine, and oil, and the first wool sheared from your flock. For the LORD your God has chosen Levi and his sons out of all your tribes to stand and minister in His name for all time.

Now if a Levite moves from any town of residence throughout Israel and comes in all earnestness to the place the LORD will choose, then he shall serve in the name of the LORD his God like all his fellow Levites who stand there before the LORD. They shall eat equal portions, even though he has received money from the sale of his father's estate.

When you enter the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, practices divination or conjury, interprets omens, practices sorcery, casts spells, consults a medium or spiritist, or inquires of the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD. And because of these detestable things, the LORD your God is driving out the nations before you.

You must be blameless before the LORD your God. Though these nations, which you will dispossess, listen to conjurers and diviners, the LORD your God has not permitted you to do so.

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers. You must listen to him. This is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God or see this great fire anymore, so that we will not die!"

Then the LORD said to me, "They have spoken well. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. I will put My words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. And I will hold accountable anyone who does not listen to My words that the prophet speaks in My name. But if any prophet dares to speak a message in My name that I have not commanded him to speak, or to speak in the name of other gods, that prophet must be put to death."

You may ask in your heart, "How can we recognize a message that the LORD has not spoken?" When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD and the message does not come to pass or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.

When the LORD your God has cut off the nations whose land He is giving you, and when you have driven them out and settled in their cities and houses, then you are to set apart for yourselves three cities within the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess. You are to build roads for yourselves and divide into three regions the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, so that any manslayer can flee to these cities.

Now this is the situation regarding the manslayer who flees to one of these cities to save his life, having killed his neighbor accidentally, without intending to harm him: If he goes into the forest with his neighbor to cut timber and swings his axe to chop down a tree, but the blade flies off the handle and strikes and kills his neighbor, he may flee to one of these cities to save his life.

Otherwise, the avenger of blood might pursue the manslayer in a rage, overtake him if the distance is great, and strike him dead though he did not deserve to die, since he did not intend any harm. This is why I am commanding you to set apart for yourselves three cities.

And if the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as He swore to your fathers, and gives you all the land He promised them, and if you carefully keep all these commandments I am giving you today, loving the LORD your God and walking in His ways at all times, then you are to add three more cities to these three.

Thus innocent blood will not be shed in the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, so that you will not be guilty of bloodshed.

If, however, a man hates his neighbor and lies in wait, attacks him and kills him, and then flees to one of these cities, the elders of his city must send for him, bring him back, and hand him over to the avenger of blood to die. You must show him no pity. You are to purge from Israel the guilt of shedding innocent blood, that it may go well with you.

You must not move your neighbor's boundary marker, which was set up by your ancestors to mark the

inheritance you shall receive in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess.

A lone witness is not sufficient to establish any wrongdoing or sin against a man, regardless of what offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

If a false witness testifies against someone, accusing him of a crime, both parties to the dispute must stand in the presence of the LORD, before the priests and judges who are in office at that time. The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness is proven to be a liar who has falsely accused his brother, you must do to him as he intended to do to his brother. So you must purge the evil from among you. Then the rest of the people will hear and be afraid, and they will never again do anything so evil among you. You must show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, and foot for foot.

When you go out to war against your enemies and see horses, chariots, and an army larger than yours, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, is with you. When you are about to go into battle, the priest is to come forward and address the army, saying to them, “Hear, O Israel, today you are going into battle with your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not be alarmed or terrified because of them. For the LORD your God goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory.”

Furthermore, the officers are to address the army, saying, “Has any man built a new house and not dedicated it? Let him return home, or he may die in battle and another man dedicate it. Has any man planted a vineyard and not begun to enjoy its fruit? Let him return home, or he may die in battle and another man enjoy its fruit. Has any man become pledged to a woman and not married her? Let him return home, or he may die in battle and another man marry her.”

Then the officers shall speak further to the army, saying, “Is any man afraid or fainthearted? Let him return home, so that the hearts of his brothers will not melt like his own.”

When the officers have finished addressing the army, they are to appoint commanders to lead it.

When you approach a city to fight against it, you are to make an offer of peace. If they accept your offer of peace and open their gates, all the people there will become forced laborers to serve you.

But if they refuse to make peace with you and wage war against you, lay siege to that city. When the LORD your God has delivered it into your hand, you must put every male to the sword. But the women, children, livestock, and whatever else is in the city— all its spoil — you may take as plunder, and you shall use the spoil of your enemies that the LORD your God gives you. This is how you are to treat all the cities that are far away from you and do not belong to the nations nearby.

However, in the cities of the nations that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, you must not leave alive anything that breathes. For you must devote them to complete destruction— the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites— as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that they cannot teach you to do all the detestable things they do for their gods, and so cause you to sin against the LORD your God.

When you lay siege to a city for an extended time while fighting against it to capture it, you must not destroy its trees by putting an axe to them, because you can eat their fruit. You must not cut them down. Are the trees of the field human, that you should besiege them? But you may destroy the trees that you know do not produce fruit. Use them to build siege works against the city that is waging war against you, until it falls.

If one is found slain, lying in a field in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess, and it is not known who killed him, your elders and judges must come out and measure the distance from the victim to the neighboring cities.

Then the elders of the city nearest the victim shall take a heifer that has never been yoked or used for work, bring the heifer to a valley with running water that has not been plowed or sown, and break its neck there by the stream.

And the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come forward, for the LORD your God has chosen them to serve Him and pronounce blessings in His name and to give a ruling in every dispute and case of assault. Then all the elders of the city nearest the victim shall wash their hands by the stream over the heifer whose neck has been broken, and they shall declare, “Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it. Accept this atonement, O LORD, for Your people Israel whom You have redeemed, and do not hold the shedding of innocent blood against them.”

And the bloodshed will be atoned for. So you shall purge from among you the guilt of shedding innocent blood, since you have done what is right in the eyes of the LORD.

When you go to war against your enemies and the LORD your God delivers them into your hand and you take them captive, if you see a beautiful woman among them, and you desire her and want to take her as your wife, then you shall bring her into your house. She must shave her head, trim her nails, and put aside the clothing of her captivity.

After she has lived in your house a full month and mourned her father and mother, you may have relations with her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife. And if you are not pleased with her, you are to let her go wherever she wishes. But you must not sell her for money or treat her as a slave, since you have dishonored her.

If a man has two wives, one beloved and the other unloved, and both bear him sons, but the unloved wife has the firstborn son, when that man assigns his inheritance to his sons he must not appoint the son of the beloved wife as the firstborn over the son of the unloved wife.

Instead, he must acknowledge the firstborn, the son of his unloved wife, by giving him a double portion of all that he has. For that son is the firstfruits of his father’s strength; the right of the firstborn belongs to him.

If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and does not listen

to them when disciplined, his father and mother are to lay hold of him and bring him to the elders of his city, to the gate of his hometown, and say to the elders, “This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he does not obey us. He is a glutton and a drunkard.”

Then all the men of his city will stone him to death. So you must purge the evil from among you, and all Israel will hear and be afraid.

If a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and he is executed, and you hang his body on a tree, you must not leave the body on the tree overnight, but you must be sure to bury him that day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse. You must not defile the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.

If you see your brother’s ox or sheep straying, you must not ignore it; be sure to return it to your brother. If your brother does not live near you, or if you do not know who he is, you are to take the animal home to remain with you until your brother comes seeking it; then you can return it to him. And you shall do the same for his donkey, his cloak, or anything your brother has lost and you have found. You must not ignore it.

If you see your brother’s donkey or ox fallen on the road, you must not ignore it; you must help him lift it up.

A woman must not wear men’s clothing, and a man must not wear women’s clothing, for whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD your God.

If you come across a bird’s nest with chicks or eggs, either in a tree or on the ground along the road, and the mother is sitting on the chicks or eggs, you must not take the mother along with the young. You may take the young, but be sure to let the mother go, so that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days.

If you build a new house, you are to construct a railing around your roof, so that you do not bring bloodguilt on your house if someone falls from it.

Do not plant your vineyard with two types of seed; if you do, the entire harvest will be defiled — both the crop you plant and the fruit of your vineyard.

Do not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together.

Do not wear clothes of wool and linen woven together.

You are to make tassels on the four corners of the cloak you wear.

Suppose a man marries a woman, has relations with her, and comes to hate her, and he then accuses her of shameful conduct and gives her a bad name, saying, “I married this woman and had relations with her, but I discovered she was not a virgin.”

Then the young woman’s father and mother shall bring the proof of her virginity to the city elders at the gate and say to the elders, “I gave my daughter in marriage to this man, but he has come to hate her. And now he has accused her of shameful conduct, saying, ‘I discovered that your daughter was not a virgin.’ But here is the proof of her virginity.” And they shall spread out the cloth before the city elders.

Then the elders of that city shall take the man and punish him. They are also to fine him a hundred shekels of silver and give them to the young woman’s father, because this man has given a virgin of Israel a bad name. And she shall remain his wife; he must not divorce her as long as he lives.

If, however, this accusation is true, and no proof of the young woman’s virginity can be found, she shall be brought to the door of her father’s house, and there the men of her city will stone her to death. For she has committed an outrage in Israel by being promiscuous in her father’s house. So you must purge the evil from among you.

If a man is found lying with another man’s wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel.

If there is a virgin pledged in marriage to a man, and another man encounters her in the city and sleeps with her, you must take both of them out to the gate of that city and stone them to death— the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he has violated his neighbor’s wife. So you must purge the evil from among you.

But if the man encounters a betrothed woman in the open country, and he overpowers her and lies with her, only the man who has done this must die. Do nothing to the young woman, because she has committed no sin worthy of death. This case is just like one in which a man attacks his neighbor and murders him. When he found her in the field, the betrothed woman cried out, but there was no one to save her.

If a man encounters a virgin who is not pledged in marriage, and he seizes her and lies with her, and they are discovered, then the man who lay with her must pay the young woman’s father fifty shekels of silver, and she must become his wife because he has violated her. He must not divorce her as long as he lives.

A man is not to marry his father’s wife, so that he will not dishonor his father’s marriage bed.

No man with crushed or severed genitals may enter the assembly of the LORD.

No one of illegitimate birth may enter the assembly of the LORD, nor may any of his descendants, even to the tenth generation.

No Ammonite or Moabite or any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even to the tenth generation. For they did not meet you with food and water on your way out of Egypt, and they hired Balaam son of Beor from Pethor in Aram-naharaim to curse you. Yet the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam, and the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you. You are not to seek peace or prosperity from them as long as you live.

Do not despise an Edomite, for he is your brother. Do not despise an Egyptian, because you lived as a foreigner in his land. The third generation of children born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD.

When you are encamped against your enemies, then you shall keep yourself from every wicked thing. If any man among you becomes unclean because of a nocturnal emission, he must leave the camp and stay outside. When evening approaches, he must wash with water, and when the sun sets he may return to the camp.

You must have a place outside the camp to go and relieve yourself. And you must have a digging tool in

your equipment so that when you relieve yourself you can dig a hole and cover up your excrement.

For the LORD your God walks throughout your camp to protect you and deliver your enemies to you. Your camp must be holy, lest He see anything unclean among you and turn away from you.

Do not return a slave to his master if he has taken refuge with you. Let him live among you wherever he chooses, in the town of his pleasing. Do not oppress him.

No daughter or son of Israel is to be a shrine prostitute. You must not bring the wages of a prostitute, whether female or male, into the house of the LORD your God to fulfill any vow, because both are detestable to the LORD your God.

Do not charge your brother interest on money, food, or any other type of loan. You may charge a foreigner interest, but not your brother, so that the LORD your God may bless you in everything to which you put your hand in the land that you are entering to possess.

If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not be slow to keep it, because He will surely require it of you, and you will be guilty of sin. But if you refrain from making a vow, you will not be guilty of sin. Be careful to follow through on what comes from your lips, because you have freely vowed to the LORD your God with your own mouth.

When you enter your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes, but you must not put any in your basket.

When you enter your neighbor's grainfield, you may pluck the heads of grain with your hand, but you must not put a sickle to your neighbor's grain.

If a man marries a woman, but she becomes displeasing to him because he finds some indecency in her, he may write her a certificate of divorce, hand it to her, and send her away from his house.

If, after leaving his house, she goes and becomes another man's wife, and the second man hates her, writes her a certificate of divorce, hands it to her, and sends her away from his house, or if he dies, then the husband who divorced her first may not remarry her after she has been defiled, for that is an abomination to the LORD. You must not bring sin upon the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.

If a man is newly married, he must not be sent to war or be pressed into any duty. For one year he is free to stay at home and bring joy to the wife he has married.

Do not take a pair of millstones or even an upper millstone as security for a debt, because that would be taking one's livelihood as security.

If a man is caught kidnapping one of his Israelite brothers, whether he treats him as a slave or sells him, the kidnapper must die. So you must purge the evil from among you.

In cases of infectious skin diseases, be careful to diligently follow everything the Levitical priests instruct you. Be careful to do as I have commanded them. Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam on the journey after you came out of Egypt.

When you lend anything to your neighbor, do not enter his house to collect security. You are to stand outside while the man to whom you are lending brings the security out to you. If he is a poor man, you must not go to sleep with the security in your possession; be sure to return it to him by sunset, so that he may sleep in his own cloak and bless you, and this will be credited to you as righteousness before the LORD your God.

Do not oppress a hired hand who is poor and needy, whether he is a brother or a foreigner residing in one of your towns. You are to pay his wages each day before sunset, because he is poor and depends on them. Otherwise he may cry out to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty of sin.

Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin.

Do not deny justice to the foreigner or the fatherless, and do not take a widow's cloak as security. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you from that place. Therefore I am commanding you to do this.

If you are harvesting in your field and forget a sheaf there, do not go back to get it. It is to be left for the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

When you beat the olives from your trees, you must not go over the branches again. What remains will be for the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widow.

When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you must not go over the vines again. What remains will be for the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widow. Remember that you were slaves in the land of Egypt. Therefore I am commanding you to do this.

If there is a dispute between men, they are to go to court to be judged, so that the innocent may be acquitted and the guilty condemned.

If the guilty man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall have him lie down and be flogged in his presence with the number of lashes his crime warrants. He may receive no more than forty lashes, lest your brother be beaten any more than that and be degraded in your sight.

Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.

When brothers dwell together and one of them dies without a son, the widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother is to take her as his wife and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law for her. The first son she bears will carry on the name of the dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.

But if the man does not want to marry his brother's widow, she is to go to the elders at the city gate and say, "My husband's brother refuses to preserve his brother's name in Israel. He is not willing to perform the duty of a brother-in-law for me."

Then the elders of his city shall summon him and speak with him. If he persists and says, "I do not want to marry her," his brother's widow shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, remove his sandal, spit in his face, and declare, "This is what is done to the man who will not maintain his brother's line." And his family name in Israel will be called "The House of the Unsandaled."

If two men are fighting, and the wife of one comes to rescue her husband from the one striking him, and

she reaches out her hand and grabs his genitals, you are to cut off her hand. You must show her no pity.

You shall not have two differing weights in your bag, one heavy and one light. You shall not have two differing measures in your house, one large and one small.

You must maintain accurate and honest weights and measures, so that you may live long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. For everyone who behaves dishonestly in regard to these things is detestable to the LORD your God.

Remember what the Amalekites did to you along your way from Egypt, how they met you on your journey when you were tired and weary, and they attacked all your stragglers; they had no fear of God.

When the LORD your God gives you rest from the enemies around you in the land that He is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you are to blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!

When you enter the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you take possession of it and settle in it, you are to take some of the firstfruits of all your produce from the soil of the land that the LORD your God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for His Name, to the priest who is serving at that time, and say to him, "I declare today to the LORD your God that I have entered the land that the LORD swore to our fathers to give us."

Then the priest shall take the basket from your hands and place it before the altar of the LORD your God, and you are to declare before the LORD your God, "My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down to Egypt few in number and lived there and became a great nation, mighty and numerous. But the Egyptians mistreated us and afflicted us, putting us to hard labor. So we called out to the LORD, the God of our fathers; and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, toil, and oppression. Then the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror, signs, and wonders. And He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land that You, O LORD, have given me."

Then you are to place the basket before the LORD your God and bow down before Him. So you shall rejoice — you, the Levite, and the foreigner dwelling among you — in all the good things the LORD your God has given to you and your household.

When you have finished laying aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you are to give it to the Levite, the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat and be filled within your gates.

Then you shall declare in the presence of the LORD your God, "I have removed from my house the sacred portion and have given it to the Levite, the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all the commandments You have given me. I have not transgressed or forgotten Your commandments. I have not eaten any of the sacred portion while in mourning, or removed any of it while unclean, or offered any of it for the dead. I have obeyed the LORD my God; I have done everything You commanded me. Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel and the land You have given us as You swore to our fathers— a land flowing with milk and honey."

The LORD your God commands you this day to follow these statutes and ordinances. You must be careful to follow them with all your heart and with all your soul.

Today you have proclaimed that the LORD is your God and that you will walk in His ways, keep His statutes and commandments and ordinances, and listen to His voice.

And today the LORD has proclaimed that you are His people and treasured possession as He promised, that you are to keep all His commandments, that He will set you high in praise and name and honor above all the nations He has made, and that you will be a holy people to the LORD your God, as He has promised.

Then Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people: "Keep all the commandments I am giving you today.

And on the day you cross the Jordan into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, set up large stones and coat them with plaster. Write on them all the words of this law when you have crossed over to enter the land that the LORD your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you. And when you have crossed the Jordan, you are to set up these stones on Mount Ebal, as I am commanding you today, and you are to coat them with plaster.

Moreover, you are to build there an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones. You must not use any iron tool on them. You shall build the altar of the LORD your God with uncut stones and offer upon it burnt offerings to the LORD your God. There you are to sacrifice your peace offerings, eating them and rejoicing in the presence of the LORD your God. And you shall write distinctly upon these stones all the words of this law."

Then Moses and the Levitical priests spoke to all Israel: "Be silent, O Israel, and listen! This day you have become the people of the LORD your God. You shall therefore obey the voice of the LORD your God and follow His commandments and statutes I am giving you today."

On that day Moses commanded the people: "When you have crossed the Jordan, these tribes shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. And these tribes shall stand on Mount Ebal to deliver the curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.

Then the Levites shall proclaim in a loud voice to every Israelite:

'Cursed is the man who makes a carved idol or molten image — an abomination to the LORD, the work of the hands of a craftsman — and sets it up in secret.'

And let all the people say, 'Amen!'

'Cursed is he who dishonors his father or mother.'

And let all the people say, 'Amen!'

'Cursed is he who moves his neighbor's boundary stone.'

And let all the people say, 'Amen!'

'Cursed is he who lets a blind man wander in the road.'

And let all the people say, 'Amen!'

'Cursed is he who withholds justice from the foreigner, the fatherless, or the widow.'

And let all the people say, 'Amen!'

'Cursed is he who sleeps with his father's wife, for he has violated his father's marriage bed.'

And let all the people say, 'Amen!'

'Cursed is he who lies with any animal.'

And let all the people say, 'Amen!'

'Cursed is he who sleeps with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother.'

And let all the people say, 'Amen!'

'Cursed is he who sleeps with his mother-in-law.'

And let all the people say, 'Amen!'

'Cursed is he who strikes down his neighbor in secret.'

And let all the people say, 'Amen!'

'Cursed is he who accepts a bribe to kill an innocent person.'

And let all the people say, 'Amen!'

'Cursed is he who does not put the words of this law into practice.'

And let all the people say, 'Amen!'"

"Now if you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God and are careful to follow all His commandments I am giving you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings will come upon you and overtake you, if you will obey the voice of the LORD your God:

> You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. The fruit of your womb will be blessed, as well as the produce of your land and the offspring of your livestock — the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. Your basket and kneading bowl will be blessed. You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out.

The LORD will cause the enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you. They will march out against you in one direction but flee from you in seven.

The LORD will decree a blessing on your barns and on everything to which you put your hand; the LORD your God will bless you in the land He is giving you. The LORD will establish you as His holy people, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways. Then all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will stand in awe of you.

The LORD will make you prosper abundantly — in the fruit of your womb, the offspring of your livestock, and the produce of your land — in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers to give you.

The LORD will open the heavens, His abundant storehouse, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations, but borrow from none.

The LORD will make you the head and not the tail; you will only move upward and never downward, if you hear and carefully follow the commandments of the LORD your God, which I am giving you today. Do not turn aside to the right or to the left from any of the words I command you today, and do not go after other gods to serve them.

If, however, you do not obey the LORD your God by carefully following all His commandments and statutes I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

> You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country. Your basket and kneading bowl will be cursed. The fruit of your womb will be cursed, as well as the produce of your land, the calves of your herds, and the lambs of your flocks. You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out.

The LORD will send curses upon you, confusion and reproof in all to which you put your hand, until you are destroyed and quickly perish because of the wickedness you have committed in forsaking Him.

The LORD will make the plague cling to you until He has exterminated you from the land that you are entering to possess. The LORD will strike you with wasting disease, with fever and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, and with blight and mildew; these will pursue you until you perish. The sky over your head will be bronze, and the earth beneath you iron.

The LORD will turn the rain of your land into dust and powder; it will descend on you from the sky until you are destroyed.

The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You will march out against them in one direction but flee from them in seven. You will be an object of horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. Your corpses will be food for all the birds of the air and beasts of the earth, with no one to scare them away.

The LORD will afflict you with the boils of Egypt, with tumors and scabs and itch from which you cannot be cured.

The LORD will afflict you with madness, blindness, and confusion of mind, and at noon you will grope about like a blind man in the darkness. You will not prosper in your ways. Day after day you will be oppressed and plundered, with no one to save you.

You will be pledged in marriage to a woman, but another man will violate her. You will build a house but will not live in it. You will plant a vineyard but will not enjoy its fruit. Your ox will be slaughtered before your eyes, but you will not eat any of it. Your donkey will be taken away and not returned to you. Your flock will be given to your enemies, and no one will save you.

Your sons and daughters will be given to another nation, while your eyes grow weary looking for them day after day, with no power in your hand. A people you do not know will eat the produce of your land and of all your toil. All your days you will be oppressed and crushed. You will be driven mad by the sights you see.

The LORD will afflict you with painful, incurable boils on your knees and thighs, from the soles of your feet to the top of your head.

The LORD will bring you and the king you appoint to a nation neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you will worship other gods— gods of wood and stone. You will become an object of horror, scorn, and ridicule among all the nations to which the LORD will drive you.

You will sow much seed in the field but harvest little, because the locusts will consume it. You will plant and cultivate vineyards, but will neither drink the wine nor gather the grapes, because worms will eat them. You will have olive trees throughout your territory but will never anoint yourself with oil, because the olives will drop off. You will father sons and daughters, but they will not remain yours, because they will go into captivity. Swarms of locusts will consume all your trees and the produce of your land.

The foreigner living among you will rise higher and higher above you, while you sink down lower and lower. He will lend to you, but you will not lend to him. He will be the head, and you will be the tail.

All these curses will come upon you. They will pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, since you did not obey the LORD your God and keep the commandments and statutes He gave you. These curses will be a sign and a wonder upon you and your descendants forever.

Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart in all your abundance, you will serve your enemies the LORD will send against you in famine, thirst, nakedness, and destitution. He will place an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you.

The LORD will bring a nation from afar, from the ends of the earth, to swoop down upon you like an eagle — a nation whose language you will not understand, a ruthless nation with no respect for the old and no pity for the young. They will eat the offspring of your livestock and the produce of your land until you are destroyed. They will leave you no grain or new wine or oil, no calves of your herds or lambs of your flocks, until they have caused you to perish. They will besiege all the cities throughout your land, until the high and fortified walls in which you trust have fallen. They will besiege all your cities throughout the land that the LORD your God has given you.

Then you will eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of the sons and daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and distress that your enemy will inflict on you.

The most gentle and refined man among you will begrudge his brother, the wife he embraces, and the rest of his children who have survived, refusing to share with any of them the flesh of his children he will eat because he has nothing left in the siege and distress that your enemy will inflict on you within all your gates.

The most gentle and refined woman among you, so gentle and refined she would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground, will begrudge the husband she embraces and her son and daughter the afterbirth that comes from between her legs and the children she bears, because she will secretly eat them for lack of anything else in the siege and distress that your enemy will inflict on you within your gates.

If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law which are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name— the LORD your God— He will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary disasters, severe and lasting plagues, and terrible and chronic sicknesses. He will afflict you again with all the diseases you dreaded in Egypt, and they will cling to you.

The LORD will also bring upon you every sickness and plague not recorded in this Book of the Law, until you are destroyed. You who were as numerous as the stars in the sky will be left few in number, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God.

Just as it pleased the LORD to make you prosper and multiply, so also it will please Him to annihilate you and destroy you. And you will be uprooted from the land you are entering to possess.

Then the LORD will scatter you among all the nations, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you will worship other gods, gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. Among those nations you will find no repose, not even a resting place for the sole of your foot. There the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and a despairing soul.

So your life will hang in doubt before you, and you will be afraid night and day, never certain of survival. In the morning you will say, 'If only it were evening!' and in the evening you will say, 'If only it were morning!'— because of the dread in your hearts of the terrifying sights you will see.

The LORD will return you to Egypt in ships by a route that I said you should never see again. There you will sell yourselves to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you."

These are the words of the covenant that the LORD commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in the land of Moab, in addition to the covenant He had made with them at Horeb.

Moses summoned all Israel and proclaimed to them, "You have seen with your own eyes everything the LORD did in Egypt to Pharaoh, to all his officials, and to all his land. You saw with your own eyes the great trials, and those miraculous signs and wonders. Yet to this day the LORD has not given you a mind to understand, eyes to see, or ears to hear.

> For forty years I led you in the wilderness, yet your clothes and sandals did not wear out. You ate no bread and drank no wine or strong drink, so that you might know that I am the LORD your God.

When you reached this place, Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan came out against us in battle, but we defeated them. We took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. So keep and follow the words of this covenant, that you may prosper in all you do.

All of you are standing today before the LORD your God— you leaders of tribes, elders, officials, and all the men of Israel, your children and wives, and the foreigners in your camps who cut your wood and draw your water— so that you may enter into the covenant of the LORD your God, which He is making with you today, and into His oath, and so that He may establish you today as His people, and He may be your God as He promised you and as He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

I am making this covenant and this oath not only with you, but also with those who are standing here

with us today in the presence of the LORD our God, as well as with those who are not here today.

For you yourselves know how we lived in the land of Egypt and how we passed through the nations on the way here. You saw the abominations and idols among them made of wood and stone, of silver and gold.

Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations. Make sure there is no root among you that bears such poisonous and bitter fruit, because when such a person hears the words of this oath, he invokes a blessing on himself, saying, 'I will have peace, even though I walk in the stubbornness of my own heart.'

This will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry. The LORD will never be willing to forgive him. Instead, His anger and jealousy will burn against that man, and every curse written in this book will fall upon him. The LORD will blot out his name from under heaven and single him out from all the tribes of Israel for disaster, according to all the curses of the covenant written in this Book of the Law.

Then the generation to come — your sons who follow you and the foreigner who comes from a distant land — will see the plagues of the land and the sicknesses the LORD has inflicted on it. All its soil will be a burning waste of sulfur and salt, unsown and unproductive, with no plant growing on it, just like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in His fierce anger.

So all the nations will ask, 'Why has the LORD done such a thing to this land? Why this great outburst of anger?'

And the people will answer, 'It is because they abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went and served other gods, and they worshiped gods they had not known— gods that the LORD had not given to them. Therefore the anger of the LORD burned against this land, and He brought upon it every curse written in this book. The LORD uprooted them from their land in His anger, rage, and great wrath, and He cast them into another land, where they are today.'

The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, so that we may follow all the words of this law.''

"When all these things come upon you— the blessings and curses I have set before you— and you call them to mind in all the nations to which the LORD your God has banished you, and when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey His voice with all your heart and all your soul according to everything I am giving you today, then He will restore you from captivity and have compassion on you and gather you from all the nations to which the LORD your God has scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the farthest horizon, He will gather you and return you from there.

And the LORD your God will bring you into the land your fathers possessed, and you will take possession of it. He will cause you to prosper and multiply more than your fathers. The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, and you will love Him with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.

Then the LORD your God will put all these curses upon your enemies who hate you and persecute you. And you will again obey the voice of the LORD and follow all His commandments I am giving you today. So the LORD your God will make you abound in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the offspring of your livestock, and the produce of your land. Indeed, the LORD will again delight in your prosperity, as He delighted in that of your fathers, if you obey the LORD your God by keeping His commandments and statutes that are written in this Book of the Law, and if you turn to Him with all your heart and with all your soul.

For this commandment I give you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not in heaven, that you should need to ask, 'Who will ascend into heaven to get it for us and proclaim it, that we may obey it?' And it is not beyond the sea, that you should need to ask, 'Who will cross the sea to get it for us and proclaim it, that we may obey it?' But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you may obey it.

See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, as well as death and disaster. For I am commanding you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, statutes, and ordinances, so that you may live and increase, and the LORD your God may bless you in the land that you are entering to possess.

But if your heart turns away and you do not listen, but are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you today that you will surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess.

I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore choose life, so that you and your descendants may live, and that you may love the LORD your God, obey Him, and hold fast to Him. For He is your life, and He will prolong your life in the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

When Moses had finished speaking these words to all Israel, he said to them, "I am now a hundred and twenty years old; I am no longer able to come and go, and the LORD has said to me, 'You shall not cross the Jordan.'

The LORD your God Himself will cross over ahead of you. He will destroy these nations before you, and you will dispossess them. Joshua will cross ahead of you, as the LORD has said. And the LORD will do to them as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, when He destroyed them along with their land.

The LORD will deliver them over to you, and you must do to them exactly as I have commanded you. Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid or terrified of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you."

Then Moses called for Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for

you will go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their fathers to give them, and you shall give it to them as an inheritance. The LORD Himself goes before you; He will be with you. He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid or discouraged."

So Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel.

Then Moses commanded them, "At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of remission of debt, during the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes before the LORD your God at the place He will choose, you are to read this law in the hearing of all Israel.

Assemble the people— men, women, children, and the foreigners within your gates— so that they may listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and to follow carefully all the words of this law. Then their children who do not know the law will listen and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, the time of your death is near. Call Joshua and present yourselves at the Tent of Meeting, so that I may commission him."

So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves at the Tent of Meeting. Then the LORD appeared at the tent in a pillar of cloud, and the cloud stood over the entrance to the tent.

And the LORD said to Moses, "You will soon rest with your fathers, and these people will rise up and prostitute themselves with the foreign gods of the land they are entering. They will forsake Me and break the covenant I have made with them.

On that day My anger will burn against them, and I will abandon them and hide My face from them, so that they will be consumed, and many troubles and afflictions will befall them.

On that day they will say, 'Have not these disasters come upon us because our God is no longer with us?'

And on that day I will surely hide My face because of all the evil they have done by turning to other gods.

Now therefore, write down for yourselves this song and teach it to the Israelites; have them recite it, so that it may be a witness for Me against them. When I have brought them into the land that I swore to give their fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey, they will eat their fill and prosper. Then they will turn to other gods and worship them, and they will reject Me and break My covenant. And when many troubles and afflictions have come upon them, this song will testify against them, because it will not be forgotten from the lips of their descendants. For I know their inclination, even before I bring them into the land that I swore to give them."

So that very day Moses wrote down this song and taught it to the Israelites.

Then the LORD commissioned Joshua son of Nun and said, "Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land that I swore to give them, and I will be with you."

When Moses had finished writing in a book the words of this law from beginning to end, he gave this command to the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD: "Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, so that it may remain there as a witness against you. For I know how rebellious and stiff-necked you are. If you are already rebelling against the LORD while I am still alive, how much more will you rebel after my death!

Assemble before me all the elders of your tribes and all your officers so that I may speak these words in their hearing and call heaven and earth to witness against them. For I know that after my death you will become utterly corrupt and turn from the path I have commanded you. And in the days to come, disaster will befall you because you will do evil in the sight of the LORD to provoke Him to anger by the work of your hands."

Then Moses recited aloud to the whole assembly of Israel the words of this song from beginning to end:

> Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. Let my teaching fall like rain and my speech settle like dew, like gentle rain on new grass, like showers on tender plants. For I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Ascribe greatness to our God! He is the Rock, His work is perfect; all His ways are just. A God of faithfulness without injustice, righteous and upright is He. His people have acted corruptly toward Him; the blemish on them is not that of His children, but of a perverse and crooked generation. Is this how you repay the LORD, O foolish and senseless people? Is He not your Father and Creator? Has He not made you and established you? Remember the days of old; consider the years long past. Ask your father, and he will tell you, your elders, and they will inform you. When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when He divided the sons of man, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. But the LORD's portion is His people, Jacob His allotted inheritance. He found him in a desert land, in a barren, howling wilderness; He surrounded him, He instructed him, He guarded him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, He spread His wings to catch them and carried them on His pinions. The LORD alone led him, and no foreign god was with him. He made him ride on the heights of the land and fed him the produce of the field. He nourished him with honey from the rock and oil from the flinty crag, with curds from the herd and milk from the flock, with the fat of lambs, with rams from Bashan, and goats, with the choicest grains of wheat. From the juice of the finest grapes you drank the wine. But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked— becoming fat, bloated, and gorged. He abandoned the God who made him and scorned the Rock of his salvation. They provoked His jealousy with foreign gods; they enraged Him with abominations. They sacrificed to demons, not to God, to gods they had not known, to newly arrived gods, which your fathers did not fear. You ignored the Rock

who brought you forth; you forgot the God who gave you birth. When the LORD saw this, He rejected them, provoked to anger by His sons and daughters. He said: “I will hide My face from them; I will see what will be their end. For they are a perverse generation— children of unfaithfulness. They have provoked My jealousy by that which is not God; they have enraged Me with their worthless idols. So I will make them jealous by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation without understanding. For a fire has been kindled by My anger, and it burns to the depths of Sheol; it consumes the earth and its produce, and scorches the foundations of the mountains. I will heap disasters upon them; I will spend My arrows against them. They will be wasted from hunger and ravaged by pestilence and bitter plague; I will send the fangs of wild beasts against them, with the venom of vipers that slither in the dust. Outside, the sword will take their children, and inside, terror will strike the young man and the young woman, the infant and the gray-haired man. I would have said that I would cut them to pieces and blot out their memory from mankind, if I had not dreaded the taunt of the enemy, lest their adversaries misunderstand and say: ‘Our own hand has prevailed; it was not the LORD who did all this.’” Israel is a nation devoid of counsel, with no understanding among them. If only they were wise, they would understand it; they would comprehend their fate. How could one man pursue a thousand, or two put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, unless the LORD had given them up? For their rock is not like our Rock, even our enemies concede. But their vine is from the vine of Sodom and from the fields of Gomorrah. Their grapes are poisonous; their clusters are bitter. Their wine is the venom of serpents, the deadly poison of cobras. “Have I not stored up these things, sealed up within My vaults? Vengeance is Mine; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; for their day of disaster is near, and their doom is coming quickly.” For the LORD will vindicate His people and have compassion on His servants when He sees that their strength is gone and no one remains, slave or free. He will say: “Where are their gods, the rock in which they took refuge, which ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offerings? Let them rise up and help you; let them give you shelter! See now that I am He; there is no God besides Me. I bring death and I give life; I wound and I heal, and there is no one who can deliver from My hand. For I lift up My hand to heaven and declare: As surely as I live forever, when I sharpen My flashing sword, and My hand grasps it in judgment, I will take vengeance on My adversaries and repay those who hate Me. I will make My arrows drunk with blood, while My sword devours flesh— the blood of the slain and captives, the heads of the enemy leaders.” Rejoice, [O heavens, with Him, and let all God’s angels worship Him.] Rejoice, O nations, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His children. He will take vengeance on His adversaries [and repay those who hate Him]; He will cleanse His land and His people.

Then Moses came with Joshua son of Nun and recited all the words of this song in the hearing of the people. When Moses had finished reciting all these words to all Israel, he said to them, “Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to carefully follow all the words of this law. For they are not idle words to you, because they are your life, and by them you will live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess.”

On that same day the LORD said to Moses, “Go up into the Abarim Range to Mount Nebo, in the land of Moab across from Jericho, and view the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites as their own possession.

And there on the mountain that you climb, you will die and be gathered to your people, just as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people.

For at the waters of Meribah-kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin, both of you broke faith with Me among the Israelites by failing to treat Me as holy in their presence. Although you shall see from a distance the land that I am giving the Israelites, you shall not enter it.”

This is the blessing that Moses the man of God pronounced upon the Israelites before his death. He said:

> “The LORD came from Sinai and dawned upon us from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran and came with myriads of holy ones, with flaming fire at His right hand. Surely You love the people; all the holy ones are in Your hand, and they sit down at Your feet; each receives Your words — the law that Moses gave us, the possession of the assembly of Jacob. So the LORD became King in Jeshurun when the leaders of the people gathered, when the tribes of Israel came together. Let Reuben live and not die, nor his men be few.”

And concerning Judah he said:

> “O LORD, hear the cry of Judah and bring him to his people. With his own hands he defends his cause, but may You be a help against his foes.”

Concerning Levi he said:

> “Give Your Thummim to Levi and Your Urim to Your godly one, whom You tested at Massah and contested at the waters of Meribah. He said of his father and mother, ‘I do not consider them.’ He disregarded his brothers and did not know his own sons, for he kept Your word and maintained Your covenant. He will teach Your ordinances to Jacob and Your law to Israel; he will set incense before You and whole burnt offerings on Your altar. Bless his substance, O

LORD, and accept the work of his hands. Smash the loins of those who rise against him, and of his foes so they can rise no more."

Concerning Benjamin he said:

"May the beloved of the LORD rest secure in Him; God shields him all day long, and upon His shoulders he rests."

Concerning Joseph he said:

"May his land be blessed by the LORD with the precious dew from heaven above and the deep waters that lie beneath, with the bountiful harvest from the sun and the abundant yield of the seasons, with the best of the ancient mountains and the bounty of the everlasting hills, with the choice gifts of the land and everything in it, and with the favor of Him who dwelt in the burning bush. May these rest on the head of Joseph and crown the brow of the prince of his brothers. His majesty is like a firstborn bull, and his horns are like those of a wild ox. With them he will gore the nations, even to the ends of the earth. Such are the myriads of Ephraim, and such are the thousands of Manasseh."

Concerning Zebulun he said:

"Rejoice, Zebulun, in your journeys, and Issachar, in your tents. They will call the peoples to a mountain; there they will offer sacrifices of righteousness. For they will feast on the abundance of the seas and the hidden treasures of the sand."

Concerning Gad he said:

"Blessed is he who enlarges the domain of Gad! He lies down like a lion and tears off an arm or a head. He chose the best land for himself, because a ruler's portion was reserved for him there. He came with the leaders of the people; he administered the LORD's justice and His ordinances for Israel."

Concerning Dan he said:

"Dan is a lion's cub, leaping out of Bashan."

Concerning Naphtali he said:

"Naphtali is abounding with favor, full of the blessing of the LORD; he shall take possession of the sea and the south."

And concerning Asher he said:

"May Asher be the most blessed of sons; may he be the most favored among his brothers and dip his foot in oil. May the bolts of your gate be iron and bronze, and may your strength match your days." "There is none like the God of Jeshurun, who rides the heavens to your aid, and the clouds in His majesty. The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He drives out the enemy before you, giving the command, 'Destroy him!' So Israel dwells securely; the fountain of Jacob lives untroubled in a land of grain and new wine, where even the heavens drip with dew. Blessed are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is the shield that protects you, the sword in which you boast. Your enemies will cower before you, and you shall trample their high places."

Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which faces Jericho. And the LORD showed him the whole land — from Gilead as far as Dan, all of Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, the Negev, and the region from the Valley of Jericho (the City of Palms) all the way to Zoar.

And the LORD said to him, "This is the land that I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when I said, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have let you see it with your own eyes, but you will not cross into it."

So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, as the LORD had said. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab facing Beth-peor, and no one to this day knows the location of his grave.

Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak, and his vitality had not diminished. The Israelites grieved for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days, until the time of weeping and mourning for Moses came to an end.

Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites obeyed him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses. Since that time, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face— no prophet who did all the signs and wonders that the LORD sent Moses to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh and to all his officials and all his land, and no prophet who performed all the mighty acts of power and awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.

Joshua

Book of Joshua

Now after the death of His servant Moses, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying, "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore arise, you and all these people, and cross over the Jordan into the land that I am giving to the children of Israel.

I have given you every place where the sole of your foot will tread, just as I promised to Moses. Your territory shall extend from the wilderness and Lebanon to the great River Euphrates— all the land of the Hittites — and west as far as the Great Sea.

No one shall stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so will I be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Be strong and courageous, for you shall give these people the inheritance of the land that I swore to their fathers I would give them.

Above all, be strong and very courageous. Be careful to observe all the law that My servant Moses commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law must not depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in all you do.

Have I not commanded you to be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people: "Go through the camp and tell the people, 'Prepare your provisions, for within three days you will cross the Jordan to go in and take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess.'"

But to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, "Remember what Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you when he said, 'The LORD your God will give you rest, and He will give you this land.' Your wives, your young children, and your livestock may remain in the land that Moses gave you on this side of the Jordan. But all your mighty men of valor must be armed for battle to cross over ahead of your brothers and help them, until the LORD gives them rest as He has done for you, and your brothers also possess the land that the LORD your God is giving them. Then you may return to the land of your inheritance and take possession of that which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the east side of the Jordan."

So they answered Joshua, "Everything you have commanded us we will do, and everywhere you send us we will go. Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you. And may the LORD your God be with you, as He was with Moses. Anyone who rebels against your order and does not obey your words, all that you command him, will be put to death. Above all, be strong and courageous!"

Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim, saying, "Go, inspect the land, especially Jericho." So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.

And it was reported to the king of Jericho: "Behold, some men of Israel have come here tonight to spy out the land."

So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab and said, "Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, for they have come to spy out the whole land."

But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. So she said, "Yes, the men did come to me, but I did not know where they had come from. At dusk, when the gate was about to close, the men went out, and I do not know which way they went. Pursue them quickly, and you may catch them!" (But Rahab had taken them up to the roof and hidden them among the stalks of flax that she had laid out there.)

So the king's men set out in pursuit of the spies along the road to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as they had gone out, the gate was shut.

Before the spies lay down for the night, Rahab went up on the roof and said to them, "I know that the LORD has given you this land and that the fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who dwell in the land are melting in fear of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the waters of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites across the Jordan, whom you devoted to destruction. When we heard this, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in the heavens above and on the earth below.

Now therefore, please swear to me by the LORD that you will indeed show kindness to my family, because I showed kindness to you. Give me a sure sign that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and that you will deliver us from death."

"Our lives for your lives!" the men agreed. "If you do not report our mission, we will show you kindness and faithfulness when the LORD gives us the land."

Then Rahab let them down by a rope through the window, since the house where she lived was built into the wall of the city. "Go to the hill country," she said, "so that your pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves there for three days until they have returned; then go on your way."

The men said to her, "We will not be bound by this oath you made us swear unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother and brothers and all your family into your house. If anyone goes out the door of your house into the street, his blood will be on his own head, and we will be innocent. But if a hand is laid on anyone with you in the house, his blood will be on our heads. And if you report our mission, we will be released from the oath you made us swear."

"Let it be as you say," she replied, and she sent them away. And when they had gone, she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

So the spies went out into the hill country and stayed there three days, until their pursuers had re-

turned without finding them, having searched all along the road. Then the two men started back, came down from the hill country, and crossed the river. So they came to Joshua son of Nun and reported all that had happened to them.

"The LORD has surely delivered the entire land into our hands," they said to Joshua. "Indeed, all who dwell in the land are melting in fear of us."

Early the next morning Joshua got up and left Shittim with all the Israelites. They went as far as the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over.

After three days the officers went through the camp and commanded the people: "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God being carried by the Levitical priests, you are to set out from your positions and follow it. But keep a distance of about two thousand cubits between yourselves and the ark. Do not go near it, so that you can see the way to go, since you have never traveled this way before."

Then Joshua told the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you." And he said to the priests, "Take the ark of the covenant and go on ahead of the people." So they carried the ark of the covenant and went ahead of them.

Now the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you just as I was with Moses. Command the priests carrying the ark of the covenant: 'When you reach the edge of the waters, stand in the Jordan.'"

So Joshua told the Israelites, "Come here and listen to the words of the LORD your God." He continued, "This is how you will know that the living God is among you and that He will surely drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go ahead of you into the Jordan.

Now choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. When the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the LORD — the Lord of all the earth — touch down in the waters of the Jordan, its flowing waters will be cut off and will stand up in a heap."

So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carried the ark of the covenant ahead of them.

Now the Jordan overflows its banks throughout the harvest season. But as soon as the priests carrying the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, the flowing water stood still. It backed up as far upstream as Adam, a city in the area of Zarethan, while the water flowing toward the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho. The priests carrying the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel crossed over the dry ground, until the entire nation had crossed the Jordan.

When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, "Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, and command them: 'Take up for yourselves twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan where the priests were standing, carry them with you, and set them down in the place where you spend the night.'"

So Joshua summoned the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, and said to them, "Cross over before the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of Israel, to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask, 'What do these stones mean to you?' you are to tell them, 'The waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters were cut off.' Therefore these stones will be a memorial to the Israelites forever."

Thus the Israelites did as Joshua had commanded them. They took up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, one for each tribe of Israel, just as the LORD had told Joshua; and they carried them to the camp, where they set them down.

Joshua also set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan, in the place where the priests who carried the ark of the covenant stood. And the stones are there to this day.

Now the priests who carried the ark remained standing in the middle of the Jordan until the people had completed everything the LORD had commanded Joshua to tell them, just as Moses had directed Joshua. The people hurried across, and after everyone had finished crossing, the priests with the ark of the LORD crossed in the sight of the people. The Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over before the Israelites, armed for battle as Moses had instructed them. About 40,000 troops armed for battle crossed over before the LORD into the plains of Jericho.

On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel, and they revered him all the days of his life, just as they had revered Moses.

Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Command the priests who carry the ark of the Testimony to come up from the Jordan."

So Joshua commanded the priests, "Come up from the Jordan."

When the priests carrying the ark of the covenant of the LORD came up out of the Jordan and their feet touched the dry land, the waters of the Jordan returned to their course and overflowed all the banks as before.

On the tenth day of the first month the people went up from the Jordan and camped at Gilgal on the eastern border of Jericho. And there at Gilgal Joshua set up the twelve stones they had taken from the Jordan.

Then Joshua said to the Israelites, "In the future, when your children ask their fathers, 'What is the meaning of these stones?' you are to tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, just as He did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over. He did this so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, and so that you may always fear the LORD your God."

Now when all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the coast heard how the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan before

the Israelites until they had crossed over, their hearts melted and their spirits failed for fear of the Israelites.

At that time the LORD said to Joshua, “Make flint knives and circumcise the sons of Israel once again.” So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth.

Now this is why Joshua circumcised them: All those who came out of Egypt— all the men of war— had died on the journey in the wilderness after they had left Egypt. Though all who had come out were circumcised, none of those born in the wilderness on the journey from Egypt had been circumcised.

For the Israelites had wandered in the wilderness forty years, until all the nation’s men of war who had come out of Egypt had died, since they did not obey the LORD. So the LORD vowed never to let them see the land He had sworn to their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. And He raised up their sons in their place, and these were the ones Joshua circumcised. Until this time they were still uncircumcised, since they had not been circumcised along the way.

And after all the nation had been circumcised, they stayed there in the camp until they were healed.

Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.” So that place has been called Gilgal to this day.

On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while the Israelites were camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, they kept the Passover. The day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate unleavened bread and roasted grain from the produce of the land.

And the day after they had eaten from the produce of the land, the manna ceased. There was no more manna for the Israelites, so that year they began to eat the crops of the land of Canaan.

Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in His hand. Joshua approached Him and asked, “Are You for us or for our enemies?”

“Neither,” He replied. “I have now come as Commander of the LORD’s army.”

Then Joshua fell facedown in reverence and asked Him, “What does my Lord have to say to His servant?”

The Commander of the LORD’s army replied, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.”

And Joshua did so.

Now Jericho was tightly shut up because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in.

And the LORD said to Joshua, “Behold, I have delivered Jericho into your hand, along with its king and its mighty men of valor. March around the city with all the men of war, circling the city one time. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry seven rams’ horns in front of the ark. Then on the seventh day, march around the city seven times, while the priests blow the horns. And when there is a long blast of the ram’s horn and you hear its sound, have all the people give a mighty shout. Then the wall of the city will collapse and all your people will charge straight into the city.”

So Joshua son of Nun summoned the priests and said, “Take up the ark of the covenant and have seven priests carry seven rams’ horns in front of the ark of the LORD.”

And he told the people, “Advance and march around the city, with the armed troops going ahead of the ark of the LORD.”

After Joshua had spoken to the people, seven priests carrying seven rams’ horns before the LORD advanced and blew the horns, and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them. While the horns continued to sound, the armed troops marched ahead of the priests who blew the horns, and the rear guard followed the ark.

But Joshua had commanded the people: “Do not give a battle cry or let your voice be heard; do not let one word come out of your mouth until the day I tell you to shout. Then you are to shout!” So he had the ark of the LORD carried around the city, circling it once. And the people returned to the camp and spent the night there.

Joshua got up early the next morning, and the priests took the ark of the LORD. And the seven priests carrying seven rams’ horns kept marching ahead of the ark of the LORD and blowing the horns. The armed troops went in front of them and the rear guard followed the ark of the LORD, while the horns kept sounding. So on the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They did this for six days.

Then on the seventh day, they got up at dawn and marched around the city seven times in the same manner. That was the only day they circled the city seven times. After the seventh time around, the priests blew the horns, and Joshua commanded the people, “Shout! For the LORD has given you the city! Now the city and everything in it must be devoted to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all those with her in her house will live, because she hid the spies we sent. But keep away from the things devoted to destruction, lest you yourself be set apart for destruction. If you take any of these, you will set apart the camp of Israel for destruction and bring disaster upon it. For all the silver and gold and all the articles of bronze and iron are holy to the LORD; they must go into His treasury.”

So when the rams’ horns sounded, the people shouted. When they heard the blast of the horn, the people gave a great shout, and the wall collapsed. Then all the people charged straight into the city and captured it. With the edge of the sword they devoted to destruction everything in the city— man and woman, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys.

Meanwhile, Joshua told the two men who had spied out the land, “Go into the house of the prostitute and bring out the woman and all who are with her, just as you promised her.” So the young spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother and brothers, and all who belonged to her. They brought out her whole family and settled them outside the camp of Israel.

Then the Israelites burned up the city and everything in it. However, they put the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the LORD’s house. And Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her father’s household and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent to spy out Jericho. So she has lived among the Israelites to this day.

At that time Joshua invoked this solemn oath:

> "Cursed before the LORD is the man who rises up and rebuilds this city, Jericho; at the cost of his firstborn he will lay its foundations; at the cost of his youngest he will set up its gates."

So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout the land.

The Israelites, however, acted unfaithfully regarding the things devoted to destruction. Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of what was set apart. So the anger of the LORD burned against the Israelites.

Meanwhile, Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven to the east of Bethel, and told them, "Go up and spy out the land." So the men went up and spied out Ai.

On returning to Joshua, they reported, "There is no need to send all the people; two or three thousand men are enough to go up and attack Ai. Since the people of Ai are so few, you need not wear out all our people there."

So about three thousand men went up, but they fled before the men of Ai. And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six of them, chasing them from the gate as far as the quarries and striking them down on the slopes. So the hearts of the people melted and became like water.

Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell facedown before the ark of the LORD until evening, as did the elders of Israel; and they all sprinkled dust on their heads.

"O, Lord GOD," Joshua said, "why did You ever bring this people across the Jordan to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to be destroyed? If only we had been content to stay on the other side of the Jordan! O Lord, what can I say, now that Israel has turned its back and run from its enemies? When the Canaanites and all who live in the land hear about this, they will surround us and wipe out our name from the earth. Then what will You do for Your great name?"

But the LORD said to Joshua, "Stand up! Why have you fallen on your face? Israel has sinned; they have transgressed My covenant that I commanded them, and they have taken some of what was devoted to destruction. Indeed, they have stolen and lied, and they have put these things with their own possessions. This is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies. They will turn their backs and run from their enemies, because they themselves have been set apart for destruction. I will no longer be with you unless you remove from among you whatever is devoted to destruction.

Get up and consecrate the people, saying, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, for this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Among you, O Israel, there are things devoted to destruction. You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove them. In the morning you must present yourselves tribe by tribe. The tribe that the LORD selects shall come forward clan by clan, and the clan that the LORD selects shall come forward family by family, and the family that the LORD selects shall come forward man by man. The one who is caught with the things devoted to destruction must be burned, along with all that belongs to him, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD and committed an outrage in Israel.'"

So Joshua arose early the next morning and had Israel come forward tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was selected. He had the clans of Judah come forward, and the clan of the Zerahites was selected. He had the clan of the Zerahites come forward, and the family of Zabdi was selected. And he had the family of Zabdi come forward man by man, and Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was selected.

So Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and make a confession to Him. I urge you to tell me what you have done; do not hide it from me."

"It is true," Achan replied, "I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I did: When I saw among the spoils a beautiful cloak from Shinar, two hundred shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath."

So Joshua sent messengers who ran to the tent, and there it all was, hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath. They took the things from inside the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites, and spread them out before the LORD.

Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the cloak, the bar of gold, his sons and daughters, his oxen and donkeys and sheep, his tent, and everything else he owned, and brought them to the Valley of Achor.

"Why have you brought this trouble upon us?" said Joshua. "Today the LORD will bring trouble upon you!" And all Israel stoned him to death. Then they stoned the others and burned their bodies. And they heaped over Achan a large pile of rocks that remains to this day. So the LORD turned from His burning anger. Therefore that place is called the Valley of Achor to this day.

Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid or discouraged. Take the whole army with you, and go up and attack Ai. See, I have delivered into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land. And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king, except that you may carry off their plunder and livestock for yourselves. Set up an ambush behind the city."

So Joshua and the whole army set out to attack Ai. Joshua chose 30,000 mighty men of valor and sent them out at night with these orders: "Pay attention. You are to lie in ambush behind the city, not too far from it. All of you must be ready. Then I and all the troops with me will advance on the city. When they come out against us as they did the first time, we will flee from them. They will pursue us until we have drawn them away from the city, for they will say, 'The Israelites are running away from us as they did before.' So as we flee from them, you are to rise from the ambush and seize the city, for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand. And when you have taken the city, set it on fire. Do as the LORD has commanded! See, I have given you orders."

So Joshua sent them out, and they went to the place of ambush and lay in wait between Bethel and Ai, to the west of Ai. But Joshua spent that night among the people.

Joshua got up early the next morning and mobilized his men, and he and the elders of Israel marched before them up to Ai. Then all the troops who were with him marched up and approached the city. They arrived in front of Ai and camped to the north of it, with the valley between them and the city.

Now Joshua had taken about five thousand men and set up an ambush between Bethel and Ai, to the west of the city. So the forces were stationed with the main camp to the north of the city and the rear guard to the west of the city. And that night Joshua went into the valley.

When the king of Ai saw the Israelites, he hurried out early in the morning with the men of the city to engage them in battle at an appointed place overlooking the Arabah. But he did not know that an ambush had been set up against him behind the city. Joshua and all Israel let themselves be beaten back before them, and they fled toward the wilderness. Then all the men of Ai were summoned to pursue them, and they followed Joshua and were drawn away from the city. Not a man was left in Ai or Bethel who did not go out after Israel, leaving the city wide open while they pursued Israel.

Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Hold out your battle lance toward Ai, for into your hand I will deliver the city." So Joshua held out his battle lance toward Ai, and as soon as he did so, the men in ambush rose quickly from their position. They rushed forward, entered the city, captured it, and immediately set it on fire.

When the men of Ai turned and looked back, the smoke of the city was rising into the sky. They could not escape in any direction, and the troops who had fled to the wilderness now turned against their pursuers. When Joshua and all Israel saw that the men in ambush had captured the city and that smoke was rising from it, they turned around and struck down the men of Ai. Meanwhile, those in the ambush came out of the city against them, and the men of Ai were trapped between the Israelite forces on both sides. So Israel struck them down until no survivor or fugitive remained. But they took the king of Ai alive and brought him to Joshua.

When Israel had finished killing all the men of Ai who had pursued them into the field and wilderness, and when every last one of them had fallen by the sword, all the Israelites returned to Ai and put it to the sword as well. A total of twelve thousand men and women fell that day— all the people of Ai. Joshua did not draw back the hand that held his battle lance until he had devoted to destruction all who lived in Ai. Israel took for themselves only the cattle and plunder of that city, as the LORD had commanded Joshua.

So Joshua burned Ai and made it a permanent heap of ruins, a desolation to this day. He hung the king of Ai on a tree until evening, and at sunset Joshua commanded that they take down the body from the tree and throw it down at the entrance of the city gate. And over it they raised a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day.

At that time Joshua built an altar on Mount Ebal to the LORD, the God of Israel, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the Israelites. He built it according to what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses: "an altar of uncut stones on which no iron tool has been used." And on it they offered burnt offerings to the LORD, and they sacrificed peace offerings.

And there in the presence of the Israelites, Joshua inscribed on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written. All Israel, foreigners and citizens alike, with their elders, officers, and judges, stood on both sides of the ark of the covenant of the LORD facing the Levitical priests who carried it. Half of the people stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded earlier, to bless the people of Israel.

Afterward, Joshua read aloud all the words of the law— the blessings and the curses— according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua failed to read before the whole assembly of Israel, including the women, the little ones, and the foreigners who lived among them.

Now when news of this reached all the kings west of the Jordan — those in the hill country, the foothills, and all along the coast of the Great Sea toward Lebanon (the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites)— they came together to wage war against Joshua and Israel.

But the people of Gibeon, having heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, acted deceptively and set out as envoys, carrying on their donkeys worn-out sacks and old wineskins, cracked and mended. They put worn, patched sandals on their feet and threadbare clothing on their bodies, and their whole supply of bread was dry and moldy. They went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and the men of Israel, "We have come from a distant land; please make a treaty with us."

But the men of Israel said to the Hivites, "Perhaps you dwell near us. How can we make a treaty with you?"

"We are your servants," they said to Joshua.

Then Joshua asked them, "Who are you and where have you come from?"

"Your servants have come from a very distant land," they replied, "because of the fame of the LORD your God. For we have heard the reports about Him: all that He did in Egypt, and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites beyond the Jordan— Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth. So the elders and inhabitants of our land told us, 'Take provisions for your journey; go to meet them and say to them: We are your servants. Please make a treaty with us.'

This bread of ours was warm when we packed it at home on the day we left to come to you. But look, it is now dry and moldy. These wineskins were new when we filled them, but look, they are cracked. And these clothes and sandals are worn out from our very long journey."

Then the men of Israel sampled their provisions but did not seek the counsel of the LORD. And Joshua made a treaty of peace with them to let them live, and the leaders of the congregation swore an oath to them.

Three days after they had made the treaty with the Gibeonites, the Israelites learned that they were neighbors, living among them. So the Israelites set out and

on the third day arrived at their cities — Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-jearim. But the Israelites did not attack them, because the leaders of the congregation had sworn an oath to them by the LORD, the God of Israel. And the whole congregation grumbled against the leaders.

All the leaders answered, "We have sworn an oath to them by the LORD, the God of Israel, and now we cannot touch them. This is how we will treat them: We will let them live, so that no wrath will fall on us because of the oath we swore to them." They continued, "Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for the whole congregation." So the leaders kept their promise.

Then Joshua summoned the Gibeonites and said, "Why did you deceive us by telling us you live far away from us, when in fact you live among us? Now therefore you are under a curse and will perpetually serve as woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God."

The Gibeonites answered, "Your servants were told clearly that the LORD your God had commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land and wipe out all its inhabitants before you. So we greatly feared for our lives because of you, and that is why we have done this. Now we are in your hands. Do to us whatever seems good and right to you."

So Joshua did this and delivered them from the hands of the Israelites, and they did not kill the Gibeonites. On that day he made them woodcutters and water carriers, as they are to this day for the congregation of the LORD and for the altar at the place He would choose.

Now Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem heard that Joshua had captured Ai and devoted it to destruction — doing to Ai and its king as he had done to Jericho and its king — and that the people of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were living near them. So Adoni-zedek and his people were greatly alarmed, because Gibeon was a great city, like one of the royal cities; it was larger than Ai, and all its men were mighty.

Therefore Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem sent word to Hoham king of Hebron, Piram king of Jarmuth, Japhia king of Lachish, and Debir king of Eglon, saying, "Come up and help me. We will attack Gibeon, because they have made peace with Joshua and the Israelites."

So the five kings of the Amorites— the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon— joined forces and advanced with all their armies. They camped before Gibeon and made war against it.

Then the men of Gibeon sent word to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal: "Do not abandon your servants. Come quickly and save us! Help us, because all the kings of the Amorites from the hill country have joined forces against us."

So Joshua and his whole army, including all the mighty men of valor, came from Gilgal.

The LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them, for I have delivered them into your hand. Not one of them shall stand against you."

After marching all night from Gilgal, Joshua caught them by surprise. And the LORD threw them into confusion before Israel, who defeated them in a great slaughter at Gibeon, pursued them along the ascent to Beth-horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah. As they fled before Israel along the descent from Beth-horon to Azekah, the LORD cast down on them large hailstones from the sky, and more of them were killed by the hailstones than by the swords of the Israelites.

On the day that the LORD gave the Amorites over to the Israelites, Joshua spoke to the LORD in the presence of Israel:

> "O sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon." So the sun stood still and the moon stopped until the nation took vengeance upon its enemies.

Is this not written in the Book of Jashar?

> "So the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day."

There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD listened to the voice of a man, because the LORD fought for Israel.

Then Joshua returned with all Israel to the camp at Gilgal.

Now the five kings had fled and hidden in the cave at Makkedah. And Joshua was informed: "The five kings have been found; they are hiding in the cave at Makkedah."

So Joshua said, "Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave, and post men there to guard them. But you, do not stop there. Pursue your enemies and attack them from behind. Do not let them reach their cities, for the LORD your God has delivered them into your hand."

So Joshua and the Israelites continued to inflict a terrible slaughter until they had finished them off, and the remaining survivors retreated to the fortified cities. The whole army returned safely to Joshua in the camp at Makkedah, and no one dared to utter a word against the Israelites.

Then Joshua said, "Open the mouth of the cave and bring those five kings out to me." So they brought the five kings out of the cave — the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon.

When they had brought the kings to Joshua, he summoned all the men of Israel and said to the army commanders who had accompanied him, "Come here and put your feet on the necks of these kings."

So the commanders came forward and put their feet on their necks.

"Do not be afraid or discouraged," Joshua said. "Be strong and courageous, for the LORD will do this to all the enemies you fight."

After this, Joshua struck down and killed the kings, and he hung their bodies on five trees and left them there until evening. At sunset Joshua ordered that they be taken down from the trees and thrown into the cave in which they had hidden. Then large stones were placed against the mouth of the cave, and the stones are there to this day.

On that day Joshua captured Makkedah and put it to the sword, along with its king. He devoted to destruction everyone in the city, leaving no survivors. So he did to the king of Makkedah as he had done to the king of Jericho.

Then Joshua and all Israel with him moved on from Makkedah to Libnah and fought against Libnah. And

the LORD also delivered that city and its king into the hand of Israel, and Joshua put all the people to the sword, leaving no survivors. And he did to the king of Libnah as he had done to the king of Jericho.

And Joshua and all Israel with him moved on from Libnah to Lachish. They laid siege to it and fought against it. And the LORD delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel, and Joshua captured it on the second day. He put all the people to the sword, just as he had done to Libnah.

At that time Horam king of Gezer went to help Lachish, but Joshua struck him down along with his people, leaving no survivors.

So Joshua moved on from Lachish to Eglon, and all Israel with him. They laid siege to it and fought against it. That day they captured Eglon and put it to the sword, and Joshua devoted to destruction everyone in the city, just as he had done to Lachish.

Then Joshua and all Israel with him went up from Eglon to Hebron and fought against it. They captured it and put to the sword its king, all its villages, and all the people. Joshua left no survivors, just as he had done at Eglon; he devoted to destruction Hebron and everyone in it.

Finally Joshua and all Israel with him turned toward Debir and fought against it. And they captured Debir, its king, and all its villages. They put them to the sword and devoted to destruction everyone in the city, leaving no survivors. Joshua did to Debir and its king as he had done to Hebron and as he had done to Libnah and its king.

So Joshua conquered the whole region— the hill country, the Negev, the foothills, and the slopes, together with all their kings— leaving no survivors. He devoted to destruction everything that breathed, just as the LORD, the God of Israel, had commanded. Joshua conquered the area from Kadesh-barnea to Gaza, and the whole region of Goshen as far as Gibeon.

And because the LORD, the God of Israel, fought for Israel, Joshua captured all these kings and their land in one campaign. Then Joshua returned with all Israel to the camp at Gilgal.

Now when Jabin king of Hazor heard about these things, he sent word to Jobab king of Madon; to the kings of Shimron and Achshaph; to the kings of the north in the mountains, in the Arabah south of Chinnereth, in the foothills, and in Naphoth-dor to the west; to the Canaanites in the east and west; to the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, and Jebusites in the hill country; and to the Hivites at the foot of Hermon in the land of Mizpah.

So these kings came out with all their armies, a multitude as numerous as the sand on the seashore, along with a great number of horses and chariots. All these kings joined forces and encamped at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel.

Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid of them, for by this time tomorrow I will deliver all of them slain before Israel. You are to hamstring their horses and burn up their chariots.”

So by the waters of Merom, Joshua and his whole army came upon them suddenly and attacked them, and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel, who struck them down and pursued them all the way to Greater Sidon and Misrephoth-maim, and eastward as far as the Valley of Mizpeh. They struck them down, leaving no survivors. Joshua treated them as the LORD had told him; he hamstrung their horses and burned up their chariots.

At that time Joshua turned back and captured Hazor and put its king to the sword, because Hazor was formerly the head of all these kingdoms. The Israelites put everyone in Hazor to the sword, devoting them to destruction. Nothing that breathed remained, and Joshua burned down Hazor itself.

Joshua captured all these kings and their cities and put them to the sword. He devoted them to destruction, as Moses the LORD’s servant had commanded. Yet Israel did not burn any of the cities built on their mounds, except Hazor, which Joshua burned.

The Israelites took for themselves all the plunder and livestock of these cities, but they put all the people to the sword until they had completely destroyed them, not sparing anyone who breathed. As the LORD had commanded His servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua. That is what Joshua did, leaving nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses.

So Joshua took this entire region: the hill country, all the Negev, all the land of Goshen, the western foothills, the Arabah, and the mountains of Israel and their foothills, from Mount Halak, which rises toward Seir, as far as Baal-gad in the Valley of Lebanon at the foot of Mount Hermon. He captured all their kings and struck them down, putting them to death.

Joshua waged war against all these kings for a long period of time. No city made peace with the Israelites except the Hivites living in Gibeon; all others were taken in battle. For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts to engage Israel in battle, so that they would be set apart for destruction and would receive no mercy, being annihilated as the LORD had commanded Moses.

At that time Joshua proceeded to eliminate the Anakim from the hill country of Hebron, Debir, and Anab, and from all the hill country of Judah and of Israel. Joshua devoted them to destruction, along with their cities. No Anakim were left in the land of the Israelites; only in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod did any survive.

So Joshua took the entire land, in keeping with all that the LORD had spoken to Moses. And Joshua gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to the allotments to their tribes. Then the land had rest from war.

Now these are the kings of the land whom the Israelites struck down and whose lands they took beyond the Jordan to the east, from the Arnon Valley to Mount Hermon, including all the Arabah eastward:

Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon. He ruled from Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Valley, along the middle of the valley, up to the Jabbok River (the border of the Ammonites), that is, half of Gilead, as well as the Arabah east of the Sea of Chinnereth to the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea), eastward through Beth-jeshimoth, and southward below the slopes of Pisgah.

And Og king of Bashan, one of the remnant of the Rephaim, who lived in Ashtaroth and Edrei.

He ruled over Mount Hermon, Salecah, all of Bashan up to the border of the Geshurites and Maacathites, and half of Gilead to the border of Sihon king of Heshbon.

Moses, the servant of the LORD, and the Israelites had struck them down and given their land as an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

And these are the kings of the land that Joshua and the Israelites conquered beyond the Jordan to the west, from Baal-gad in the Valley of Lebanon to Mount Halak, which rises toward Seir (according to the allotments to the tribes of Israel, Joshua gave them as an inheritance the hill country, the foothills, the Arabah, the slopes, the wilderness, and the Negev — the lands of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites):

the king of Jericho, one;
the king of Ai, which is near Bethel, one;
the king of Jerusalem, one;
the king of Hebron, one;
the king of Jarmuth, one;
the king of Lachish, one;
the king of Eglon, one;
the king of Gezer, one;
the king of Debir, one;
the king of Geder, one;
the king of Hormah, one;
the king of Arad, one;
the king of Libnah, one;
the king of Adullam, one;
the king of Makkedah, one;
the king of Bethel, one;
the king of Tappuah, one;
the king of Hepher, one;
the king of Aphek, one;
the king of Lasharon, one;
the king of Madon, one;
the king of Hazor, one;
the king of Shimron-meron, one;
the king of Achshaph, one;
the king of Taanach, one;
the king of Megiddo, one;
the king of Kedesh, one;
the king of Jokneam in Carmel, one;
the king of Dor in Naphath-dor, one;
the king of Goiim in Gilgal, one;
and the king of Tirzah, one.

So there were thirty-one kings in all.

Now Joshua was old and well along in years, and the LORD said to him, “You are old and well along in years, but very much of the land remains to be possessed. This is the land that remains:

All the territory of the Philistines and the Geshurites, from the Shihor east of Egypt to the territory of Ekron on the north (considered to be Canaanite territory)— that of the five Philistine rulers of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron, as well as that of the Avvites;
to the south, all the land of the Canaanites, from Mearah of the Sidonians to Aphek, as far as the border of the Amorites;
the land of the Gebalites;
and all Lebanon to the east, from Baal-gad below Mount Hermon to Lebo-hamath.

All the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon to Misrephoth-maim — all the Sidonians — I Myself will drive out before the Israelites. Be sure to divide it by lot as an inheritance to Israel, as I have commanded you. Now therefore divide this land as an inheritance to the nine tribes and the half-tribe of Manasseh.”

The other half of Manasseh, along with the Reubenites and Gadites, had received the inheritance Moses had given them beyond the Jordan to the east, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had assigned to them:

The area from Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Valley, along with the city in the middle of the valley, the whole plateau of Medeba as far as Dibon, and all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites who reigned in Heshbon, as far as the border of the Ammonites;
also Gilead and the territory of the Geshurites and Maacathites, all of Mount Hermon, and all Bashan as far as Salecah— the whole kingdom of Og in Bashan, who had reigned in Ashtaroth and Edrei and had remained as a remnant of the Rephaim.

Moses had struck them down and dispossessed them, but the Israelites did not drive out the Geshurites or the Maacathites. So Geshur and Maacath dwell among the Israelites to this day.

To the tribe of Levi, however, Moses had given no inheritance. The food offerings to the LORD, the God of Israel, are their inheritance, just as He had promised them.

This is what Moses had given to the clans of the tribe of Reuben:

The territory from Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Valley, along with the city in the middle of the valley, to the whole plateau beyond Medeba, to Heshbon and all its cities on the plateau, including Dibon, Bamoth-baal, Beth-baal-meon, Jahaz, Kedemoth, Mephaath, Kiriathaim, Sibmah, Zereth-shahar on the hill in the valley, Beth-peor, the slopes of Pisgah, and Beth-jeshimoth— all the cities of the plateau and all the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon until Moses killed him and the chiefs of Midian (Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba), the princes of Sihon who lived in the land.
The Israelites also killed the diviner Balaam son of Beor along with the others they put to the sword. And the border of the Reubenites was the bank of the Jordan.

This was the inheritance of the clans of the Reubenites, including the cities and villages.

This is what Moses had given to the clans of the tribe of Gad:

The territory of Jazer, all the cities of Gilead, and half the land of the Ammonites as far as Aroer, near Rabbah;
the territory from Heshbon to Ramath-mizpeh and Betonim, and from Mahanaim to the border of Debir;
and in the valley, Beth-haram, Beth-nimrah, Succoth, and Zaphon, with the rest of the kingdom of Sihon king of Heshbon (the territory on the east

side of the Jordan up to the edge of the Sea of Chinnereth).

This was the inheritance of the clans of the Gadites, including the cities and villages.

This is what Moses had given to the clans of the half-tribe of Manasseh, that is, to half the tribe of the descendants of Manasseh:

The territory from Mahanaim through all Bashan— all the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, including all the towns of Jair that are in Bashan, sixty cities; half of Gilead; and Ashtaroth and Edrei, the royal cities of Og in Bashan.

All this was for the clans of the descendants of Machir son of Manasseh, that is, half of the descendants of Machir.

These were the portions Moses had given them on the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan, east of Jericho.

To the tribe of Levi, however, Moses had given no inheritance. The LORD, the God of Israel, is their inheritance, just as He had promised them.

Now these are the portions that the Israelites inherited in the land of Canaan, as distributed by Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the heads of the families of the tribes of Israel. Their inheritance was assigned by lot for the nine and a half tribes, as the LORD had commanded through Moses. For Moses had given the inheritance east of the Jordan to the other two and a half tribes. But he granted no inheritance among them to the Levites.

The descendants of Joseph became two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim. And no portion of the land was given to the Levites, except for cities in which to live, along with pasturelands for their flocks and herds.

So the Israelites did as the LORD had commanded Moses, and they divided the land.

Then the sons of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, “You know what the LORD said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh-barnea about you and me. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land, and I brought back to him an honest report.

Although my brothers who went with me made the hearts of the people melt with fear, I remained loyal to the LORD my God. On that day Moses swore to me, saying, ‘Surely the land on which you have set foot will be an inheritance to you and your children forever, because you have wholly followed the LORD my God.’

Now behold, as the LORD promised, He has kept me alive these forty-five years since He spoke this word to Moses, while Israel wandered in the wilderness. So here I am today, eighty-five years old, still as strong today as I was the day Moses sent me out. As my strength was then, so it is now for war, for going out, and for coming in.

Now therefore give me this hill country that the LORD promised me on that day, for you yourself heard then that the Anakim were there, with great and fortified cities. Perhaps with the LORD’s help I will drive them out, as the LORD has spoken.”

Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron as his inheritance. Therefore Hebron belongs to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite as an inheritance to this day, because he wholly followed the LORD, the God of Israel. (Hebron used to be called Kiriath-arba, after Arba, the greatest man among the Anakim.)

Then the land had rest from war.

Now the allotment for the clans of the tribe of Judah extended to the border of Edom, to the Wilderness of Zin at the extreme southern boundary:

Their southern border started at the bay on the southern tip of the Salt Sea, proceeded south of the Ascent of Akrabbim, continued on to Zin, went over to the south of Kadesh-barnea, ran past Hezron up to Addar, and curved toward Karka. It proceeded to Azmon, joined the Brook of Egypt, and ended at the Sea. This was their southern border.

The eastern border was the Salt Sea as far as the mouth of the Jordan.

The northern border started from the bay of the sea at the mouth of the Jordan, went up to Beth-hoglah, proceeded north of Beth-arabah, and went up to the Stone of Bohan son of Reuben. Then the border went up to Debir from the Valley of Achor, turning north to Gilgal, which faces the Ascent of Adummim south of the ravine. It continued along the waters of En-shemesh and came out at En-rogel. From there the border went up the Valley of Ben-hinnom along the southern slope of the Jebusites (that is, Jerusalem) and ascended to the top of the hill that faces the Valley of Hinnom on the west, at the northern end of the Valley of Rephaim. From the hilltop the border curved to the spring of the Waters of Nephtoah, proceeded to the cities of Mount Ephron, and then bent around toward Baalah (that is, Kiriath-jearim). The border curled westward from Baalah to Mount Seir, ran along the northern slope of Mount Jearim (that is, Chesalon), went down to Beth-shemesh, and crossed to Timnah. Then it went out to the northern slope of Ekron, curved toward Shikkeron, proceeded to Mount Baalah, went on to Jabneel, and ended at the Sea.

And the western border was the coastline of the Great Sea.

These are the boundaries around the clans of the descendants of Judah.

According to the LORD’s command to him, Joshua gave Caleb son of Jephunneh a portion among the sons of Judah — Kiriath-arba, that is, Hebron. (Arba was the forefather of Anak.) And Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak — the descendants of Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai, the children of Anak.

From there he marched against the inhabitants of Debir (formerly known as Kiriath-sepher). And Caleb said, “To the man who strikes down Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will give my daughter Acsah in marriage.” So Othniel son of Caleb’s brother Kenaz captured the city, and Caleb gave his daughter Acsah to him in marriage.

One day Acsah came to Othniel and urged him to ask her father for a field. When she got off her donkey, Caleb asked her, “What do you desire?”

"Give me a blessing," she answered. "Since you have given me land in the Negev, give me springs of water as well."

So Caleb gave her both the upper and lower springs.

This is the inheritance of the clans of the tribe of Judah. These were the southernmost cities of the tribe of Judah in the Negev toward the border of Edom:

Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur, Kinah, Dimonah, Adadah, Kedesh, Hazor, Ithnan, Ziph, Telem, Bealoth, Hazor-hadattah, Kerioth-hezron (that is, Hazor), Amam, Shema, Moladah, Hazar-gaddah, Heshmon, Beth-pelet, Hazar-shual, Beersheba, Biziothiah, Baalah, Iim, Ezem, Eltolad, Chesil, Hormah, Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah, Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain, and Rimmon— twenty-nine cities in all, along with their villages.

These were in the foothills:

Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah, Zanoah, En-gannim, Tappuah, Enam, Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh, Azekah, Shaaraim, Adithaim, and Gederah (or Gederothaim)— fourteen cities, along with their villages.

Zenan, Hadashah, Migdal-gad, Dilan, Mizpeh, Joktheel, Lachish, Bozkath, Eglon, Cabbon, Lahmas, Chitlish, Gederoth, Beth-dagon, Naamah, and Makkedah— sixteen cities, along with their villages.

Libnah, Ether, Ashan, Iphtah, Ashnah, Nezib, Keilah, Achzib, and Mareshah— nine cities, along with their villages.

Ekron, with its towns and villages; from Ekron to the sea, all the cities near Ashdod, along with their villages; Ashdod, with its towns and villages; Gaza, with its towns and villages, as far as the Brook of Egypt and the coastline of the Great Sea.

These were in the hill country:

Shamir, Jattir, Socoh, Dannah, Kiriath-sannah (that is, Debir), Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim, Goshen, Holon, and Giloh— eleven cities, along with their villages.

Arab, Dumah, Eshan, Janim, Beth-tappuah, Aphekah, Humtah, Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), and Zior— nine cities, along with their villages.

Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah, Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah, Kain, Gibeah, and Timnah— ten cities, along with their villages.

Halhul, Beth-zur, Gedor, Maarath, Beth-anoth, and Eltekon— six cities, along with their villages.

Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-jearim), and Rabbah— two cities, along with their villages.

These were in the wilderness:

Beth-arabah, Middin, Secacah, Nibshan, the City of Salt, and En-gedi— six cities, along with their villages.

But the descendants of Judah could not drive out the Jebusites living in Jerusalem. So to this day the Jebusites live there among the descendants of Judah.

The allotment for the descendants of Joseph extended from the Jordan at Jericho to the waters of Jericho on the east, through the wilderness that goes up from Jericho into the hill country of Bethel. It went on from Bethel(that is, Luz) and proceeded to the border of the Archites in Ataroth. Then it descended westward to the border of the Japhletites as far as the border of Lower Beth-horon and on to Gezer, and it ended at the Sea.

So Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph, received their inheritance. This was the territory of the descendants of Ephraim by their clans:

The border of their inheritance went from Ataroth-addar in the east to Upper Beth-horon and out toward the Sea. From Michmethath on the north it turned eastward toward Taanath-shiloh and passed by it to Janoah on the east. From Janoah it went down to Ataroth and Naarah, and then reached Jericho and came out at the Jordan. From Tappuah the border went westward to the Brook of Kanah and ended at the Sea.

This was the inheritance of the clans of the tribe of Ephraim, along with all the cities and villages set apart for the descendants of Ephraim within the inheritance of Manasseh. But they did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer. So the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites to this day, but they are forced laborers.

Now this was the allotment for the tribe of Manasseh as Joseph's firstborn son, namely for Machir the firstborn of Manasseh and father of the Gileadites, who had received Gilead and Bashan because Machir was a man of war. So this allotment was for the rest of the descendants of Manasseh — the clans of Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hepher, and Shemida. These are the other male descendants of the clans of Manasseh son of Joseph.

But Zelophehad son of Hepher (the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh) had no sons but only daughters. These are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. They approached Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the leaders, and said, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers."

So Joshua gave them an inheritance among their father's brothers, in keeping with the command of the LORD. Thus ten shares fell to Manasseh, in addition to the land of Gilead and Bashan beyond the Jordan, because the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance among his sons. And the land of Gilead belonged to the rest of the sons of Manasseh.

Now the border of Manasseh went from Asher to Michmethath near Shechem, then southward to include the inhabitants of En-tappuah. The region of Tappuah belonged to Manasseh, but Tappuah itself, on the border of Manasseh, belonged to Ephraim. From there the border continued southward to the Brook of Kanah. There were cities belonging to Ephraim among the cities of Manasseh, but the border of Manasseh was on the north side of the brook and ended at the Sea. Ephraim's territory was to the south, and Manasseh's was to the north, having the Sea as its border and adjoining Asher on the north and Issachar on the east.

Within Issachar and Asher, Manasseh was assigned Beth-shean, Ibleam, Dor (that is, Naphath), Endor, Taanach, and Megiddo, each with their surrounding settlements.

But the descendants of Manasseh were unable to occupy these cities, because the Canaanites were determined to stay in this land. However, when the Israelites grew stronger, they put the Canaanites to forced labor; but they failed to drive them out completely.

Then the sons of Joseph said to Joshua, “Why have you given us only one portion as an inheritance? We have many people, because the LORD has blessed us abundantly.”

Joshua answered them, “If you have so many people that the hill country of Ephraim is too small for you, go to the forest and clear for yourself an area in the land of the Perizzites and the Rephaim.”

“The hill country is not enough for us,” they replied, “and all the Canaanites who live in the valley have iron chariots, both in Beth-shean with its towns and in the Valley of Jezreel.”

So Joshua said to the house of Joseph — to Ephraim and Manasseh — “You have many people and great strength. You shall not have just one allotment, because the hill country will be yours as well. It is a forest; clear it, and its farthest limits will be yours. Although the Canaanites have iron chariots and although they are strong, you can drive them out.”

Then the whole congregation of Israel assembled at Shiloh and set up the Tent of Meeting there. And though the land was subdued before them, there were still seven tribes of Israel who had not yet received their inheritance.

So Joshua said to the Israelites, “How long will you put off entering and possessing the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you? Appoint three men from each tribe, and I will send them out to survey the land and map it out, according to the inheritance of each. Then they will return to me and divide the land into seven portions. Judah shall remain in their territory in the south, and the house of Joseph shall remain in their territory in the north. When you have mapped out the seven portions of land and brought it to me, I will cast lots for you here in the presence of the LORD our God.

The Levites, however, have no portion among you, because their inheritance is the priesthood of the LORD. And Gad, Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh have already received the inheritance that Moses the servant of the LORD gave them beyond the Jordan to the east.”

As the men got up to go out, Joshua commanded them to map out the land, saying, “Go and survey the land, map it out, and return to me. Then I will cast lots for you here in Shiloh in the presence of the LORD.”

So the men departed and went throughout the land, mapping it city by city into seven portions. Then they returned with the document to Joshua at the camp in Shiloh.

And Joshua cast lots for them in the presence of the LORD at Shiloh, where he distributed the land to the Israelites according to their divisions.

The first lot came up for the clans of the tribe of Benjamin. Their allotted territory lay between the tribes of Judah and Joseph:

On the north side their border began at the Jordan, went up past the northern slope of Jericho, headed west through the hill country, and came out at the wilderness of Beth-aven. From there the border crossed over to the southern slope of Luz (that is, Bethel) and went down to Ataroth-addar on the hill south of Lower Beth-horon.

On the west side the border curved southward from the hill facing Beth-horon on the south and came out at Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-jearim), a city of the sons of Judah. This was the western side.

On the south side the border began at the outskirts of Kiriath-jearim and extended westward to the spring at the Waters of Nephtoah. Then it went down to the foot of the hill that faces the Valley of Ben-hinnom at the northern end of the Valley of Rephaim and ran down the Valley of Hinnom toward the southern slope of the Jebusites and downward to En-rogel. From there it curved northward and proceeded to En-shemesh and on to Geliloth facing the Ascent of Adummim, and continued down to the Stone of Bohan son of Reuben. Then it went on to the northern slope of Beth-arabah and went down into the valley. The border continued to the northern slope of Beth-hoglah and came out at the northern bay of the Salt Sea, at the mouth of the Jordan. This was the southern border.

On the east side the border was the Jordan.

These were the borders around the inheritance of the clans of the tribe of Benjamin.

These were the cities of the clans of the tribe of Benjamin:

Jericho, Beth-hoglah, Emek-keziz, Beth-arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel, Avvim, Parah, Ophrah, Chephar-ammoni, Ophni, and Geba— twelve cities, along with their villages.

Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth, Mizpeh, Chephirah, Mozah, Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah, Zelah, Haeleph, Jebus (that is, Jerusalem), Gibeah, and Kiriath-jearim— fourteen cities, along with their villages.

This was the inheritance of the clans of the tribe of Benjamin.

The second lot came out for the clans of the tribe of Simeon:

Their inheritance lay within the territory of Judah and included Beersheba (or Sheba), Moladah, Hazar-shual, Balah, Ezem, Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah, Ziklag, Beth-marcaboth, Hazar-susah, Beth-lebaoth, and Sharuhen— thirteen cities, along with their villages.

Ain, Rimmon, Ether, and Ashan— four cities, along with their villages, and all the villages surrounding these cities as far as Baalath-beer (Ramah of the Negev).

This was the inheritance of the clans of the tribe of Simeon. The inheritance of the Simeonites was taken from the territory of Judah, because the share for Judah’s descendants was too large for them. So the Simeonites received an inheritance within Judah’s portion.

The third lot came up for the clans of the tribe of Zebulun:

The border of their inheritance stretched as far as Sarid. It went up westward to Maralah, reached

Dabbesheth, and met the brook east of Jokneam. From Sarid it turned eastward along the border of Chisloth-tabor and went on to Daberath and up to Japhia. From there it crossed eastward to Gath-hepher and to Eth-kazin; it extended to Rimmon and curved around toward Neah. Then the border circled around the north side of Neah to Hannathon and ended at the Valley of Iphtah-el. It also included Kattath, Nahalal, Shimron, Idalah, and Bethlehem. There were twelve cities, along with their villages.

This was the inheritance of the clans of the tribe of Zebulun, including these cities and their villages.

The fourth lot came out for the clans of the tribe of Issachar:

Their territory included Jezreel, Chesulloth, Shunem, Hapharaim, Shion, Anaharath, Rabbith, Kishion, Ebez, Remeth, En-gannim, En-haddah, and Beth-pazzez. The border reached Tabor, Shahazumah, and Beth-shemesh, and ended at the Jordan. There were sixteen cities, along with their villages.

This was the inheritance of the clans of the tribe of Issachar, including these cities and their villages.

The fifth lot came out for the clans of the tribe of Asher:

Their territory included Helkath, Hali, Beten, Achshaph, Allammelech, Amad, and Mishal. On the west the border touched Carmel and Shihor-libnath, then turned eastward toward Beth-dagon, touched Zebulun and the Valley of Iphtah-el, and went north to Beth-emek and Neiel, passing Cabul on the left. It went on to Ebron, Rehob, Hammon, and Kanah, as far as Greater Sidon. The border then turned back toward Ramah as far as the fortified city of Tyre, turned toward Hosah, and came out at the Sea in the region of Achzib, Ummah, Aphek, and Rehob. There were twenty-two cities, along with their villages.

This was the inheritance of the clans of the tribe of Asher, including these cities and their villages.

The sixth lot came out for the clans of the tribe of Naphtali:

Their border started at Heleph and the great tree of Zaanannim, passing Adami-nekeb and Jabneel as far as Lakkum and ending at the Jordan. Then the border turned westward to Aznoth-tabor and ran from there to Hukkok, touching Zebulun on the south side, Asher on the west, and Judah at the Jordan on the east. The fortified cities were Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Chinnereth, Adamah, Ramah, Hazor, Kedesh, Edrei, En-hazor, Iron, Migdal-el, Horem, Beth-anath, and Beth-shemesh. There were nineteen cities, along with their villages.

This was the inheritance of the clans of the tribe of Naphtali, including these cities and their villages.

The seventh lot came out for the clans of the tribe of Dan:

The territory of their inheritance included Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir-shemesh, Shaalabbin, Aijalon, Ithlah, Elon, Timnah, Ekron, Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath, Jehud, Bene-berak, Gath-rimmon, Me-jarkon, and Rakkon, including the territory across from Joppa.

(Later, when the territory of the Danites was lost to them, they went up and fought against Leshem, captured it, and put it to the sword. So they took possession of Leshem, settled there, and renamed it after their father Dan.)

This was the inheritance of the clans of the tribe of Dan, including these cities and their villages.

When they had finished distributing the land into its territories, the Israelites gave Joshua son of Nun an inheritance among them, as the LORD had commanded. They gave him the city of Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim, as he requested. He rebuilt the city and settled in it.

These are the inheritances that Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the heads of the families distributed by lot to the tribes of Israel at Shiloh before the LORD at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. So they finished dividing up the land.

Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Tell the Israelites to designate the cities of refuge, as I instructed you through Moses, so that anyone who kills another unintentionally or accidentally may flee there. These will be your refuge from the avenger of blood. When someone flees to one of these cities, stands at the entrance of the city gate, and states his case before its elders, they are to bring him into the city and give him a place to live among them.

Now if the avenger of blood pursues him, they must not surrender the manslayer into his hand, because that man killed his neighbor accidentally without prior malice. He is to stay in that city until he stands trial before the assembly and until the death of the high priest serving at that time. Then the manslayer may return to his own home in the city from which he fled.”

So they set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali, Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the hill country of Judah.

And beyond the Jordan, east of Jericho, they designated Bezer on the wilderness plateau from the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan from the tribe of Manasseh.

These are the cities appointed for all the Israelites and foreigners among them, so that anyone who kills a person unintentionally may flee there and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood prior to standing trial before the assembly.

Now the family heads of the Levites approached Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the heads of the other tribes of Israel at Shiloh in the land of Canaan and said to them, “The LORD commanded through Moses that we be given cities in which to live, together with pasturelands for our livestock.”

So by the command of the LORD, the Israelites gave the Levites these cities and their pasturelands out of their own inheritance:

The first lot came out for the Kohathite clans. The Levites who were descendants of Aaron the priest received thirteen cities by lot from the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin.

The remaining descendants of Kohath received ten cities by lot from the tribes of Ephraim, Dan, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.
The descendants of Gershon received thirteen cities by lot from the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and the half-tribe of Manasseh in Bashan.
And the descendants of Merari received twelve cities from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun.

So the Israelites allotted to the Levites these cities, together with their pasturelands, as the LORD had commanded through Moses.

From the tribes of Judah and Simeon, they designated these cities by name to the descendants of Aaron from the Kohathite clans of the Levites, because the first lot fell to them:
They gave them Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), with its surrounding pasturelands, in the hill country of Judah. (Arba was the father of Anak.) But they had given the fields and villages around the city to Caleb son of Jephunneh as his possession.
So to the descendants of Aaron the priest they gave these cities, together with their pasturelands: Hebron, a city of refuge for the manslayer, Libnah, Jattir, Eshtemoa, Holon, Debir, Ain, Juttah, and Beth-shemesh— nine cities from these two tribes, together with their pasturelands.
And from the tribe of Benjamin they gave them Gibeon, Geba, Anathoth, and Almon— four cities, together with their pasturelands.
In all, thirteen cities, together with their pasturelands, were given to the priests, the descendants of Aaron.

The remaining Kohathite clans of the Levites were allotted these cities:
From the tribe of Ephraim they were given Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim (a city of refuge for the manslayer), Gezer, Kibzaim, and Beth-horon— four cities, together with their pasturelands.
From the tribe of Dan they were given Elteke, Gibbethon, Aijalon, and Gath-rimmon— four cities, together with their pasturelands.
And from the half-tribe of Manasseh they were given Taanach and Gath-rimmon— two cities, together with their pasturelands.
In all, ten cities, together with their pasturelands, were given to the rest of the Kohathite clans.

This is what the Levite clans of the Gershonites were given:
From the half-tribe of Manasseh they were given Golan in Bashan, a city of refuge for the manslayer, and Beeshterah— two cities, together with their pasturelands.
From the tribe of Issachar they were given Kishion, Daberath, Jarmuth, and En-gannim— four cities, together with their pasturelands.
From the tribe of Asher they were given Mishal, Abdon, Helkath, and Rehob— four cities, together with their pasturelands.
And from the tribe of Naphtali they were given Kedesh in Galilee (a city of refuge for the manslayer), Hammoth-dor, and Kartan— three cities, together with their pasturelands.
In all, thirteen cities, together with their pasturelands, were given to the Gershonite clans.

This is what the Merarite clan (the rest of the Levites) were given:
From the tribe of Zebulun they were given Jokneam, Kartah, Dimnah, and Nahalal— four cities, together with their pasturelands.
From the tribe of Reuben they were given Bezer, Jahaz, Kedemoth, and Mephaath— four cities, together with their pasturelands.
And from the tribe of Gad they were given Ramoth in Gilead, a city of refuge for the manslayer, Mahanaim, Heshbon, and Jazer— four cities in all, together with their pasturelands.
In all, twelve cities were allotted to the clans of Merari, the remaining Levite clans.

For the Levites, then, there were forty-eight cities in all, together with their pasturelands, within the territory of the Israelites. Each of these cities had its own surrounding pasturelands; this was true for all the cities.

Thus the LORD gave Israel all the land He had sworn to give their fathers, and they took possession of it and settled in it.

And the LORD gave them rest on every side, just as He had sworn to their fathers. None of their enemies could stand against them, for the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand.

Not one of all the LORD's good promises to the house of Israel had failed; everything was fulfilled.

Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh and told them, "You have done all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and you have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you. All this time you have not deserted your brothers, up to this very day, but have kept the charge given you by the LORD your God.

And now that the LORD your God has given your brothers rest as He promised them, you may return to your homes in the land that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you across the Jordan. But be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul."

So Joshua blessed them and sent them on their way, and they went to their homes. (To the half-tribe of Manasseh Moses had given land in Bashan, and to the other half Joshua gave land on the west side of the Jordan among their brothers.) When Joshua sent them to their homes he blessed them, saying, "Return to your homes with your great wealth, with immense herds of livestock, with silver, gold, bronze, iron, and very many clothes. Divide with your brothers the spoil of your enemies."

So the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh left the Israelites at Shiloh in the land of Canaan to return to their own land of Gilead, which they had acquired according to the command of the LORD through Moses. And when they came to Geliloth near the Jordan in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an imposing altar there by the Jordan.

Then the Israelites received the report: “Behold, the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh have built an altar on the border of the land of Canaan, at Geliloth near the Jordan on the Israelite side.” And when they heard this, the whole congregation of Israel assembled at Shiloh to go to war against them.

The Israelites sent Phinehas son of Eleazar the priest to the land of Gilead, to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. With him they sent ten chiefs — one family leader from each tribe of Israel, each the head of a family among the clans of Israel.

They went to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh in the land of Gilead and said to them, “This is what the whole congregation of the LORD says: ‘What is this breach of faith you have committed today against the God of Israel by turning away from the LORD and building for yourselves an altar, that you might rebel against the LORD this day?

Was not the sin of Peor enough for us, from which we have not cleansed ourselves to this day? It even brought a plague upon the congregation of the LORD. And now, would you turn away from the LORD? If you rebel today against the LORD, tomorrow He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel.

If indeed the land of your inheritance is unclean, then cross over to the land of the LORD’s possession, where the LORD’s tabernacle stands, and take possession of it among us. But do not rebel against the LORD or against us by building for yourselves an altar other than the altar of the LORD our God.

Was not Achan son of Zerah unfaithful regarding what was set apart for destruction, bringing wrath upon the whole congregation of Israel? Yet it was not only Achan who perished because of his sin!’”

Then the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered the leaders of the clans of Israel: “The LORD, the Mighty One, is God! The LORD, the Mighty One, is God! He knows, and may Israel also know. If this was in rebellion or breach of faith against the LORD, do not spare us today. If we have built for ourselves an altar to turn away from Him and to offer burnt offerings and grain offerings on it, or to sacrifice peace offerings on it, may the LORD Himself hold us accountable.

But in fact we have done this for fear that in the future your descendants might say to ours, ‘What have you to do with the LORD, the God of Israel? For the LORD has made the Jordan a border between us and you Reubenites and Gadites. You have no share in the LORD!’ So your descendants could cause ours to stop fearing the LORD.

That is why we said, ‘Let us take action and build an altar for ourselves, but not for burnt offerings or sacrifices. Rather, let it be a witness between us and you and the generations to come, that we will worship the LORD in His presence with our burnt offerings, sacrifices, and peace offerings.’ Then in the future, your descendants cannot say to ours, ‘You have no share in the LORD!’

Therefore we said, ‘If they ever say this to us or to our descendants, we will answer: Look at the replica of the altar of the LORD that our fathers made, not for burnt offerings or sacrifices, but as a witness between us and you.’

Far be it from us to rebel against the LORD and turn away from Him today by building an altar for burnt offerings, grain offerings, or sacrifices, other than the altar of the LORD our God, which stands before His tabernacle.”

When Phinehas the priest and the chiefs of the congregation — the heads of Israel’s clans who were with him — heard what the descendants of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh had to say, they were satisfied. Phinehas son of Eleazar the priest said to the descendants of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, “Today we know that the LORD is among us, because you have not committed this breach of faith against Him. Consequently, you have delivered the Israelites from the hand of the LORD.”

Then Phinehas son of Eleazar the priest, together with the other leaders, returned to the Israelites in the land of Canaan and brought back a report regarding the Reubenites and Gadites in the land of Gilead. The Israelites were satisfied with the report, and they blessed God and spoke no more about going to war against them to destroy the land where the Reubenites and Gadites lived. So the Reubenites and Gadites named the altar Witness, for they said, “It is a witness between us that the LORD is God.”

A long time after the LORD had given Israel rest from all the enemies around them, when Joshua was old and well along in years, he summoned all Israel, including its elders, leaders, judges, and officers. “I am old and well along in years,” he said, “and you have seen everything that the LORD your God has done to all these nations for your sake, because it was the LORD your God who fought for you.

See, I have allotted as an inheritance to your tribes these remaining nations, including all the nations I have already cut off, from the Jordan westward to the Great Sea. The LORD your God will push them out of your way and drive them out before you, so that you can take possession of their land, as the LORD your God promised you.

Be very strong, then, so that you can keep and obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, not turning aside from it to the right or to the left. So you are not to associate with these nations that remain among you. You must not call on the names of their gods or swear by them, and you must not serve them or bow down to them. Instead, you shall hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day.

The LORD has driven out great and powerful nations before you, and to this day no one can stand against you. One of you can put a thousand to flight, because the LORD your God fights for you, just as He promised. Therefore watch yourselves carefully, that you love the LORD your God. For if you turn away and cling to the rest of these nations that remain among you, and if you intermarry and associate with them, know for sure that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become for you a snare and a trap, a scourge in your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land that the LORD your God has given you.

Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know with all your heart and soul that not one of the good promises the LORD your God made to you has failed. Everything was fulfilled for you; not one promise has failed. But just as every good thing the LORD your God promised you has come to pass, likewise the LORD will bring upon you the calamity He has threatened, until He has destroyed you from this good land He has given you. If you transgress the covenant of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and you will quickly perish from this good land He has given you."

Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges, and officers of Israel, and they presented themselves before God.

And Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your fathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates and worshiped other gods. But I took your father Abraham from beyond the Euphrates and led him through all the land of Canaan, and I multiplied his descendants. I gave him Isaac, and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I gave Esau Mount Seir to possess, but Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt.

Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I afflicted the Egyptians by what I did there, and afterward I brought you out. When I brought your fathers out of Egypt and you reached the Red Sea, the Egyptians pursued them with chariots and horsemen as far as the Red Sea. So your fathers cried out to the LORD, and He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, over whom He brought the sea and engulfed them. Your very eyes saw what I did to the Egyptians. Then you lived in the wilderness for a long time.

Later, I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived beyond the Jordan. They fought against you, but I delivered them into your hand, that you should possess their land when I destroyed them before you. Then Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab, set out to fight against Israel. He sent for Balaam son of Beor to curse you, but I would not listen to Balaam. So he blessed you again and again, and I delivered you from his hand.

After this, you crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho. The people of Jericho fought against you, as did the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites, and Jebusites, and I delivered them into your hand. I sent the hornet ahead of you, and it drove out the two Amorite kings before you, but not by your own sword or bow. So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities that you did not build, and now you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.'

Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; cast aside the gods your fathers served beyond the Euphrates and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if it is unpleasing in your sight to serve the LORD, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living. As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD!"

The people replied, "Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods! For the LORD our God brought us and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and performed these great signs before our eyes. He also protected us throughout our journey and among all the nations through which we traveled. And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because He is our God!"

But Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your rebellion or your sins. If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, He will turn and bring disaster on you and consume you, even after He has been good to you."

"No!" replied the people. "We will serve the LORD!"

Then Joshua told them, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD."

"We are witnesses!" they said.

"Now, therefore," he said, "get rid of the foreign gods among you and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel."

So the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God and obey His voice."

On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he established for them a statute and ordinance. Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was near the sanctuary of the LORD. And Joshua said to all the people, "You see this stone. It will be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words the LORD has spoken to us, and it will be a witness against you if you ever deny your God."

Then Joshua sent the people away, each to his own inheritance.

Some time later, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of 110. And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. Israel had served the LORD throughout the days of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced all the works that the LORD had done for Israel.

And the bones of Joseph, which the Israelites had brought up out of Egypt, were buried at Shechem in the plot of land that Jacob had purchased from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, for a hundred pieces of silver. So it became an inheritance for Joseph's descendants.

Eleazar son of Aaron also died, and they buried him at Gibeah, which had been given to his son Phinehas in the hill country of Ephraim.

Judges

Book of Judges

After the death of Joshua, the Israelites inquired of the LORD, “Who will be the first to go up and fight for us against the Canaanites?”

“Judah shall go up,” answered the LORD. “Indeed, I have delivered the land into their hands.”

Then the men of Judah said to their brothers the Simeonites, “Come up with us to our allotted territory, and let us fight against the Canaanites. And we likewise will go with you to your territory.” So the Simeonites went with them.

When Judah attacked, the LORD delivered the Canaanites and Perizzites into their hands, and they struck down ten thousand men at Bezek. And there they found Adoni-bezek and fought against him, striking down the Canaanites and Perizzites. As Adoni-bezek

fled, they pursued him, seized him, and cut off his thumbs and big toes. Then Adoni-bezek said, “Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off have gathered the scraps under my table. As I have done to them, so God has repaid me.” And they brought him to Jerusalem, where he died.

Then the men of Judah fought against Jerusalem and captured it. They put the city to the sword and set it on fire. Afterward, the men of Judah marched down to fight against the Canaanites living in the hill country, in the Negev, and in the foothills.

Judah also marched against the Canaanites who were living in Hebron (formerly known as Kiriath-arba), and they struck down Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai.

From there they marched against the inhabitants of Debir (formerly known as Kiriath-sepher). And Caleb said, “To the man who strikes down Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will give my daughter Acsah in marriage.” So Othniel son of Caleb’s younger brother Kenaz captured the city, and Caleb gave his daughter Acsah to him in marriage.

One day Acsah came to Othniel and urged him to ask her father for a field. When she got off her donkey, Caleb asked her, “What do you desire?”

“Give me a blessing,” she answered. “Since you have given me land in the Negev, give me springs of water as well.”

So Caleb gave her both the upper and lower springs.

Now the descendants of Moses’ father-in-law, the Kenite, went up with the men of Judah from the City of Palms to the Wilderness of Judah in the Negev near Arad. They went to live among the people.

Then the men of Judah went with their brothers the Simeonites, attacked the Canaanites living in Zephath, and devoted the city to destruction. So it was called Hormah. And Judah also captured Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron — each with its territory. The LORD was with Judah, and they took possession of the hill country; but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the plains because they had chariots of iron.

Just as Moses had promised, Judah gave Hebron to Caleb, who drove out the descendants of the three sons of Anak.

The Benjamites, however, failed to drive out the Jebusites living in Jerusalem. So to this day the Jebusites live there among the Benjamites.

The house of Joseph also attacked Bethel, and the LORD was with them. They sent spies to Bethel (formerly known as Luz), and when the spies saw a man coming out of the city, they said to him, “Please show us how to get into the city, and we will treat you kindly.”

So the man showed them the entrance to the city, and they put the city to the sword but released that man and all his family. And the man went to the land of the Hittites, built a city, and called it Luz, which is its name to this day.

At that time Manasseh failed to drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, Megiddo, and their villages; for the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land. When Israel became stronger, they pressed the Canaanites into forced labor, but they never drove them out completely.

Ephraim also failed to drive out the Canaanites living in Gezer; so the Canaanites continued to dwell among them in Gezer.

Zebulun failed to drive out the inhabitants of Kitron and Nahalol; so the Canaanites lived among them and served as forced laborers.

Asher failed to drive out the inhabitants of Acco, Sidon, Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, and Rehob. So the Asherites lived among the Canaanite inhabitants of the land, because they did not drive them out.

Naphtali failed to drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and Beth-anath. So the Naphtalites also lived among the Canaanite inhabitants of the land, but the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and Beth-anath served them as forced laborers.

The Amorites forced the Danites into the hill country and did not allow them to come down into the plain. And the Amorites were determined to dwell in Mount Heres, Aijalon, and Shaalbim. But when the house of Joseph grew in strength, they pressed the Amorites into forced labor. And the border of the Amorites extended from the Ascent of Akrabbim to Sela and beyond.

Now the angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim and said, “I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land that I had promised to your fathers, and I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you, and you are not to make a covenant with the people of this land, but you shall tear down their altars.’

Yet you have not obeyed My voice. What is this you have done? So now I tell you that I will not drive out these people before you; they will be thorns in your sides, and their gods will be a snare to you.”

When the angel of the LORD had spoken these words to all the Israelites, the people lifted up their voices and wept. So they called that place Bochim and offered sacrifices there to the LORD.

After Joshua had dismissed the people, the Israelites went out to take possession of the land, each to his own inheritance. And the people served the LORD throughout the days of Joshua and of the elders who

outlived him, who had seen all the great works that the LORD had done for Israel.

And Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of 110. They buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath-heres in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

After that whole generation had also been gathered to their fathers, another generation rose up who did not know the LORD or the works that He had done for Israel. And the Israelites did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals.

Thus they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and they followed after various gods of the peoples around them. They bowed down to them and provoked the LORD to anger, for they forsook Him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.

Then the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He delivered them into the hands of those who plundered them. He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist. Wherever Israel marched out, the hand of the LORD was against them to bring calamity, just as He had sworn to them. So they were greatly distressed.

Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them from the hands of those who plundered them.

Israel, however, did not listen to their judges. Instead, they prostituted themselves with other gods and bowed down to them. They quickly turned from the way of their fathers, who had walked in obedience to the LORD's commandments; they did not do as their fathers had done.

Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for the Israelites, He was with that judge and saved them from the hands of their enemies while the judge was still alive; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning under those who oppressed them and afflicted them. But when the judge died, the Israelites became even more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods to serve them and bow down to them. They would not give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.

So the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He said, "Because this nation has transgressed the covenant I laid down for their fathers and has not heeded My voice, I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations Joshua left when he died. In this way I will test whether Israel will keep the way of the LORD by walking in it as their fathers did."

That is why the LORD had left those nations in place and had not driven them out immediately by delivering them into the hand of Joshua.

These are the nations that the LORD left to test all the Israelites who had not known any of the wars in Canaan, if only to teach warfare to the subsequent generations of Israel, especially to those who had not known it formerly: the five rulers of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites who lived in the mountains of Lebanon from Mount Baal-hermon to Lebo-hamath.

These nations were left to test the Israelites, to find out whether they would keep the commandments of the LORD, which He had given their fathers through Moses. Thus the Israelites continued to live among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. And they took the daughters of these people in marriage, gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

So the Israelites did evil in the sight of the LORD; they forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs. Then the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim king of Aram-naharaim, and the Israelites served him eight years.

But when the Israelites cried out to the LORD, He raised up Othniel son of Caleb's younger brother Kenaz as a deliverer to save them. The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he became Israel's judge and went out to war. And the LORD delivered Cushan-rishathaim king of Aram into the hand of Othniel, who prevailed against him.

So the land had rest for forty years, until Othniel son of Kenaz died.

Once again the Israelites did evil in the sight of the LORD. So He gave Eglon king of Moab power over Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD. After enlisting the Ammonites and Amalekites to join forces with him, Eglon attacked and defeated Israel, taking possession of the City of Palms.

The Israelites served Eglon king of Moab eighteen years. And again they cried out to the LORD, and He raised up Ehud son of Gera, a left-handed Benjamite, as their deliverer. So they sent him with tribute to Eglon king of Moab.

Now Ehud had made for himself a double-edged sword a cubit long. He strapped it to his right thigh under his cloak and brought the tribute to Eglon king of Moab, who was an obese man.

After Ehud had finished presenting the tribute, he ushered out those who had carried it. But upon reaching the idols near Gilgal, he himself turned back and said, "I have a secret message for you, O king."

"Silence," said the king, and all his attendants left him.

Then Ehud approached him while he was sitting alone in the coolness of his upper room. "I have a word from God for you," Ehud said, and the king rose from his seat.

And Ehud reached with his left hand, pulled the sword from his right thigh, and plunged it into Eglon's belly. Even the handle sank in after the blade, and Eglon's fat closed in over it, so that Ehud did not withdraw the sword from his belly. And Eglon's bowels emptied. Then Ehud went out through the porch, closing and locking the doors of the upper room behind him.

After Ehud was gone, Eglon's servants came in and found the doors of the upper room locked. "He must be relieving himself in the cool room," they said. So they waited until they became worried and saw that he had still not opened the doors of the upper room. Then they took the key and opened the doors— and there was their lord lying dead on the floor.

Ehud, however, had escaped while the servants waited. He passed by the idols and escaped to Seirah.

On arriving in Seirah, he blew the ram's horn throughout the hill country of Ephraim. The Israelites came down with him from the hills, and he became

their leader. “Follow me,” he told them, “for the LORD has delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand.”

So they followed him down and seized the fords of the Jordan leading to Moab, and they did not allow anyone to cross over. At that time they struck down about ten thousand Moabites, all robust and valiant men. Not one of them escaped.

So Moab was subdued under the hand of Israel that day, and the land had rest for eighty years.

After Ehud came Shamgar son of Anath. And he too saved Israel, striking down six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad.

After Ehud died, the Israelites again did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his forces was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-hagoyim. Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD, because Jabin had nine hundred chariots of iron, and he had harshly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years.

Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. And she would sit under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, where the Israelites would go up to her for judgment.

She summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, “Surely the LORD, the God of Israel, is commanding you: ‘Go and march to Mount Tabor, taking with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun. And I will draw out Sisera the commander of Jabin’s army, his chariots, and his troops to the River Kishon, and I will deliver him into your hand.’”

Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go.”

“I will certainly go with you,” Deborah replied, “but the road you are taking will bring you no honor, because the LORD will be selling Sisera into the hand of a woman.” So Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh, where he summoned Zebulun and Naphtali. Ten thousand men followed him, and Deborah also went with him.

Now Heber the Kenite had moved away from the Kenites, the descendants of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent by the great tree of Zaanannim, which was near Kedesh.

When Sisera was told that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up Mount Tabor, he summoned all nine hundred of his iron chariots and all the men with him, from Harosheth-hagoyim to the River Kishon.

Then Deborah said to Barak, “Arise, for this is the day that the LORD has delivered Sisera into your hand. Has not the LORD gone before you?”

So Barak came down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him. And in front of him the LORD routed with the sword Sisera, all his charioteers, and all his army. Sisera abandoned his chariot and fled on foot.

Then Barak pursued the chariots and army as far as Harosheth-hagoyim, and the whole army of Sisera fell by the sword; not a single man was left.

Meanwhile, Sisera had fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because there was peace between Jabin king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. Jael went out to greet Sisera and said to him, “Come in, my lord. Come in with me. Do not be afraid.” So he entered her tent, and she covered him with a blanket.

Sisera said to her, “Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty.” So she opened a container of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him again.

“Stand at the entrance to the tent,” he said, “and if anyone comes and asks you, ‘Is there a man here?’ say, ‘No.’”

But as he lay sleeping from exhaustion, Heber’s wife Jael took a tent peg, grabbed a hammer, and went silently to Sisera. She drove the peg through his temple and into the ground, and he died.

When Barak arrived in pursuit of Sisera, Jael went out to greet him and said to him, “Come, and I will show you the man you are seeking.” So he went in with her, and there lay Sisera dead, with a tent peg through his temple.

On that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan before the Israelites. And the hand of the Israelites grew stronger and stronger against Jabin king of Canaan until they destroyed him.

On that day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang this song:

> “When the princes take the lead in Israel, when the people volunteer, bless the LORD. Listen, O kings! Give ear, O princes! I will sing to the LORD; I will sing praise to the LORD, the God of Israel. O LORD, when You went out from Seir, when You marched from the land of Edom, the earth trembled, the heavens poured out rain, and the clouds poured down water. The mountains quaked before the LORD, the One of Sinai, before the LORD, the God of Israel. In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were deserted and the travelers took the byways. Life in the villages ceased; it ended in Israel, until I, Deborah, arose, a mother in Israel. When they chose new gods, then war came to their gates. Not a shield or spear was found among forty thousand in Israel. My heart is with the princes of Israel, with the volunteers among the people. Bless the LORD! You who ride white donkeys, who sit on saddle blankets, and you who travel the road, ponder the voices of the singers at the watering places. There they shall recount the righteous acts of the LORD, the righteous deeds of His villagers in Israel. Then the people of the LORD went down to the gates: ‘Awake, awake, O Deborah! Awake, awake, sing a song! Arise, O Barak, and take hold of your captives, O son of Abinoam!’ Then the survivors came down to the nobles; the people of the LORD came down to me against the mighty. Some came from Ephraim, with their roots in Amalek; Benjamin came with your people after you. The commanders came down from Machir, the bearers of the marshal’s staff from Zebulun. The princes of Issachar were with Deborah, and Issachar was with Barak, rushing into the valley at his heels. In the clans of Reuben there was great

indecision. Why did you sit among the sheepfolds to hear the whistling for the flocks? In the clans of Reuben there was great indecision. Gilead remained beyond the Jordan. Dan, why did you linger by the ships? Asher stayed at the coast and remained in his harbors. Zebulun was a people who risked their lives; Naphtali, too, on the heights of the battlefield. Kings came and fought; then the kings of Canaan fought at Taanach by the waters of Megiddo, but they took no plunder of silver. From the heavens the stars fought; from their courses they fought against Sisera. The River Kishon swept them away, the ancient river, the River Kishon. March on, O my soul, in strength! Then the hooves of horses thundered— the mad galloping of his stallions. 'Curse Meroz,' says the angel of the LORD. 'Bitterly curse her inhabitants; for they did not come to help the LORD, to help the LORD against the mighty.' Most blessed among women is Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, most blessed of tent-dwelling women. He asked for water, and she gave him milk. In a magnificent bowl she brought him curds. She reached for the tent peg, her right hand for the workman's hammer. She struck Sisera and crushed his skull; she shattered and pierced his temple. At her feet he collapsed, he fell, there he lay still; at her feet he collapsed, he fell; where he collapsed, there he fell dead. Sisera's mother looked through the window; she peered through the lattice and lamented: 'Why is his chariot so long in coming? What has delayed the clatter of his chariots?' Her wisest ladies answer; indeed she keeps telling herself, 'Are they not finding and dividing the spoil— a girl or two for each warrior, a plunder of dyed garments for Sisera, the spoil of embroidered garments for the neck of the looter?' So may all Your enemies perish, O LORD! But may those who love You shine like the sun at its brightest."

And the land had rest for forty years.

Again the Israelites did evil in the sight of the LORD; so He delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years, and the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of the Midianites, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in the mountains, caves, and strongholds.

Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites, and other people of the east would come up and invade them, encamping against them as far as Gaza and destroying the produce of the land. They left Israel with no sustenance, neither sheep nor oxen nor donkeys. For the Midianites came with their livestock and their tents like a great swarm of locusts. They and their camels were innumerable, and they entered the land to ravage it.

Israel was greatly impoverished by Midian, and the Israelites cried out to the LORD.

Now when the Israelites cried out to the LORD because of Midian, He sent them a prophet, who told them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. I delivered you out of the hands of Egypt and all your oppressors. I drove them out before you and gave you their land. And I said to you: 'I am the LORD your God. You must not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell.' But you did not obey Me."

Then the angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon and said, "The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor."

"Please, my Lord," Gideon replied, "if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? And where are all His wonders of which our fathers told us, saying, 'Has not the LORD brought us up out of Egypt?' But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hand of Midian."

The LORD turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel from the hand of Midian. Am I not sending you?"

"Please, my Lord," Gideon replied, "how can I save Israel? Indeed, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house."

"Surely I will be with you," the LORD replied, "and you will strike down all the Midianites as one man."

Gideon answered, "If I have found favor in Your sight, give me a sign that it is You speaking with me. Please do not depart from this place until I return to You. Let me bring my offering and set it before You."

And the LORD said, "I will stay until you return."

So Gideon went in and prepared a young goat and unleavened bread and an ephah of flour. He placed the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot and brought them out to present to Him under the oak.

And the angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread, lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And Gideon did so.

Then the angel of the LORD extended the tip of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread. And fire flared from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the LORD vanished from his sight.

When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the LORD, he said, "Oh no, Lord GOD! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!"

But the LORD said to him, "Peace be with you. Do not be afraid, for you will not die."

So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it The LORD Is Peace. To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

On that very night the LORD said to Gideon, "Take your father's young bull and a second bull seven years old, tear down your father's altar to Baal, and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. Then build a proper altar to the LORD your God on the top of this stronghold. And with the wood of the Asherah pole you cut down, take the second bull and offer it as a burnt offering."

So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the LORD had told him. But because he was too afraid of his father's household and the men of the city, he did it by night rather than in the daytime.

When the men of the city got up in the morning, there was Baal's altar torn down, with the Asherah pole

cut down beside it and the second bull offered up on the newly built altar. “Who did this?” they said to one another.

And after they had investigated thoroughly, they were told, “Gideon son of Joash did it.”

Then the men of the city said to Joash, “Bring out your son. He must die, because he has torn down Baal’s altar and cut down the Asherah pole beside it.”

But Joash said to all who stood against him, “Are you contending for Baal? Are you trying to save him? Whoever pleads his case will be put to death by morning! If Baal is a god, let him contend for himself with the one who has torn down his altar.”

So on that day Gideon was called Jerubbaal, that is to say, “Let Baal contend with him,” because he had torn down Baal’s altar.

Then all the Midianites, Amalekites, and other people of the east gathered together, crossed over the Jordan, and camped in the Valley of Jezreel.

So the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, who blew the ram’s horn and rallied the Abiezrites behind him. Calling them to arms, Gideon sent messengers throughout Manasseh, as well as Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, so that they came up to meet him.

Then Gideon said to God, “If You are going to save Israel by my hand, as You have said, then behold, I will place a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that You are going to save Israel by my hand, as You have said.”

And that is what happened. When Gideon arose the next morning, he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew — a bowlful of water.

Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me; let me speak one more time. Please allow me one more test with the fleece. This time let it be dry, and the ground covered with dew.”

And that night God did so. Only the fleece was dry, and dew covered the ground.

Early in the morning Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the men with him camped beside the spring of Harod. And the camp of Midian was north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh.

Then the LORD said to Gideon, “You have too many men for Me to deliver Midian into their hands, lest Israel glorify themselves over Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’ Now, therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the men: ‘Whoever is fearful and trembling may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.’”

So twenty-two thousand of them turned back, but ten thousand remained.

Then the LORD said to Gideon, “There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will sift them for you there. If I say to you, ‘This one shall go with you,’ he shall go. But if I say, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ he shall not go.”

So Gideon brought the men down to the water, and the LORD said to him, “Separate those who lap the water with their tongues like a dog from those who kneel to drink.” And the number of those who lapped the water with their hands to their mouths was three hundred men; all the others knelt to drink.

Then the LORD said to Gideon, “With the three hundred men who lapped the water I will save you and deliver the Midianites into your hand. But all the others are to go home.”

So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites to their tents but kept the three hundred men, who took charge of the provisions and rams’ horns of the others. And the camp of Midian lay below him in the valley.

That night the LORD said to Gideon, “Get up and go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand. But if you are afraid to do so, then go down to the camp with your servant Purah and listen to what they are saying. Then your hands will be strengthened to attack the camp.” So he went with Purah his servant to the outposts where armed men were guarding the camp.

Now the Midianites, Amalekites, and all the other people of the east had settled in the valley like a swarm of locusts, and their camels were as countless as the sand on the seashore. And as Gideon arrived, a man was telling his friend about a dream. “Behold, I had a dream,” he said, “and I saw a loaf of barley bread come tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent so hard that the tent overturned and collapsed.”

His friend replied: “This is nothing less than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God has delivered Midian and the whole camp into his hand.”

When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he bowed in worship. He returned to the camp of Israel and said, “Get up, for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand.” And he divided the three hundred men into three companies and gave each man a ram’s horn in one hand and a large jar in the other, containing a torch.

“Watch me and do as I do,” Gideon said. “When I come to the outskirts of the camp, do exactly as I do. When I and all who are with me blow our horns, then you are also to blow your horns from all around the camp and shout, ‘For the LORD and for Gideon!’”

Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after the changing of the guard. They blew their horns and broke the jars that were in their hands. The three companies blew their horns and shattered their jars. Holding the torches in their left hands and the horns in their right hands, they shouted, “A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!”

Each Israelite took his position around the camp, and the entire Midianite army fled, crying out as they ran. And when the three hundred rams’ horns sounded, the LORD set all the men in the camp against one another with their swords. The army fled to Beth-shittah toward Zererah as far as the border of Abel-meholah near Tabbath. Then the men of Israel were called out from Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh, and they pursued the Midianites.

Gideon sent messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim to say, “Come down against the Midianites and seize the waters of the Jordan ahead of them as far as Beth-barah.” So all the men of Ephraim were called out, and they captured the waters of the Jordan as far as Beth-barah. They also captured Oreb and Zeeb, the two princes of Midian; and they killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb and Zeeb at the winepress of Zeeb. So they

pursued the Midianites and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan.

Then the men of Ephraim said to Gideon, “Why have you done this to us? Why did you fail to call us when you went to fight against Midian?” And they contended with him violently.

But Gideon answered them, “Now what have I accomplished compared to you? Are not the gleanings of Ephraim better than the grape harvest of Abiezer? God has delivered Oreb and Zeeb, the two princes of Midian, into your hand. What was I able to do compared to you?” When he had said this, their anger against him subsided.

Then Gideon and his three hundred men came to the Jordan and crossed it, exhausted yet still in pursuit. So Gideon said to the men of Succoth, “Please give my troops some bread, for they are exhausted, and I am still pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian.”

But the leaders of Succoth asked, “Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your possession, that we should give bread to your army?”

“Very well,” Gideon replied, “when the LORD has delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, I will tear your flesh with the thorns and briers of the wilderness!”

From there he went up to Penuel and asked the same from them, but the men of Penuel gave the same response as the men of Succoth. So Gideon told the men of Penuel, “When I return in triumph, I will tear down this tower!”

Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with their army of about fifteen thousand men — all that were left of the armies of the people of the east. A hundred and twenty thousand swordsmen had already fallen. And Gideon went up by way of the caravan route east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and he attacked their army, taking them by surprise. When Zebah and Zalmunna fled, Gideon pursued and captured these two kings of Midian, routing their entire army.

After this, Gideon son of Joash returned from the battle along the Ascent of Heres. There he captured a young man of Succoth and interrogated him. The young man wrote down for him the names of the seventy-seven leaders and elders of Succoth.

And Gideon went to the men of Succoth and said, “Here are Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you taunted me, saying, ‘Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your possession, that we should give bread to your weary men?’” Then he took the elders of the city, and using the thorns and briers of the wilderness, he disciplined the men of Succoth. He also pulled down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

Next, Gideon asked Zebah and Zalmunna, “What kind of men did you kill at Tabor?”

“Men like you,” they answered, “each one resembling the son of a king.”

“They were my brothers,” Gideon replied, “the sons of my mother! As surely as the LORD lives, if you had let them live, I would not kill you.”

So he said to Jether, his firstborn, “Get up and kill them.” But the young man did not draw his sword; he was fearful because he was still a youth.

Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, “Get up and kill us yourself, for as the man is, so is his strength.” So Gideon got up and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and he took the crescent ornaments from the necks of their camels.

Then the Israelites said to Gideon, “Rule over us — you and your son and grandson — for you have saved us from the hand of Midian.”

But Gideon replied, “I will not rule over you, nor will my son. The LORD shall rule over you.”

Then he added, “Let me make a request of you, that each of you give me an earring from his plunder.” (For the enemies had gold earrings because they were Ishmaelites.)

“We will give them gladly,” they replied.

So they spread out a garment, and each man threw an earring from his plunder onto it. The weight of the gold earrings he had requested was 1,700 shekels, in addition to the crescent ornaments, the pendants, the purple garments of the kings of Midian, and the chains from the necks of their camels.

From all this Gideon made an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his hometown. But soon all Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his household.

In this way Midian was subdued before the Israelites and did not raise its head again. So the land had rest for forty years in the days of Gideon, and he — Jerubbaal son of Joash — returned home and settled down.

Gideon had seventy sons of his own, since he had many wives. His concubine, who dwelt in Shechem, also bore him a son, and he named him Abimelech.

Later, Gideon son of Joash died at a ripe old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

And as soon as Gideon was dead, the Israelites turned and prostituted themselves with the Baals, and they set up Baal-berith as their god.

The Israelites failed to remember the LORD their God who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side. They did not show kindness to the house of Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) for all the good things he had done for Israel.

Now Abimelech son of Jerubbaal went to his mother’s brothers at Shechem and said to them and to all the clan of his mother, “Please ask all the leaders of Shechem, ‘Is it better for you that seventy men, all the sons of Jerubbaal, rule over you, or just one man?’ Remember that I am your own flesh and blood.”

And when his mother’s brothers spoke all these words about him in the presence of all the leaders of Shechem, their hearts were inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, “He is our brother.” So they gave him seventy shekels of silver from the temple of Baal-berith, with which Abimelech hired some worthless and reckless men to follow him. He went to his father’s house in Ophrah, and on one stone murdered his seventy brothers, the sons of Jerubbaal. But Jotham, the youngest son of Jerubbaal, survived, because he hid himself.

Then all the leaders of Shechem and Beth-millo gathered beside the oak at the pillar in Shechem and proceeded to make Abimelech their king.

When this was reported to Jotham, he climbed to the top of Mount Gerizim, raised his voice, and cried out:

> "Listen to me, O leaders of Shechem, and may God listen to you. One day the trees set out to anoint a king for themselves. They said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us.' But the olive tree replied, 'Should I stop giving my oil that honors both God and man, to hold sway over the trees?' Then the trees said to the fig tree, 'Come and reign over us.' But the fig tree replied, 'Should I stop giving my sweetness and my good fruit, to hold sway over the trees?' Then the trees said to the grapevine, 'Come and reign over us.' But the grapevine replied, 'Should I stop giving my wine that cheers both God and man, to hold sway over the trees?' Finally all the trees said to the thornbush, 'Come and reign over us.' But the thornbush replied, 'If you really are anointing me as king over you, come and find refuge in my shade. But if not, may fire come out of the thornbush and consume the cedars of Lebanon.'

Now if you have acted faithfully and honestly in making Abimelech king, if you have done well by Jerubbaal and his family, and if you have done to him as he deserves— for my father fought for you and risked his life to deliver you from the hand of Midian, but you have risen up against my father's house this day and killed his seventy sons on a single stone, and you have made Abimelech, the son of his maidservant, king over the leaders of Shechem because he is your brother — if you have acted faithfully and honestly toward Jerubbaal and his house this day, then may you rejoice in Abimelech, and he in you.

But if not, may fire come from Abimelech and consume the leaders of Shechem and Beth-millo, and may fire come from the leaders of Shechem and Beth-millo and consume Abimelech."

Then Jotham ran away, escaping to Beer, and he lived there for fear of his brother Abimelech.

After Abimelech had reigned over Israel for three years, God sent a spirit of animosity between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem and caused them to treat Abimelech deceitfully, in order that the crime against the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might come to justice and their blood be avenged on their brother Abimelech and on the leaders of Shechem, who had helped him murder his brothers.

The leaders of Shechem set up an ambush against Abimelech on the hilltops, and they robbed all who passed by them on the road. So this was reported to Abimelech.

Meanwhile, Gaal son of Ebed came with his brothers and crossed into Shechem, and the leaders of Shechem put their confidence in him. And after they had gone out into the fields, gathered grapes from their vineyards, and trodden them, they held a festival and went into the house of their god; and as they ate and drank, they cursed Abimelech.

Then Gaal son of Ebed said, "Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? Is he not the son of Jerubbaal, and is not Zebul his officer? You are to serve the men of Hamor, the father of Shechem. Why should we serve Abimelech? If only this people were under my authority, I would remove Abimelech; I would say to him, 'Muster your army and come out!'"

When Zebul the governor of the city heard the words of Gaal son of Ebed, he burned with anger. So he covertly sent messengers to Abimelech to say, "Look, Gaal son of Ebed and his brothers have come to Shechem and are stirring up the city against you. Now then, tonight you and the people with you are to come and lie in wait in the fields. And in the morning at sunrise, get up and advance against the city. When Gaal and his men come out against you, do to them whatever you are able."

So Abimelech and all his troops set out by night and lay in wait against Shechem in four companies.

Now Gaal son of Ebed went out and stood at the entrance of the city gate just as Abimelech and his men came out from their hiding places.

When Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, "Look, people are coming down from the mountains!"

But Zebul replied, "The shadows of the mountains look like men to you."

Then Gaal spoke up again, "Look, people are coming down from the center of the land, and one company is coming by way of the Diviners' Oak."

"Where is your gloating now?" Zebul replied. "You said, 'Who is Abimelech that we should serve him?' Are these not the people you ridiculed? Go out now and fight them!"

So Gaal went out before the leaders of Shechem and fought against Abimelech, but Abimelech pursued him, and Gaal fled before him. And many Shechemites fell wounded all the way to the entrance of the gate. Abimelech stayed in Arumah, and Zebul drove Gaal and his brothers out of Shechem.

The next day the people of Shechem went out into the fields, and this was reported to Abimelech. So he took his men, divided them into three companies, and lay in wait in the fields. When he saw the people coming out of the city, he rose up against them and attacked them.

Then Abimelech and the companies with him rushed forward and took their stand at the entrance of the city gate. The other two companies rushed against all who were in the fields and struck them down. And all that day Abimelech fought against the city until he had captured it and killed its people. Then he demolished the city and sowed it with salt.

On hearing of this, all the leaders in the tower of Shechem entered the inner chamber of the temple of El-berith. And when Abimelech was told that all the leaders in the tower of Shechem were gathered there, he and all his men went up to Mount Zalmon. Abimelech took his axe in his hand and cut a branch from the trees, which he lifted to his shoulder, saying to his men, "Hurry and do what you have seen me do."

So each man also cut his own branch and followed Abimelech. Then they piled the branches against the inner chamber and set it on fire above them, killing everyone in the tower of Shechem, about a thousand men and women.

Then Abimelech went to Thebez, encamped against it, and captured it. But there was a strong tower inside the city, and all the men, women, and leaders of the city fled there. They locked themselves in and went up to the roof of the tower.

When Abimelech came to attack the tower, he approached its entrance to set it on fire. But a woman dropped an upper millstone on Abimelech's head, crushing his skull. He quickly called his armor-bearer, saying, "Draw your sword and kill me, lest they say of me, 'A woman killed him.'"

So Abimelech's armor-bearer ran his sword through him, and he died. And when the Israelites saw that Abimelech was dead, they all went home.

In this way God repaid the wickedness that Abimelech had done to his father in murdering his seventy brothers. And God also brought all the wickedness of the men of Shechem back upon their own heads. So the curse of Jotham son of Jerubbaal came upon them.

After the time of Abimelech, a man of Issachar, Tola son of Puah, the son of Dodo, rose up to save Israel. He lived in Shamir, in the hill country of Ephraim.

Tola judged Israel twenty-three years, and when he died, he was buried in Shamir.

Tola was followed by Jair the Gileadite, who judged Israel twenty-two years. He had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys. And they had thirty towns in the land of Gilead, which to this day are called Havvoth-jair.

When Jair died, he was buried in Kamon.

And again the Israelites did evil in the sight of the LORD. They served the Baals, the Ashtoreths, the gods of Aram, Sidon, and Moab, and the gods of the Ammonites and Philistines. Thus they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him.

So the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and Ammonites, who that very year harassed and oppressed the Israelites, and they did so for eighteen years to all the Israelites on the other side of the Jordan in Gilead, the land of the Amorites.

The Ammonites also crossed the Jordan to fight against Judah, Benjamin, and the house of Ephraim, and Israel was in deep distress.

Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD, saying, "We have sinned against You, for we have indeed forsaken our God and served the Baals."

The LORD replied, "When the Egyptians, Amorites, Ammonites, Philistines, Sidonians, Amalekites, and Maonites oppressed you and you cried out to Me, did I not save you from their hands? But you have forsaken Me and served other gods, so I will no longer save you. Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen. Let them save you in your time of trouble."

"We have sinned," the Israelites said to the LORD. "Deal with us as You see fit; but please deliver us today!" So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD, and He could no longer bear the misery of Israel.

Then the Ammonites were called to arms and camped in Gilead, and the Israelites assembled and camped at Mizpah. And the rulers of Gilead said to one another, "Whoever will launch the attack against the Ammonites will be the head of all who live in Gilead."

Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor; he was the son of a prostitute, and Gilead was his father. And Gilead's wife bore him sons who grew up, drove Jephthah out, and said to him, "You shall have no inheritance in our father's house, because you are the son of another woman."

So Jephthah fled from his brothers and settled in the land of Tob, where worthless men gathered around him and traveled with him.

Some time later, when the Ammonites fought against Israel and made war with them, the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob. "Come," they said, "be our commander, so that we can fight against the Ammonites."

Jephthah replied to the elders of Gilead, "Did you not hate me and expel me from my father's house? Why then have you come to me now, when you are in distress?"

They answered Jephthah, "This is why we now turn to you, that you may go with us, fight the Ammonites, and become leader over all of us who live in Gilead."

But Jephthah asked them, "If you take me back to fight the Ammonites and the LORD gives them to me, will I really be your leader?"

And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "The LORD is our witness if we do not do as you say."

So Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him their leader and commander. And Jephthah repeated all his terms in the presence of the LORD at Mizpah.

Then Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites, saying, "What do you have against me that you have come to fight against my land?"

The king of the Ammonites answered Jephthah's messengers, "When Israel came up out of Egypt, they seized my land, from the Arnon to the Jabbok and all the way to the Jordan. Now, therefore, restore it peaceably."

Jephthah again sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites to tell him, "This is what Jephthah says: Israel did not take away the land of Moab or of the Ammonites. But when Israel came up out of Egypt, they traveled through the wilderness to the Red Sea and came to Kadesh. Then Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, 'Please let us pass through your land,' but the king of Edom would not listen. They also sent messengers to the king of Moab, but he would not consent. So Israel stayed in Kadesh.

Then Israel traveled through the wilderness and bypassed the lands of Edom and Moab. They came to the east side of the land of Moab and camped on the other side of the Arnon. But they did not enter the territory of Moab, since the Arnon was its border.

And Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon, and said to him, 'Please let us pass through your land into our own place.' But Sihon would not trust Israel to pass through his territory. So he gathered all his people, encamped in Jahaz, and fought with Israel.

Then the LORD, the God of Israel, delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, who defeated them. So Israel took possession of all the land of the Amorites who inhabited that country, seizing all the

land from the Arnon to the Jabbok and from the wilderness to the Jordan.

Now since the LORD, the God of Israel, has driven out the Amorites from before His people Israel, should you now possess it? Do you not possess whatever your god Chemosh grants you? So also, we possess whatever the LORD our God has granted us. Are you now so much better than Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever contend with Israel or fight against them?

For three hundred years Israel has lived in Heshbon, Aroer, and their villages, as well as all the cities along the banks of the Arnon. Why did you not take them back during that time? I have not sinned against you, but you have done me wrong by waging war against me. May the LORD, the Judge, decide today between the Israelites and the Ammonites."

But the king of the Ammonites paid no heed to the message Jephthah sent him.

Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh, then through Mizpah of Gilead. And from there he advanced against the Ammonites.

Jephthah made this vow to the LORD: "If indeed You will deliver the Ammonites into my hand, then whatever comes out the door of my house to greet me on my triumphant return from the Ammonites will belong to the LORD, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering."

So Jephthah crossed over to the Ammonites to fight against them, and the LORD delivered them into his hand. With a great blow he devastated twenty cities from Aroer to the vicinity of Minnith, as far as Abelkeramim. So the Ammonites were subdued before the Israelites.

And when Jephthah returned home to Mizpah, there was his daughter coming out to meet him with tambourines and dancing! She was his only child; he had no son or daughter besides her.

As soon as Jephthah saw her, he tore his clothes and said, "No! Not my daughter! You have brought me to my knees! You have brought great misery upon me, for I have given my word to the LORD and cannot take it back."

"My father," she replied, "you have given your word to the LORD. Do to me as you have said, for the LORD has avenged you of your enemies, the Ammonites." She also said to her father, "Let me do this one thing: Let me wander for two months through the mountains with my friends and mourn my virginity."

"Go," he said. And he sent her away for two months.

So she left with her friends and mourned her virginity upon the mountains. After two months, she returned to her father, and he did to her as he had vowed. And she had never had relations with a man.

So it has become a custom in Israel that each year the young women of Israel go out for four days to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite.

Then the men of Ephraim assembled and crossed the Jordan to Zaphon. They said to Jephthah, "Why have you crossed over to fight the Ammonites without calling us to go with you? We will burn your house down with you inside!"

But Jephthah replied, "My people and I had a serious conflict with the Ammonites, and when I called, you did not save me out of their hands. When I saw that you would not save me, I risked my life and crossed over to the Ammonites, and the LORD delivered them into my hand. Why then have you come today to fight against me?"

Jephthah then gathered all the men of Gilead and fought against Ephraim. And the men of Gilead struck them down because the Ephraimites had said, "You Gileadites are fugitives in Ephraim, living in the territories of Ephraim and Manasseh."

The Gileadites captured the fords of the Jordan leading to Ephraim, and whenever a fugitive from Ephraim would say, "Let me cross over," the Gileadites would ask him, "Are you an Ephraimite?"

If he answered, "No," they told him, "Please say Shibboleth."

If he said, "Sibboleth," because he could not pronounce it correctly, they seized him and killed him at the fords of the Jordan. So at that time 42,000 Ephraimites were killed.

Jephthah judged Israel six years, and when he died, he was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.

After Jephthah, Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. He had thirty sons, as well as thirty daughters whom he gave in marriage to men outside his clan; and for his sons he brought back thirty wives from elsewhere. Ibzan judged Israel seven years. Then Ibzan died, and he was buried in Bethlehem.

After Ibzan, Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel ten years. Then Elon the Zebulunite died, and he was buried in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.

After Elon, Abdon son of Hillel, from Pirathon, judged Israel. He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy donkeys. And he judged Israel eight years. Then Abdon son of Hillel, from Pirathon, died, and he was buried at Pirathon in Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.

Again the Israelites did evil in the sight of the LORD, so He delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

Now there was a man from Zorah named Manoah, from the clan of the Danites, whose wife was barren and had no children. The angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "It is true that you are barren and have no children; but you will conceive and give birth to a son. Now please be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, and not to eat anything unclean. For behold, you will conceive and give birth to a son. And no razor shall touch his head, because the boy will be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he will begin the deliverance of Israel from the hand of the Philistines."

So the woman went and told her husband, "A man of God came to me. His appearance was like the angel of God, exceedingly awesome. I did not ask him where he came from, and he did not tell me his name. But he said to me, 'Behold, you will conceive and give birth to a son. Now, therefore, do not drink wine or strong drink, and do not eat anything unclean, because the boy will be a Nazirite to God from the womb until the day of his death.'"

Then Manoah prayed to the LORD, “Please, O Lord, let the man of God You sent us come to us again to teach us how to raise the boy who is to be born.”

And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the angel of God returned to the woman as she was sitting in the field; but her husband Manoah was not with her. The woman ran quickly to tell her husband, “Behold, the man who came to me the other day has reappeared!”

So Manoah got up and followed his wife. When he came to the man, he asked, “Are you the man who spoke to my wife?”

“I am, ” he said.

Then Manoah asked, “When your words come to pass, what will be the boy’s rule of life and mission?”

So the angel of the LORD answered Manoah, “Your wife is to do everything I told her. She must not eat anything that comes from the vine, nor drink any wine or strong drink, nor eat anything unclean. She must do everything I have commanded her.”

“Please stay here,” Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “and we will prepare a young goat for you.”

And the angel of the LORD replied, “Even if I stay, I will not eat your food. But if you prepare a burnt offering, offer it to the LORD.” For Manoah did not know that it was the angel of the LORD.

Then Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “What is your name, so that we may honor you when your word comes to pass?”

“Why do you ask my name,” said the angel of the LORD, “since it is beyond comprehension?”

Then Manoah took a young goat and a grain offering and offered them on a rock to the LORD. And as Manoah and his wife looked on, the LORD did a marvelous thing. When the flame went up from the altar to the sky, the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame.

When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell face-down to the ground. And when the angel of the LORD did not appear again to Manoah and his wife, Manoah realized that it had been the angel of the LORD.

“We are going to die,” he said to his wife, “for we have seen God!”

But his wife replied, “If the LORD had intended to kill us, He would not have accepted the burnt offering and the grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things or spoken to us this way.”

So the woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson. The boy grew, and the LORD blessed him. And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him at Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

One day Samson went down to Timnah, where he saw a young Philistine woman. So he returned and told his father and mother, “I have seen a daughter of the Philistines in Timnah. Now get her for me as a wife.”

But his father and mother replied, “Can’t you find a young woman among your relatives or among any of our people? Must you go to the uncircumcised Philistines to get a wife?”

But Samson told his father, “Get her for me, for she is pleasing to my eyes.” (Now his father and mother did not know this was from the LORD, who was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines; for at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel.)

Then Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother and came to the vineyards of Timnah. Suddenly a young lion came roaring at him, and the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon him, and he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as one would tear a young goat. But he did not tell his father or mother what he had done. Then Samson continued on his way down and spoke to the woman, because she was pleasing to his eyes.

When Samson returned later to take her, he left the road to see the lion’s carcass, and in it was a swarm of bees, along with their honey. So he scooped some honey into his hands and ate it as he went along. And when he returned to his father and mother, he gave some to them and they ate it. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey from the lion’s carcass.

Then his father went to visit the woman, and Samson prepared a feast there, as was customary for the bridegroom. And when the Philistines saw him, they selected thirty men to accompany him.

“Let me tell you a riddle,” Samson said to them. “If you can solve it for me within the seven days of the feast, I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes. But if you cannot solve it, you must give me thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes.”

“Tell us your riddle,” they replied. “Let us hear it.”

So he said to them:

> “Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet.”

For three days they were unable to explain the riddle. So on the fourth day they said to Samson’s wife, “Entice your husband to explain the riddle to us, or we will burn you and your father’s household to death. Did you invite us here to rob us?”

Then Samson’s wife came to him, weeping, and said, “You hate me! You do not really love me! You have posed to my people a riddle, but have not explained it to me.”

“Look,” he said, “I have not even explained it to my father or mother, so why should I explain it to you?”

She wept the whole seven days of the feast, and finally on the seventh day, because she had pressed him so much, he told her the answer. And in turn she explained the riddle to her people.

Before sunset on the seventh day, the men of the city said to Samson:

> “What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?”

So he said to them:

> “If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle!”

Then the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave their clothes to those who had solved the riddle. And burning with anger, Samson returned to his father’s house, and his wife was given to one of the men who had accompanied him.

Later on, at the time of the wheat harvest, Samson took a young goat and went to visit his wife. “I want to go to my wife in her room,” he said. But her father would not let him enter.

“I was sure that you thoroughly hated her,” said her father, “so I gave her to one of the men who accompa-

nied you. Is not her younger sister more beautiful than she? Please take her instead."

Samson said to them, "This time I will be blameless in doing harm to the Philistines."

Then Samson went out and caught three hundred foxes. And he took torches, turned the foxes tail-to-tail, and fastened a torch between each pair of tails. Then he lit the torches and released the foxes into the standing grain of the Philistines, burning up the piles of grain and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards and olive groves.

"Who did this?" the Philistines demanded.

"It was Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite," they were told. "For his wife was given to his companion."

So the Philistines went up and burned her and her father to death.

And Samson told them, "Because you have done this, I will not rest until I have taken vengeance upon you." And he struck them ruthlessly with a great slaughter, and then went down and stayed in the cave at the rock of Etam.

Then the Philistines went up, camped in Judah, and deployed themselves near the town of Lehi.

"Why have you attacked us?" said the men of Judah.

The Philistines replied, "We have come to arrest Samson and pay him back for what he has done to us."

In response, three thousand men of Judah went to the cave at the rock of Etam, and they asked Samson, "Do you not realize that the Philistines rule over us? What have you done to us?"

"I have done to them what they did to me," he replied.

But they said to him, "We have come down to arrest you and hand you over to the Philistines."

Samson replied, "Swear to me that you will not kill me yourselves."

"No," they answered, "we will not kill you, but we will tie you up securely and hand you over to them." So they bound him with two new ropes and led him up from the rock.

When Samson arrived in Lehi, the Philistines came out shouting against him. And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him. The ropes on his arms became like burnt flax, and the bonds broke loose from his hands. He found the fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and struck down a thousand men. Then Samson said:

> "With the jawbone of a donkey I have piled them into heaps. With the jawbone of a donkey I have slain a thousand men."

And when Samson had finished speaking, he cast the jawbone from his hand; and he named that place Ramath-lehi.

And being very thirsty, Samson cried out to the LORD, "You have accomplished this great deliverance through Your servant. Must I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?"

So God opened up the hollow place in Lehi, and water came out of it. When Samson drank, his strength returned, and he was revived. That is why he named it En-hakkore, and it remains in Lehi to this day.

And Samson judged Israel for twenty years in the days of the Philistines.

One day Samson went to Gaza, where he saw a prostitute and went in to spend the night with her.

When the Gazites heard that Samson was there, they surrounded that place and lay in wait for him all night at the city gate. They were quiet throughout the night, saying, "Let us wait until dawn; then we will kill him."

But Samson lay there only until midnight, when he got up, took hold of the doors of the city gate and both gateposts, and pulled them out, bar and all. Then he put them on his shoulders and took them to the top of the mountain overlooking Hebron.

Some time later, Samson fell in love with a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. The lords of the Philistines went to her and said, "Entice him and find out the source of his great strength and how we can overpower him to tie him up and subdue him. Then each one of us will give you eleven hundred shekels of silver."

So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me the source of your great strength and how you can be tied up and subdued."

Samson told her, "If they tie me up with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, I will become as weak as any other man."

So the lords of the Philistines brought her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she tied him up with them. While the men were hidden in her room, she called out, "Samson, the Philistines are here!"

But he snapped the bowstrings like a strand of yarn seared by a flame. So the source of his strength remained unknown.

Then Delilah said to Samson, "You have mocked me and lied to me! Now please tell me how you can be tied up."

He replied, "If they tie me up with new ropes that have never been used, I will become as weak as any other man."

So Delilah took new ropes, tied him up with them, and called out, "Samson, the Philistines are here!"

But while the men were hidden in her room, he snapped the ropes off his arms like they were threads.

Then Delilah said to Samson, "You have mocked me and lied to me all along! Tell me how you can be tied up."

He told her, "If you weave the seven braids of my head into the web of a loom and tighten it with a pin, I will become as weak as any other man."

So while he slept, Delilah took the seven braids of his hair and wove them into the web.Then she tightened it with a pin and called to him, "Samson, the Philistines are here!"

But he awoke from his sleep and pulled out the pin with the loom and the web.

"How can you say, 'I love you,'" she asked, "when your heart is not with me? This is the third time you have mocked me and failed to reveal to me the source of your great strength!"

Finally, after she had pressed him daily with her words and pleaded until he was sick to death, Samson told her all that was in his heart: "My hair has never been cut, because I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaved, my strength will leave me, and I will become as weak as any other man."

When Delilah realized that he had revealed to her all that was in his heart, she sent this message to the lords of the Philistines: “Come up once more, for he has revealed to me all that is in his heart.”

Then the lords of the Philistines came to her, bringing the money in their hands.

And having lulled him to sleep on her lap, she called a man to shave off the seven braids of his head. In this way she began to subdue him, and his strength left him. Then she called out, “Samson, the Philistines are here!”

When Samson awoke from his sleep, he thought, “I will escape as I did before and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him.

Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, where he was bound with bronze shackles and forced to grind grain in the prison.

However, the hair of his head began to grow back after it had been shaved.

Now the lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon. They rejoiced and said, “Our god has delivered Samson our enemy into our hands.”

And when the people saw him, they praised their god, saying:

> “Our god has delivered into our hands our enemy who destroyed our land and multiplied our dead.”

And while their hearts were merry, they said, “Call for Samson to entertain us.” So they called Samson out of the prison to entertain them. And they stationed him between the pillars.

Samson said to the servant who held his hand, “Lead me where I can feel the pillars supporting the temple, so I can lean against them.”

Now the temple was full of men and women; all the lords of the Philistines were there, and about three thousand men and women were on the roof watching Samson entertain them.

Then Samson called out to the LORD: “O Lord GOD, please remember me. Strengthen me, O God, just once more, so that with one vengeful blow I may pay back the Philistines for my two eyes.”

And Samson reached out for the two central pillars supporting the temple. Bracing himself against them with his right hand on one pillar and his left hand on the other, Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines.”

Then he pushed with all his might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people in it. So in his death he killed more than he had killed in his life.

Then Samson’s brothers and his father’s family came down, carried him back, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. And he had judged Israel twenty years.

Now a man named Micah from the hill country of Ephraim said to his mother, “The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from you and about which I heard you utter a curse— I have the silver here with me; I took it.”

Then his mother said, “Blessed be my son by the LORD!”

And when he had returned the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, she said, “I wholly dedicate the silver to the LORD for my son’s benefit, to make a graven image and a molten idol. Therefore I will now return it to you.”

So he returned the silver to his mother, and she took two hundred shekels of silver and gave them to a silversmith, who made them into a graven image and a molten idol. And they were placed in the house of Micah.

Now this man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and some household idols, and ordained one of his sons as his priest. In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

And there was a young Levite from Bethlehem in Judah who had been residing within the clan of Judah. This man left the city of Bethlehem in Judah to settle where he could find a place. And as he traveled, he came to Micah’s house in the hill country of Ephraim.

“Where are you from?” Micah asked him.

“I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah,” he replied, “and I am on my way to settle wherever I can find a place.”

“Stay with me,” Micah said to him, “and be my father and priest, and I will give you ten shekels of silver per year, a suit of clothes, and your provisions.”

So the Levite went in and agreed to stay with him, and the young man became like a son to Micah.

Micah ordained the Levite, and the young man became his priest and lived in his house. Then Micah said, “Now I know that the LORD will be good to me, because a Levite has become my priest.”

In those days there was no king in Israel, and the tribe of the Danites was looking for territory to occupy. For up to that time they had not come into an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. So the Danites sent out five men from their clans, men of valor from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and explore it. “Go and explore the land,” they told them.

The men entered the hill country of Ephraim and came to the house of Micah, where they spent the night. And while they were near Micah’s house, they recognized the voice of the young Levite; so they went over and asked him, “Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? Why are you here?”

“Micah has done this and that for me,” he replied, “and he has hired me to be his priest.”

Then they said to him, “Please inquire of God to determine whether we will have a successful journey.”

And the priest told them, “Go in peace. The LORD is watching over your journey.”

So the five men departed and came to Laish, where they saw that the people were living securely, like the Sidonians, quiet and unsuspecting. There was nothing lacking in the land and no oppressive ruler. And they were far away from the Sidonians and had no alliance with anyone.

When the men returned to Zorah and Eshtaol, their brothers asked them, “What did you find?”

They answered, “Come on, let us go up against them, for we have seen the land, and it is very good. Why would you fail to act? Do not hesitate to go there and take possession of the land! When you enter, you will come to an unsuspecting people and a spacious land, for God has delivered it into your hand. It is a place where nothing on earth is lacking.”

So six hundred Danites departed from Zorah and Eshtaol, armed with weapons of war. They went up and camped at Kiriath-jearim in Judah. That is why the place west of Kiriath-jearim is called Mahaneh-dan to this day. And from there they traveled to the hill country of Ephraim and came to Micah's house.

Then the five men who had gone to spy out the land of Laish said to their brothers, "Did you know that one of these houses has an ephod, household gods, a graven image, and a molten idol? Now think about what you should do."

So they turned aside there and went to the home of the young Levite, the house of Micah, and greeted him.

The six hundred Danites stood at the entrance of the gate, armed with their weapons of war. And the five men who had gone to spy out the land went inside and took the graven image, the ephod, the household idols, and the molten idol, while the priest stood at the entrance of the gate with the six hundred armed men.

When they entered Micah's house and took the graven image, the ephod, the household idols, and the molten idol, the priest said to them, "What are you doing?"

"Be quiet," they told him. "Put your hand over your mouth and come with us and be a father and a priest to us. Is it better for you to be a priest for the house of one person or a priest for a tribe and family in Israel?"

So the priest was glad and took the ephod, the household idols, and the graven image, and went with the people. Putting their small children, their livestock, and their possessions in front of them, they turned and departed.

After they were some distance from Micah's house, the men in the houses near Micah's house mobilized and overtook the Danites. When they called out after them, the Danites turned to face them and said to Micah, "What is the matter with you that you have called out such a company?"

He replied, "You took the gods I had made, and my priest, and went away. What else do I have? How can you say to me, 'What is the matter with you?'"

The Danites said to him, "Do not raise your voice against us, or angry men will attack you, and you and your family will lose your lives."

So the Danites went on their way, and Micah turned to go back home, because he saw that they were too strong for him.

After they had taken Micah's idols and his priest, they went to Laish, to a quiet and unsuspecting people, and they struck them with their swords and burned down the city. There was no one to deliver them, because the city was far from Sidon and had no alliance with anyone; it was in a valley near Beth-rehob.

And the Danites rebuilt the city and lived there. They named it Dan, after their forefather Dan, who was born to Israel — though the city was formerly named Laish.

The Danites set up idols for themselves, and Jonathan son of Gershom, the son of Moses, and his sons were priests for the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land.

So they set up for themselves Micah's graven image, and it was there the whole time the house of God was in Shiloh.

Now in those days, when there was no king in Israel, a Levite who lived in the remote hill country of Ephraim took for himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. But she was unfaithful to him and left him to return to her father's house in Bethlehem in Judah.

After she had been there four months, her husband got up and went after her to speak kindly to her and bring her back, taking his servant and a pair of donkeys. So the girl brought him into her father's house, and when her father saw him, he gladly welcomed him. His father-in-law, the girl's father, persuaded him to stay, so he remained with him three days, eating, drinking, and lodging there.

On the fourth day, they got up early in the morning and prepared to depart, but the girl's father said to his son-in-law, "Refresh your heart with a morsel of bread, and then you can go." So they sat down and the two of them ate and drank together. Then the girl's father said to the man, "Please agree to stay overnight and let your heart be merry." The man got up to depart, but his father-in-law persuaded him, so he stayed there that night.

On the fifth day, he got up early in the morning to depart, but the girl's father said, "Please refresh your heart." So they waited until late afternoon and the two of them ate. When the man got up to depart with his concubine and his servant, his father-in-law, the girl's father, said to him, "Look, the day is drawing to a close. Please spend the night. See, the day is almost over. Spend the night here, that your heart may be merry. Then you can get up early tomorrow for your journey home."

But the man was unwilling to spend the night. He got up and departed, and arrived opposite Jebus (that is, Jerusalem), with his two saddled donkeys and his concubine. When they were near Jebus and the day was almost gone, the servant said to his master, "Please, let us stop at this Jebusite city and spend the night here."

But his master replied, "We will not turn aside to the city of foreigners, where there are no Israelites. We will go on to Gibeah." He continued, "Come, let us try to reach one of these towns to spend the night in Gibeah or Ramah."

So they continued on their journey, and the sun set as they neared Gibeah in Benjamin. They stopped to go in and lodge in Gibeah. The Levite went in and sat down in the city square, but no one would take them into his home for the night.

That evening an old man from the hill country of Ephraim, who was residing in Gibeah (the men of that place were Benjamites), came in from his work in the field. When he looked up and saw the traveler in the city square, the old man asked, "Where are you going, and where have you come from?"

The Levite replied, "We are traveling from Bethlehem in Judah to the remote hill country of Ephraim, where I am from. I went to Bethlehem in Judah, and now I am going to the house of the LORD; but no one has taken me into his home, even though there is both straw and feed for our donkeys, and bread and wine for me and the maidservant and young man with me. There is nothing that we, your servants, lack."

"Peace to you," said the old man. "Let me supply everything you need. Only do not spend the night in the square." So he brought him to his house and fed his donkeys. And they washed their feet and ate and drank.

While they were enjoying themselves, suddenly the wicked men of the city surrounded the house. Pounding on the door, they said to the old man who owned the house, "Bring out the man who came to your house, so we can have relations with him!"

The owner of the house went out and said to them, "No, my brothers, do not do this wicked thing! After all, this man is a guest in my house. Do not commit this outrage. Look, let me bring out my virgin daughter and the man's concubine, and you can use them and do with them as you wish. But do not do such a vile thing to this man."

But the men would not listen to him. So the Levite took his concubine and sent her outside to them, and they raped her and abused her throughout the night, and at dawn they let her go. Early that morning, the woman went back to the house where her master was staying, collapsed at the doorway, and lay there until it was light.

In the morning, when her master got up and opened the doors of the house to go out on his journey, there was his concubine, collapsed in the doorway of the house, with her hands on the threshold. "Get up," he told her. "Let us go." But there was no response. So the man put her on his donkey and set out for home.

When he reached his house, he picked up a knife, took hold of his concubine, cut her limb by limb into twelve pieces, and sent her throughout the territory of Israel. And everyone who saw it said, "Nothing like this has been seen or done from the day the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt until this day. Think it over, take counsel, and speak up!"

Then all the Israelites from Dan to Beersheba and from the land of Gilead came out, and the congregation assembled as one man before the LORD at Mizpah. The leaders of all the people and all the tribes of Israel presented themselves in the assembly of God's people: 400,000 men on foot, armed with swords. (Meanwhile the Benjamites heard that the Israelites had gone up to Mizpah.) And the Israelites asked, "Tell us, how did this wicked thing happen?"

So the Levite, the husband of the murdered woman, answered: "I and my concubine came to Gibeah in Benjamin to spend the night. And during the night, the men of Gibeah rose up against me and surrounded the house. They intended to kill me, but they abused my concubine, and she died. Then I took my concubine, cut her into pieces, and sent her throughout the land of Israel's inheritance, because they had committed a lewd and disgraceful act in Israel. Behold, all you Israelites, give your advice and verdict here and now."

Then all the people stood as one man and said, "Not one of us will return to his tent or to his house. Now this is what we will do to Gibeah: We will go against it as the lot dictates. We will take ten men out of every hundred from all the tribes of Israel, and a hundred out of every thousand, and a thousand out of every ten thousand, to supply provisions for the army when they go to Gibeah in Benjamin to punish them for the atrocity they have committed in Israel."

So all the men of Israel gathered as one man, united against the city. And the tribes of Israel sent men throughout the tribe of Benjamin, saying, "What is this wickedness that has occurred among you? Hand over the wicked men of Gibeah so we can put them to death and purge Israel of this evil."

But the Benjamites refused to heed the voice of their fellow Israelites. And from their cities they came together at Gibeah to go out and fight against the Israelites. On that day the Benjamites mobilized 26,000 swordsmen from their cities, in addition to the 700 select men of Gibeah. Among all these soldiers there were 700 select left-handers, each of whom could sling a stone at a hair without missing.

The Israelites, apart from Benjamin, mobilized 400,000 swordsmen, each one an experienced warrior.

The Israelites set out, went up to Bethel, and inquired of God, "Who of us shall go up first to fight against the Benjamites?"

"Judah will be first," the LORD replied.

The next morning the Israelites set out and camped near Gibeah. And the men of Israel went out to fight against Benjamin and took up their battle positions at Gibeah.

And the Benjamites came out of Gibeah and cut down 22,000 Israelites on the battlefield that day.

But the Israelite army took courage and again took their battle positions in the same place where they had arrayed themselves on the first day. They went up and wept before the LORD until evening, inquiring of Him, "Should we again draw near for battle against our brothers the Benjamites?"

And the LORD answered, "Go up against them."

On the second day the Israelites advanced against the Benjamites. That same day the Benjamites came out against them from Gibeah and cut down another 18,000 Israelites, all of them armed with swords.

Then the Israelites, all the people, went up to Bethel, where they sat weeping before the LORD. That day they fasted until evening and presented burnt offerings and peace offerings to the LORD. And the Israelites inquired of the LORD. (In those days the ark of the covenant of God was there, and Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, served before it.) The Israelites asked, "Should we again go out to battle against our brothers the Benjamites, or should we stop?"

The LORD answered, "Fight, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand."

So Israel set up an ambush around Gibeah. On the third day the Israelites went up against the Benjamites and arrayed themselves against Gibeah as they had done before. The Benjamites came out against them and were drawn away from the city. They began to attack the people as before, killing about thirty men of Israel in the fields and on the roads, one of which led up to Bethel and the other to Gibeah.

"We are defeating them as before," said the Benjamites.

But the Israelites said, "Let us retreat and draw them away from the city onto the roads."

So all the men of Israel got up from their places and arrayed themselves at Baal-tamar, and the Israelites in

ambush charged from their positions west of Gibeah. Then 10,000 select men from all Israel made a frontal assault against Gibeah, and the battle was fierce. But the Benjamites did not realize that disaster was upon them. The LORD defeated Benjamin in the presence of Israel, and on that day the Israelites slaughtered 25,100 Benjamites, all armed with swords. Then the Benjamites realized they had been defeated.

Now the men of Israel had retreated before Benjamin because they were relying on the ambush they had set against Gibeah. The men in ambush rushed suddenly against Gibeah; they advanced and put the whole city to the sword.

The men of Israel had arranged a signal with the men in ambush: When they sent up a great cloud of smoke from the city, the men of Israel would turn in the battle.

When the Benjamites had begun to strike them down, killing about thirty men of Israel, they said, "They are defeated before us as in the first battle." But when the column of smoke began to go up from the city, the Benjamites looked behind them and saw the whole city going up in smoke.

Then the men of Israel turned back on them, and the men of Benjamin were terrified when they realized that disaster had come upon them. So they fled before the men of Israel toward the wilderness, but the battle overtook them, and the men coming out of the cities struck them down there. They surrounded the Benjamites, pursued them, and easily overtook them in the vicinity of Gibeah on the east. And 18,000 Benjamites fell, all men of valor.

Then the Benjamites turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, and Israel cut down 5,000 men on the roads. And they overtook them at Gidom and struck down 2,000 more.

That day 25,000 Benjamite swordsmen fell, all men of valor. But 600 men turned and fled into the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, where they stayed four months. And the men of Israel turned back against the other Benjamites and put to the sword all the cities, including the animals and everything else they found. And they burned down all the cities in their path.

Now the men of Israel had sworn an oath at Mizpah, saying, "Not one of us will give his daughter in marriage to a Benjamite."

So the people came to Bethel and sat there before God until evening, lifting up their voices and weeping bitterly. "Why, O LORD God of Israel," they cried out, "has this happened in Israel? Today in Israel one tribe is missing!"

The next day the people got up early, built an altar there, and presented burnt offerings and peace offerings. The Israelites asked, "Who among all the tribes of Israel did not come to the assembly before the LORD?" For they had taken a solemn oath that anyone who failed to come up before the LORD at Mizpah would surely be put to death.

And the Israelites grieved for their brothers, the Benjamites, and said, "Today a tribe is cut off from Israel. What should we do about wives for the survivors, since we have sworn by the LORD not to give them our daughters in marriage?"

So they asked, "Which one of the tribes of Israel failed to come up before the LORD at Mizpah?" And, in fact, no one from Jabesh-gilead had come to the camp for the assembly. For when the people were counted, none of the residents of Jabesh-gilead were there.

So the congregation sent 12,000 of their most valiant men and commanded them: "Go and put to the sword those living in Jabesh-gilead, including women and children. This is what you are to do: Devote to destruction every male, as well as every female who has had relations with a man."

So they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead four hundred young women who had not had relations with a man, and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh in the land of Canaan.

Then the whole congregation sent a message of peace to the Benjamites who were at the rock of Rimmon. And at that time the Benjamites returned and were given the women who were spared from Jabesh-gilead. But there were not enough women for all of them.

The people grieved for Benjamin, because the LORD had made a void in the tribes of Israel.

Then the elders of the congregation said, "What should we do about wives for those who remain, since the women of Benjamin have been destroyed?" They added, "There must be heirs for the survivors of Benjamin, so that a tribe of Israel will not be wiped out. But we cannot give them our daughters as wives."

For the Israelites had sworn, "Cursed is he who gives a wife to a Benjamite."

"But look," they said, "there is a yearly feast to the LORD in Shiloh, which is north of Bethel east of the road that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and south of Lebonah."

So they commanded the Benjamites: "Go, hide in the vineyards and watch. When you see the daughters of Shiloh come out to perform their dances, each of you is to come out of the vineyards, catch for himself a wife from the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin. When their fathers or brothers come to us to complain, we will tell them, 'Do us a favor by helping them, since we did not get wives for each of them in the war. Since you did not actually give them your daughters, you have no guilt.'"

The Benjamites did as instructed and carried away the number of women they needed from the dancers they caught. They went back to their own inheritance, rebuilt their cities, and settled in them. And at that time, each of the Israelites returned from there to his own tribe and clan, each to his own inheritance.

In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

Ruth

Book of Ruth

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. And a certain man from Bethlehem in Judah, with his wife and two sons, went to reside in the land of Moab. The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah, and they entered the land of Moab and settled there.

Then Naomi's husband Elimelech died, and she was left with her two sons, who took Moabite women as their wives, one named Orpah and the other named Ruth.

And after they had lived in Moab about ten years, both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and without her husband.

When Naomi heard in Moab that the LORD had attended to His people by providing them with food, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to leave the land of Moab. Accompanied by her two daughters-in-law, she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road leading back to the land of Judah.

Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you to your mother's home. May the LORD show you loving devotion, as you have shown to your dead and to me. May the LORD enable each of you to find rest in the home of your new husband."

And she kissed them as they wept aloud and said, "Surely we will return with you to your people."

But Naomi replied, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb to become your husbands? Return home, my daughters. Go on, for I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me to have a husband tonight and to bear sons, would you wait for them to grow up? Would you refrain from having husbands? No, my daughters, it is much more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the LORD has gone out against me."

Again they wept aloud, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

"Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; follow her back home."

But Ruth replied:

> "Do not urge me to leave you or to turn from following you. For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you live, I will live; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD punish me, and ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me."

When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped trying to persuade her.

So Naomi and Ruth traveled until they came to Bethlehem. When they entered Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women of the town exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?"

"Do not call me Naomi," she replied. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has dealt quite bitterly with me. I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? After all, the LORD has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me."

So Naomi returned from the land of Moab with her daughter-in-law Ruth the Moabitess. And they arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a prominent man of noble character from the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.

And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go into the fields and glean heads of grain after someone in whose sight I may find favor."

"Go ahead, my daughter," Naomi replied.

So Ruth departed and went out into the field and gleaned after the harvesters. And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech.

Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and said to the harvesters, "The LORD be with you."

"The LORD bless you," they replied.

And Boaz asked the foreman of his harvesters, "Whose young woman is this?"

The foreman answered, "She is the Moabitess who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab. She has said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the harvesters.' So she came out and has continued from morning until now, except that she rested a short time in the shelter."

Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen, my daughter. Do not go and glean in another field, and do not go away from this place, but stay here close to my servant girls. Let your eyes be on the field they are harvesting, and follow along after these girls. Indeed, I have ordered the young men not to touch you. And when you are thirsty, go and drink from the jars the young men have filled."

At this, she fell on her face, bowing low to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you should take notice of me, even though I am a foreigner?"

Boaz replied, "I have been made fully aware of all you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, how you left your father and mother and the land of your birth, and how you came to a people you did not know before. May the LORD repay your work, and may you receive a rich reward from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have taken refuge."

"My lord," she said, "may I continue to find favor in your eyes, for you have comforted and spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your servant girls."

At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come over here; have some bread and dip it into the vinegar sauce." So she sat down beside the harvesters, and he offered her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left over.

When Ruth got up to glean, Boaz ordered his young men, "Even if she gathers among the sheaves, do not insult her. Rather, pull out for her some stalks from the

bundles and leave them for her to gather. Do not rebuke her."

So Ruth gathered grain in the field until evening. And when she beat out what she had gleaned, it was about an ephah of barley. She picked up the grain and went into the town, where her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. And she brought out what she had saved from her meal and gave it to Naomi.

Then her mother-in-law asked her, "Where did you glean today, and where did you work? Blessed be the man who noticed you."

So she told her mother-in-law where she had worked. "The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz," she said.

Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed by the LORD, who has not withdrawn His kindness from the living or the dead." Naomi continued, "The man is a close relative. He is one of our kinsman-redeemers."

Then Ruth the Moabitess said, "He also told me, 'Stay with my young men until they have finished gathering all my harvest.'"

And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law Ruth, "My daughter, it is good for you to work with his young women, so that nothing will happen to you in another field."

So Ruth stayed close to the servant girls of Boaz to glean grain until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, should I not seek a resting place for you, that it may be well with you? Now is not Boaz, with whose servant girls you have been working, a relative of ours? In fact, tonight he is winnowing barley on the threshing floor. Therefore wash yourself, put on perfume, and wear your best clothes. Go down to the threshing floor, but do not let the man know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, note the place where he lies. Then go in and uncover his feet, and lie down, and he will explain to you what you should do."

"I will do everything you say," Ruth answered. So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law had instructed her to do.

After Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then Ruth went in secretly, uncovered his feet, and lay down.

At midnight, Boaz was startled, turned over, and there lying at his feet was a woman!

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I am your servant Ruth," she replied. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, for you are a kinsman-redeemer."

Then Boaz said, "May the LORD bless you, my daughter. You have shown more kindness now than before, because you have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. And now do not be afraid, my daughter. I will do for you whatever you request, since all my fellow townspeople know that you are a woman of noble character. Yes, it is true that I am a kinsman-redeemer, but there is a redeemer nearer than I. Stay here tonight, and in the morning, if he wants to redeem you, good. Let him redeem you. But if he does not want to redeem you, as surely as the LORD lives, I will. Now lie here until morning."

So she lay down at his feet until morning, but she got up before anyone else could recognize her.

Then Boaz said, "Do not let it be known that a woman came to the threshing floor." And he told her, "Bring the shawl you are wearing and hold it out." When she did so, he poured in six measures of barley and placed it on her. Then he went into the city.

When Ruth returned to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked her, "How did it go, my daughter?"

Then Ruth told her all that Boaz had done for her. And she said, "He gave me these six measures of barley, for he said, 'Do not go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'"

"Wait, my daughter," said Naomi, "until you find out how things go, for he will not rest unless he has resolved the matter today."

Meanwhile, Boaz went to the gate and sat down there. Soon the kinsman-redeemer of whom he had spoken came along, and Boaz said, "Come over here, my friend, and sit down." So he went over and sat down.

Then Boaz took ten of the elders of the city and said, "Sit here," and they did so.

And he said to the kinsman-redeemer, "Naomi, who has returned from the land of Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our brother Elimelech. I thought I should inform you that you may buy it back in the presence of those seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you want to redeem it, do so. But if you will not redeem it, tell me so I may know, because there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am next after you."

"I will redeem it," he replied.

Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the land from Naomi and also from Ruth the Moabitess, you must also acquire the widow of the deceased in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance."

The kinsman-redeemer replied, "I cannot redeem it myself, or I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption, because I cannot redeem it."

Now in former times in Israel, concerning the redemption or exchange of property, to make any matter legally binding a man would remove his sandal and give it to the other party, and this was a confirmation in Israel. So the kinsman-redeemer removed his sandal and said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself."

At this, Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses today that I am buying from Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech, Chilion, and Mahlon. Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, to raise up the name of the deceased through his inheritance, so that his name will not disappear from among his brothers or from the gate of his home. You are witnesses today."

"We are witnesses," said the elders and all the people at the gate. "May the LORD make the woman entering your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you be prosperous in Ephrathah and famous in Bethlehem. And may your house become like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring the LORD will give you by this young woman."

So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And when he had relations with her, the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.

Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a kinsman-redeemer. May his name become famous in Israel. He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.”

And Naomi took the child, placed him on her lap, and became a nurse to him. The neighbor women said, “A son has been born to Naomi,” and they named him Obed. He became the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Now these are the generations of Perez:
Perez was the father of Hezron,
Hezron was the father of Ram,
Ram was the father of Amminadab,
Amminadab was the father of Nahshon,
Nahshon was the father of Salmon,
Salmon was the father of Boaz,
Boaz was the father of Obed,
Obed was the father of Jesse,
and Jesse was the father of David.

1 Samuel

First Book of Samuel

Now there was a man named Elkanah who was from Ramathaim-zophim in the hill country of Ephraim. He was the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. He had two wives, one named Hannah and the other Peninnah. And Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

Year after year Elkanah would go up from his city to worship and sacrifice to the LORD of Hosts at Shiloh, where Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests to the LORD. And whenever the day came for Elkanah to present his sacrifice, he would give portions to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved her even though the LORD had closed her womb.

Because the LORD had closed Hannah's womb, her rival would provoke her viciously to taunt her. And this went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the LORD, her rival taunted her until she wept and would not eat.

"Hannah, why are you crying?" her husband Elkanah asked. "Why won't you eat? Why is your heart so grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

So after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the temple of the LORD.

In her bitter distress, Hannah prayed to the LORD and wept with many tears. And she made a vow, saying, "O LORD of Hosts, if only You will look upon the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, not forgetting Your maidservant but giving her a son, then I will dedicate him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall ever touch his head."

As Hannah kept on praying before the LORD, Eli watched her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and though her lips were moving, her voice could not be heard.

So Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, "How long will you be drunk? Put away your wine!"

"No, my lord," Hannah replied. "I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have not had any wine or strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the LORD. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman, for all this time I have been praying out of the depth of my anguish and grief."

"Go in peace," Eli replied, "and may the God of Israel grant the petition you have asked of Him."

"May your maidservant find favor with you," said Hannah. Then she went on her way, and she began to eat, and her face was no longer downcast.

The next morning they got up early to bow in worship before the LORD, and then they returned home to Ramah.

And Elkanah had relations with his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. So in the course of time, Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel,saying, "Because I have asked for him from the LORD."

Then Elkanah and all his house went up to make the annual sacrifice to the LORD and to fulfill his vow, but Hannah did not go. "After the boy is weaned," she said to her husband, "I will take him to appear before the LORD and to stay there permanently."

"Do what you think is best," her husband Elkanah replied, "and stay here until you have weaned him. Only may the LORD confirm His word."

So Hannah stayed and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

Once she had weaned him, Hannah took the boy with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine. Though the boy was still young, she brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. And when they had slaughtered the bull, they brought the boy to Eli.

"Please, my lord," said Hannah, "as surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. I prayed for this boy, and since the LORD has granted me what I asked of Him, I now dedicate the boy to the LORD. For as long as he lives, he is dedicated to the LORD."

So they worshiped the LORD there.

At that time Hannah prayed:

> "My heart rejoices in the LORD; my horn is exalted in the LORD. My mouth speaks boldly against my enemies, for I rejoice in Your salvation. There is no one holy like the LORD. Indeed, there is no one besides You! And there is no Rock like our God. Do not boast so proudly, or let arrogance come from your mouth, for the LORD is a God who knows, and by Him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble are equipped with strength. The well-fed hire themselves out for food, but the starving hunger no more. The barren woman gives birth to seven, but she who has many sons pines away. The LORD brings death and gives life; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. The LORD sends poverty and wealth; He humbles and He exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap. He seats them among princes and bestows on them a throne of honor. For the foundations of the earth are the LORD's, and upon them He has set the world. He guards the steps of His faithful ones, but the wicked perish in darkness; for by his own strength shall no man prevail. Those who oppose the LORD will be shattered. He will thunder from heaven against them. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth and will give power to His king. He will exalt the horn of His anointed."

Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy began ministering to the LORD before Eli the priest.

Now the sons of Eli were wicked men; they had no regard for the LORD or for the custom of the priests with the people.

When any man offered a sacrifice, the servant of the priest would come with a three-pronged meat fork while the meat was boiling and plunge it into the pan or kettle or cauldron or cooking pot. And the priest would

claim for himself whatever the meat fork brought up. This is how they treated all the Israelites who came to Shiloh.

Even before the fat was burned, the servant of the priest would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, "Give the priest some meat to roast, because he will not accept boiled meat from you, but only raw."

And if any man said to him, "The fat must be burned first; then you may take whatever you want," the servant would reply, "No, you must give it to me right now. If you refuse, I will take it by force!"

Thus the sin of these young men was severe in the sight of the LORD, for they were treating the LORD's offering with contempt.

Now Samuel was ministering before the LORD — a boy wearing a linen ephod. Each year his mother would make him a little robe and bring it to him when she went with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice. And Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, saying, "May the LORD give you children by this woman in place of the one she dedicated to the LORD." Then they would go home.

So the LORD attended to Hannah, and she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters.

Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD.

Now Eli was very old, and he heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they were sleeping with the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

"Why are you doing these things?" Eli said to his sons. "I hear about your wicked deeds from all these people. No, my sons; it is not a good report I hear circulating among the LORD's people. If a man sins against another man, God can intercede for him; but if a man sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?"

But they would not listen to their father, since the LORD intended to put them to death.

And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with man.

Then a man of God came to Eli and told him, "This is what the LORD says: 'Did I not clearly reveal Myself to your father's house when they were in Egypt under Pharaoh's house? And out of all the tribes of Israel I selected your father to be My priest, to offer sacrifices on My altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod in My presence. I also gave to the house of your father all the food offerings of the Israelites.

Why then do you kick at My sacrifice and offering that I have prescribed for My dwelling place? You have honored your sons more than Me by fattening yourselves with the best of all the offerings of My people Israel.'

Therefore, the LORD, the God of Israel, declares:

> 'I did indeed say that your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever. But now the LORD declares: Far be it from Me! For I will honor those who honor Me, but those who despise Me will be disdained.

Behold, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father's house, so that no one in it will reach old age. You will see distress in My dwelling place. Despite all that is good in Israel, no one in your house will ever again reach old age. And every one of you that I do not cut off from My altar, I will cause your eyes to fail and your heart to grieve. All your descendants will die by the sword of men.

And this sign shall come to you concerning your two sons Hophni and Phinehas: They will both die on the same day.

Then I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest. He will do whatever is in My heart and mind. And I will build for him an enduring house, and he will walk before My anointed one for all time.

And everyone left in your house will come and bow down to him for a piece of silver or a morsel of bread, pleading, "Please appoint me to some priestly office so that I can eat a piece of bread."'"

And the boy Samuel ministered to the LORD before Eli.

Now in those days the word of the LORD was rare, and visions were scarce. And at that time Eli, whose eyesight had grown so dim that he could not see, was lying in his room.

Before the lamp of God had gone out, Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was located.

Then the LORD called to Samuel, and he answered, "Here I am."

He ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you have called me."

"I did not call," Eli replied. "Go back and lie down."

So he went and lay down.

Once again the LORD called, "Samuel!"

So Samuel got up, went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you have called me."

"My son, I did not call," Eli replied. "Go back and lie down."

Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, because the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. Once again, for the third time, the LORD called to Samuel. He got up, went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you have called me."

Then Eli realized that it was the LORD who was calling the boy. "Go and lie down," he said to Samuel, "and if He calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.'"

So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Then the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!"

And Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant is listening."

Then the LORD said to Samuel, "I am about to do something in Israel at which the ears of all who hear it will tingle. On that day I will carry out against Eli everything I have spoken about his house, from beginning to end. I told him that I would judge his house forever for the iniquity of which he knows, because his sons blasphemed God and he did not restrain them. Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli, 'The iniquity of Eli's house shall never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.'"

Samuel lay down until the morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, but Eli called to him and said, "Samuel, my son."

"Here I am," answered Samuel.

"What was the message He gave you?" Eli asked. "Do not hide it from me. May God punish you, and ever so severely, if you hide from me anything He said to you."

So Samuel told him everything and did not hide a thing from him.

"He is the LORD," replied Eli. "Let Him do what is good in His eyes."

And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and He let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground.

So all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD. And the LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, because there He revealed Himself to Samuel by His word.

Thus the word of Samuel came to all Israel.

Now the Israelites went out to meet the Philistines in battle and camped at Ebenezer, while the Philistines camped at Aphek. The Philistines arrayed themselves against Israel, and as the battle spread, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who struck down about four thousand men on the battlefield.

When the troops returned to the camp, the elders of Israel asked, "Why has the LORD brought defeat on us before the Philistines today? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD from Shiloh, so that it may go with us to save us from the hand of our enemies."

So the people sent men to Shiloh, and they brought back the ark of the covenant of the LORD of Hosts, who sits enthroned between the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

When the ark of the covenant of the LORD entered the camp, all the Israelites raised such a great shout that the ground shook.

On hearing the noise of the shout, the Philistines asked, "What is this loud shouting in the camp of the Hebrews?"

And when they realized that the ark of the LORD had entered the camp, the Philistines were afraid. "The gods have entered their camp!" they said. "Woe to us, for nothing like this has happened before. Woe to us! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness. Take courage and be men, O Philistines! Otherwise, you will serve the Hebrews just as they served you. Now be men and fight!"

So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and each man fled to his tent. The slaughter was very great — thirty thousand foot soldiers of Israel fell. The ark of God was captured, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

That same day a Benjamite ran from the battle line all the way to Shiloh, with his clothes torn and dirt on his head. When he arrived, there was Eli, sitting on his chair beside the road and watching, because his heart trembled for the ark of God.

When the man entered the city to give a report, the whole city cried out.

Eli heard the outcry and asked, "Why this commotion?"

So the man hurried over and reported to Eli. Now Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his gaze was fixed because he could not see.

"I have just come from the battle," the man said to Eli. "I fled from there today."

"What happened, my son?" Eli asked.

The messenger answered, "Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has been a great slaughter among the people. Your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are both dead, and the ark of God has been captured."

As soon as the ark of God was mentioned, Eli fell backward from his chair by the city gate, and being old and heavy, he broke his neck and died. And Eli had judged Israel forty years.

Now Eli's daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant and about to give birth. When she heard the news of the capture of God's ark and the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband, she collapsed and gave birth, for her labor pains overtook her.

As she was dying, the women attending to her said, "Do not be afraid, for you have given birth to a son!"

But she did not respond or pay any heed. And she named the boy Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel," because the ark of God had been captured and her father-in-law and her husband had been killed.

"The glory has departed from Israel," she said, "for the ark of God has been captured."

After the Philistines had captured the ark of God, they took it from Ebenezer to Ashdod, carried it into the temple of Dagon, and set it beside his statue.

When the people of Ashdod got up early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen on his face before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and returned him to his place.

But when they got up early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen on his face before the ark of the LORD, with his head and his hands broken off and lying on the threshold. Only the torso remained. That is why, to this day, the priests of Dagon and all who enter the temple of Dagon in Ashdod do not step on the threshold.

Now the hand of the LORD was heavy on the people of Ashdod and its vicinity, ravaging them and afflicting them with tumors. And when the men of Ashdod saw what was happening, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not stay here with us, because His hand is heavy upon us and upon our god Dagon."

So they called together all the rulers of the Philistines and asked, "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?"

"It must be moved to Gath," they replied. So they carried away the ark of the God of Israel.

But after they had moved the ark to Gath, the LORD's hand was also against that city, throwing it into great confusion and afflicting the men of the city, both young and old, with an outbreak of tumors.

So they sent the ark of God to Ekron, but as it arrived, the Ekronites cried out, "They have brought us the ark of the God of Israel in order to kill us and our people!"

Then the Ekronites called together all the rulers of the Philistines and said, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel. It must return to its place, so that it will not kill us and our people!"

For a deadly confusion had pervaded the city; the hand of God was very heavy upon it. Those who did not

die were afflicted with tumors, and the outcry of the city went up to heaven.

When the ark of the LORD had been in the land of the Philistines seven months, the Philistines summoned the priests and diviners, saying, “What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us how to send it back to its place.”

They replied, “If you return the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it away empty, but by all means return it to Him with a guilt offering. Then you will be healed, and you will understand why His hand has not been lifted from you.”

“What guilt offering should we send back to Him?” asked the Philistines.

“Five gold tumors and five gold rats,” they said, “according to the number of rulers of the Philistines, since the same plague has struck both you and your rulers. Make images of your tumors and of the rats that are ravaging the land. Give glory to the God of Israel, and perhaps He will lift His hand from you and your gods and your land.

Why harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened theirs? When He afflicted them, did they not send the people out so they could go on their way?

Now, therefore, prepare one new cart with two milk cows that have never been yoked. Hitch the cows to the cart, but take their calves away and pen them up. Take the ark of the LORD, set it on the cart, and in a chest beside it put the gold objects you are sending back to Him as a guilt offering.

Then send the ark on its way, but keep watching it. If it goes up the road to its homeland, toward Beth-shemesh, it is the LORD who has brought on us this great disaster. But if it does not, then we will know that it was not His hand that punished us and that it happened by chance.”

So the men did as instructed. They took two milk cows, hitched them to the cart, and penned up their calves. Then they put the ark of the LORD on the cart, along with the chest containing the gold rats and the images of the tumors.

And the cows headed straight up the road toward Beth-shemesh, staying on that one highway and lowing as they went, never straying to the right or to the left. The rulers of the Philistines followed behind them to the border of Beth-shemesh.

Now the people of Beth-shemesh were harvesting wheat in the valley, and when they looked up and saw the ark, they were overjoyed at the sight.

The cart came to the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh and stopped there near a large rock. The people chopped up the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD. And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD and the chest containing the gold objects, and they placed them on the large rock. That day the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and made sacrifices to the LORD.

And when the five rulers of the Philistines saw this, they returned to Ekron that same day.

As a guilt offering to the LORD, the Philistines had sent back one gold tumor for each city: Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron. The number of gold rats also corresponded to the number of Philistine cities belonging to the five rulers — the fortified cities and their outlying villages. And the large rock on which they placed the ark of the LORD stands to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh.

But God struck down some of the people of Beth-shemesh because they looked inside the ark of the LORD. He struck down seventy men, and the people mourned because the LORD had struck them with a great slaughter.

The men of Beth-shemesh asked, “Who can stand in the presence of the LORD, this holy God? To whom should the ark go up from here?”

So they sent messengers to the people of Kiriath-jearim, saying, “The Philistines have returned the ark of the LORD. Come down and take it up with you.”

Then the men of Kiriath-jearim came for the ark of the LORD and took it into Abinadab’s house on the hill. And they consecrated his son Eleazar to guard the ark of the LORD.

And from that day a long time passed, twenty years in all, as the ark remained at Kiriath-jearim. And all the house of Israel mournfully sought the LORD.

Then Samuel said to all the house of Israel, “If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and Ashtoreths among you, prepare your hearts for the LORD, and serve Him only. And He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.”

So the Israelites put away the Baals and Ashtoreths and served only the LORD.

Then Samuel said, “Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD on your behalf.”

When they had gathered at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the LORD. On that day they fasted, and there they confessed, “We have sinned against the LORD.” And Samuel judged the Israelites at Mizpah.

When the Philistines heard that the Israelites had gathered at Mizpah, their rulers marched up toward Israel. And when the Israelites learned of this, they feared the Philistines and said to Samuel, “Do not stop crying out to the LORD our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines.”

Then Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. He cried out to the LORD on behalf of Israel, and the LORD answered him. As the Philistines drew near to fight against Israel, Samuel was offering up the burnt offering. But that day the LORD thundered loudly against the Philistines and threw them into such confusion that they fled before Israel.

Then the men of Israel charged out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, striking them down all the way to an area below Beth-car.

Afterward, Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, “Thus far the LORD has helped us.”

So the Philistines were subdued, and they stopped invading the territory of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. The cities from Ekron to Gath, which the Philistines had taken, were restored to Israel, who also delivered the surrounding territory from the hand of the Philistines. And there was peace between the Israelites and the Amorites.

So Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. Every year he would go on a circuit from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah, judging Israel in all these places. Then he would return to Ramah because his home was there, and there he judged Israel and built an altar to the LORD.

When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second was Abijah. They were judges in Beersheba. But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside toward dishonest gain, accepting bribes and perverting justice.

So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. "Look," they said, "you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king to judge us like all the other nations."

But when they said, "Give us a king to judge us," their demand was displeasing in the sight of Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD.

And the LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you. For it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected Me as their king. Just as they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking Me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to their voice; but you must solemnly warn them and show them the manner of the king who will reign over them."

So Samuel spoke all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, "This will be the manner of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them to serve his own chariots and horses, and to run in front of his chariots.

He will appoint some for himself as commanders of thousands and of fifties, and others to plow his ground, to reap his harvest, and to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.

And he will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers.

He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his servants. He will take a tenth of your grain and grape harvest and give it to his officials and servants. And he will take your menservants and maidservants and your best cattle and donkeys and put them to his own use.

He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will beg for relief from the king you have chosen, but the LORD will not answer you on that day."

Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We must have a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to judge us, to go out before us, and to fight our battles."

Samuel listened to all the words of the people and repeated them in the hearing of the LORD.

"Listen to their voice," the LORD said to Samuel. "Appoint a king for them."

Then Samuel told the men of Israel, "Everyone must go back to his city."

Now there was a Benjamite, a powerful man, whose name was Kish son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Becorath, the son of Aphiah of Benjamin. And he had a son named Saul, choice and handsome, without equal among the Israelites — a head taller than any of the people.

One day the donkeys of Saul's father Kish wandered off, and Kish said to his son Saul, "Take one of the servants and go look for the donkeys."

So Saul passed through the hill country of Ephraim and then through the land of Shalishah, but they did not find the donkeys. He and the servant went through the region of Shaalim, but they were not there. Then they went through the land of Benjamin, and still they did not find them.

When they reached the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant, "Come, let us go back, or my father will stop worrying about the donkeys and start worrying about us."

"Look," said the servant, "in this city there is a man of God who is highly respected; everything he says surely comes to pass. Let us go there now. Perhaps he will tell us which way to go."

"If we do go," Saul replied, "what can we give the man? For the bread in our packs is gone, and there is no gift to take to the man of God. What do we have?"

The servant answered him again. "Look," he said, "I have here in my hand a quarter shekel of silver. I will give it to the man of God, and he will tell us our way."

(Formerly in Israel, a man on his way to inquire of God would say, "Come, let us go to the seer." For the prophet of today was formerly called the seer.)

"Good," said Saul to his servant. "Come, let us go." So they set out for the city where the man of God was. And as they were climbing the hill to the city, they met some young women coming out to draw water and asked, "Is the seer here?"

"Yes, he is ahead of you," they answered. "Hurry now, for today he has come to the city because the people have a sacrifice on the high place. As soon as you enter the city, you will find him before he goes up to the high place to eat. The people will not eat until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; after that, the guests will eat. Go up at once; you will find him."

So Saul and his servant went up toward the city, and as they were entering it, there was Samuel coming toward them on his way up to the high place.

Now on the day before Saul's arrival, the LORD had revealed to Samuel, "At this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you are to anoint him ruler over My people Israel; he will save them from the hand of the Philistines. For I have looked upon My people, because their cry has come to Me."

When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD told him, "Here is the man of whom I spoke; he shall rule over My people."

Saul approached Samuel in the gateway and asked, "Would you please tell me where the seer's house is?"

"I am the seer," Samuel replied. "Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today. And when I send you off in the morning, I will tell you all that is in your heart. As for the donkeys you lost three days ago, do not worry about them, for they have been found. And upon whom is all the desire of Israel, if not upon you and all your father's house?"

Saul replied, "Am I not a Benjamite from the smallest tribe of Israel, and is not my clan the least of all the

clans of Benjamin? So why would you say such a thing to me?"

Then Samuel took Saul and his servant, brought them into the hall, and seated them in the place of honor among those who were invited — about thirty in all. And Samuel said to the cook, "Bring the portion I gave you and told you to set aside."

So the cook picked up the leg and what was attached to it and set it before Saul. Then Samuel said, "Here is what was kept back. It was set apart for you. Eat, for it has been kept for you for this occasion, from the time I said, 'I have invited the people.'" So Saul dined with Samuel that day.

And after they had come down from the high place into the city, Samuel spoke with Saul on the roof of his house.

They got up early in the morning, and just before dawn Samuel called to Saul on the roof, "Get ready, and I will send you on your way!" So Saul got ready, and both he and Samuel went outside together.

As they were going down to the edge of the city, Samuel said to Saul, "Tell the servant to go on ahead of us, but you stay for a while, and I will reveal to you the word of God." So the servant went on.

Then Samuel took a flask of oil, poured it on Saul's head, kissed him, and said, "Has not the LORD anointed you ruler over His inheritance? When you leave me today, you will find two men at Rachel's tomb in Zelzah on the border of Benjamin. They will say to you, 'The donkeys you seek have been found, and now your father has stopped worrying about the donkeys and started worrying about you, asking, "What should I do about my son?"'

Then you will go on from there until you come to the Oak of Tabor. Three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine. They will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you will accept from their hands.

After that you will come to Gibeah of God, where the Philistines have an outpost. As you approach the city, you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place, preceded by harps, tambourines, flutes, and lyres, and they will be prophesying.

Then the Spirit of the LORD will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be transformed into a different person.

When these signs have come, do as the occasion demands, for God is with you. And you shall go before me to Gilgal, and surely I will come to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Wait seven days until I come to you and show you what you are to do."

As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul's heart, and all the signs came to pass that day. When Saul and his servant arrived at Gibeah, a group of prophets met him. Then the Spirit of God rushed upon him, and he prophesied along with them.

When all those who had formerly known Saul saw him prophesying with the prophets, they asked one another, "What has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?"

Then a man who lived there replied, "And who is their father?" So the saying became a proverb: "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

And when Saul had finished prophesying, he went up to the high place.

Now Saul's uncle asked him and his servant, "Where did you go?"

"To look for the donkeys," Saul replied. "When we saw they were not to be found, we went to Samuel."

"Tell me," Saul's uncle asked, "what did Samuel say to you?"

And Saul replied, "He assured us that the donkeys had been found." But Saul did not tell his uncle what Samuel had said about the kingship.

After this, Samuel summoned the people to the LORD at Mizpah and said to the Israelites, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I brought Israel up out of Egypt, and I rescued you from the hands of the Egyptians and of all the kingdoms that oppressed you.'

But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your troubles and afflictions, and you have said to Him, 'No, set a king over us.' Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and clans."

Thus Samuel had all the tribes of Israel come forward, and the tribe of Benjamin was selected. Then he had the tribe of Benjamin come forward by its clans, and the clan of Matri was selected. Finally, Saul son of Kish was selected. But when they looked for him, they could not find him. So again they inquired of the LORD, "Has the man come here yet?"

And the LORD replied, "Behold, he has hidden himself among the baggage."

So they ran and brought Saul, and when he stood among the people, he was a head taller than any of the others. Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see the one the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people."

And all the people shouted, "Long live the king!"

Then Samuel explained to the people the rights of kingship. He wrote them on a scroll and laid it up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, each to his own home.

Saul also went to his home in Gibeah, and the men of valor whose hearts God had touched went with him.

But some worthless men said, "How can this man save us?" So they despised him and brought him no gifts; but Saul remained silent about it.

Then Nahash the Ammonite came up and laid siege to Jabesh-gilead. All the men of Jabesh said to him, "Make a treaty with us, and we will serve you."

But Nahash the Ammonite replied, "I will make a treaty with you on one condition, that I may put out everyone's right eye and bring reproach upon all Israel."

"Hold off for seven days," replied the elders of Jabesh, "and let us send messengers throughout Israel. If there is no one to save us, we will surrender to you."

When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and relayed these words in the hearing of the people, they all wept aloud.

Just then Saul was returning from the field, behind his oxen. "What troubles the people?" asked Saul. "Why

are they weeping?" And they relayed to him the words of the men from Jabesh.

When Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God rushed upon him, and he burned with great anger. He took a pair of oxen, cut them into pieces, and sent them by messengers throughout the land of Israel, proclaiming, "This is what will be done to the oxen of anyone who does not march behind Saul and Samuel."

Then the terror of the LORD fell upon the people, and they came out together as one man. And when Saul numbered them at Bezek, there were 300,000 Israelites and 30,000 men of Judah. So they said to the messengers who had come, "Tell the men of Jabesh-gilead: 'Deliverance will be yours tomorrow by the time the sun is hot.'"

And when the messengers relayed this to the men of Jabesh, they rejoiced.

Then the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, "Tomorrow we will come out, and you can do with us whatever seems good to you."

The next day Saul organized the troops into three divisions, and during the morning watch they invaded the camp of the Ammonites and slaughtered them, until the hottest part of the day. And the survivors were so scattered that no two of them were left together.

Then the people said to Samuel, "Who said that Saul should not reign over us? Bring those men here so we can kill them!"

But Saul ordered, "No one shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has worked salvation in Israel."

Then Samuel said to the people, "Come, let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingship there."

So all the people went to Gilgal and confirmed Saul as king in the presence of the LORD. There they sacrificed peace offerings before the LORD, and Saul and all the Israelites rejoiced greatly.

Then Samuel said to all Israel, "I have listened to your voice in all that you have said to me, and I have set over you a king. Now here is the king walking before you, and I am old and gray, and my sons are here with you. I have walked before you from my youth until this day.

Here I am. Bear witness against me before the LORD and before His anointed: Whose ox or donkey have I taken? Whom have I cheated or oppressed? From whose hand have I accepted a bribe and closed my eyes? Tell me, and I will restore it to you."

"You have not cheated us or oppressed us," they replied, "nor have you taken anything from the hand of man."

Samuel said to them, "The LORD is a witness against you, and His anointed is a witness today, that you have not found anything in my hand."

"He is a witness," they replied.

Then Samuel said to the people, "The LORD is the One who appointed Moses and Aaron, and who brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. Now present yourselves, so that I may confront you before the LORD with all the righteous acts He has done for you and your fathers.

When Jacob went to Egypt, your fathers cried out to the LORD, and He sent them Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and settled them in this place. But they forgot the LORD their God, and He sold them into the hand of Sisera the commander of the army of Hazor, and into the hands of the Philistines and the king of Moab, who fought against them.

Then they cried out to the LORD and said, 'We have sinned, for we have forsaken the LORD and served the Baals and Ashtoreths. Now deliver us from the hands of our enemies, that we may serve You.'

So the LORD sent Jerubbaal, Barak, Jephthah, and Samuel, and He delivered you from the hands of your enemies on every side, and you dwelt securely. But when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites was moving against you, you said to me, 'No, we must have a king to rule over us'— even though the LORD your God was your king.

Now here is the king you have chosen, the one you requested. Behold, the LORD has placed a king over you.

If you fear the LORD and serve Him and obey His voice, and if you do not rebel against the command of the LORD, and if both you and the king who rules over you follow the LORD your God, then all will be well. But if you disobey the LORD and rebel against His command, then the hand of the LORD will be against you as it was against your fathers.

Now, therefore, present yourselves and see this great thing that the LORD will do before your eyes. Is it not the wheat harvest today? I will call on the LORD to send thunder and rain, so that you will know and see what a great evil you have committed in the sight of the LORD by asking for a king."

So Samuel called to the LORD, and on that day the LORD sent thunder and rain.

As a result, all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. They pleaded with Samuel, "Pray to the LORD your God for your servants so that we will not die! For we have added to all our sins the evil of asking for a king."

"Do not be afraid," Samuel replied. "Even though you have committed all this evil, do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. Do not turn aside after worthless things that cannot profit you or deliver you, for they are empty. Indeed, for the sake of His great name, the LORD will not abandon His people, because He was pleased to make you His own.

As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you. And I will continue to teach you the good and right way.

Above all, fear the LORD and serve Him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things He has done for you. But if you persist in doing evil, both you and your king will be swept away."

Saul was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel forty-two years. He chose for himself three thousand men of Israel: Two thousand were with Saul at Michmash and in the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. And the rest of the troops he sent away, each to his own home.

Then Jonathan attacked the Philistine outpost at Geba, and the Philistines heard about it. So Saul blew the ram's horn throughout the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear!"

And all Israel heard the news: "Saul has attacked an outpost of the Philistines, and now Israel has become a stench to the Philistines!" Then the people were summoned to join Saul at Gilgal.

Now the Philistines assembled to fight against Israel with three thousand chariots, six thousand horsemen, and troops as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They went up and camped at Michmash, east of Beth-aven.

Seeing that they were in danger because their troops were hard-pressed, the men of Israel hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, and in cellars and cisterns. Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan into the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul, however, remained at Gilgal, and all his troops were quaking in fear.

And Saul waited seven days for the time appointed by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the troops began to desert Saul. So he said, "Bring me the burnt offering and the peace offerings." And he offered up the burnt offering.

Just as he finished offering the burnt offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him.

"What have you done?" Samuel asked.

And Saul replied, "When I saw that the troops were deserting me, and that you did not come at the appointed time and the Philistines were gathering at Michmash, I thought, 'Now the Philistines will descend upon me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the LORD.' So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering."

"You have acted foolishly," Samuel declared. "You have not kept the command that the LORD your God gave you; if you had, the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought a man after His own heart and appointed him ruler over His people, because you have not kept the command of the LORD."

Then Samuel set out from Gilgal and went up to Gibeah in Benjamin. And Saul numbered the troops who were with him, about six hundred men.

Now Saul and Jonathan his son and the troops with them were staying in Geba of Benjamin, while the Philistines camped at Michmash. And raiders went out of the Philistine camp in three divisions. One headed toward Ophrah in the land of Shual, another toward Beth-horon, and the third down the border road overlooking the Valley of Zeboim facing the wilderness.

And no blacksmith could be found in all the land of Israel, because the Philistines had said, "The Hebrews must not be allowed to make swords or spears." Instead, all the Israelites would go down to the Philistines to sharpen their plowshares, mattocks, axes, and sickles. The charge was a pim for sharpening a plowshare or mattock, a third of a shekel for sharpening a pitchfork or an axe, and a third of a shekel for repointing an oxgoad.

So on the day of battle not a sword or spear could be found in the hands of the troops with Saul and Jonathan; only Saul and his son Jonathan had weapons.

And a garrison of the Philistines had gone out to the pass at Michmash.

One day Jonathan son of Saul said to the young man bearing his armor, "Come, let us cross over to the Philistine outpost on the other side." But Jonathan did not tell his father.

Meanwhile, Saul was staying under the pomegranate tree in Migron on the outskirts of Gibeah. And the troops who were with him numbered about six hundred men, including Ahijah, who was wearing an ephod. He was the son of Ichabod's brother Ahitub son of Phinehas, the son of Eli the priest of the LORD in Shiloh. But the troops did not know that Jonathan had left.

Now there were cliffs on both sides of the pass that Jonathan intended to cross to reach the Philistine outpost. One was named Bozez and the other Seneh. One cliff stood to the north toward Michmash, and the other to the south toward Geba.

Jonathan said to the young man bearing his armor, "Come, let us cross over to the outpost of these uncircumcised men. Perhaps the LORD will work on our behalf. Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few."

His armor-bearer replied, "Do all that is in your heart. Go ahead; I am with you heart and soul."

"Very well," said Jonathan, "we will cross over toward these men and show ourselves to them. If they say, 'Wait until we come to you,' then we will stay where we are and will not go up to them. But if they say, 'Come on up,' then we will go up, because this will be our sign that the LORD has delivered them into our hands."

So the two of them showed themselves to the outpost of the Philistines, who exclaimed, "Look, the Hebrews are coming out of the holes in which they were hiding!"

So the men of the outpost called out to Jonathan and his armor-bearer, "Come on up, and we will teach you a lesson!"

"Follow me," Jonathan told his armor-bearer, "for the LORD has delivered them into the hand of Israel."

So Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet, with his armor-bearer behind him. And the Philistines fell before Jonathan, and his armor-bearer followed and finished them off. In that first assault, Jonathan and his armor-bearer struck down about twenty men in about half an acre of land.

Then panic struck the Philistines in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. Even those in the outposts and raiding parties trembled. Indeed, the earth quaked, and panic spread from God.

Now when Saul's watchmen at Gibeah in Benjamin looked and saw the troops melting away and scattering in every direction, Saul said to the troops who were with him, "Call the roll and see who has left us."

And when they had called the roll, they saw that Jonathan and his armor-bearer were not there.

Then Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the ark of God." (For at that time it was with the Israelites.) While Saul was talking to the priest, the commotion in the Philistine camp continued to increase. So Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand."

Then Saul and all his troops assembled and marched to the battle, and they found the Philistines in total confusion, with each man wielding the sword against his neighbor. And the Hebrews who had previously gone up into the surrounding camps to join the Philistines now went over to the Israelites who were

with Saul and Jonathan. When all the Israelites who had been hiding in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines were fleeing, they also joined the battle in close pursuit.

So the LORD saved Israel that day, and the battle moved on beyond Beth-aven.

Now the men of Israel were in distress that day, for Saul had placed the troops under an oath, saying, "Cursed is the man who eats any food before evening, before I have taken vengeance on my enemies." So none of the troops tasted any food.

Then all the troops entered the forest, and there was honey on the ground. And when they entered the forest and saw the flowing honey, not one of them put his hand to his mouth, because they feared the oath.

Jonathan, however, had not heard that his father had bound the people with the oath. So he reached out the end of the staff in his hand, dipped it into the honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth, and his eyes brightened. Then one of the soldiers told him, "Your father bound the troops with a solemn oath, saying, 'Cursed is the man who eats food today.' That is why the people are faint."

"My father has brought trouble to the land," Jonathan replied. "Just look at how my eyes have brightened because I tasted a little of this honey. How much better it would have been if the troops had eaten freely today from the plunder they took from their enemies! Would not the slaughter of the Philistines have been much greater?"

That day, after the Israelites had struck down the Philistines from Michmash to Aijalon, the people were very faint. So they rushed greedily to the plunder, taking sheep, cattle, and calves. They slaughtered them on the ground and ate meat with the blood still in it.

Then someone reported to Saul: "Look, the troops are sinning against the LORD by eating meat with the blood still in it."

"You have broken faith," said Saul. "Roll a large stone over here at once." Then he said, "Go among the troops and tell them, 'Each man must bring me his ox or his sheep, slaughter them in this place, and then eat. Do not sin against the LORD by eating meat with the blood still in it.'"

So that night everyone brought his ox and slaughtered it there. Then Saul built an altar to the LORD; it was the first time he had built an altar to the LORD.

And Saul said, "Let us go down after the Philistines by night and plunder them until dawn, leaving no man alive!"

"Do what seems good to you," the troops replied.

But the priest said, "We must consult God here."

So Saul inquired of God, "Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will You give them into the hand of Israel?"

But God did not answer him that day.

Therefore Saul said, "Come here, all you leaders of the troops, and let us investigate how this sin has occurred today. As surely as the LORD who saves Israel lives, even if it is my son Jonathan, he must die!"

But not one of the troops said a word.

Then Saul said to all Israel, "You stand on one side, and I and my son Jonathan will stand on the other side."

"Do what seems good to you," the troops replied.

So Saul said to the LORD, the God of Israel, "Why have You not answered Your servant this day? If the fault is with me or my son Jonathan, respond with Urim, but if the fault is with the men of Israel, respond with Thummim." And Jonathan and Saul were selected, but the people were cleared of the charge.

Then Saul said, "Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan." And Jonathan was selected.

"Tell me what you have done," Saul commanded him.

So Jonathan told him, "I only tasted a little honey with the end of the staff that was in my hand. And now I must die?"

And Saul declared, "May God punish me, and ever so severely, if you, Jonathan, do not surely die!"

But the people said to Saul, "Must Jonathan die — he who accomplished such a great deliverance for Israel? Never! As surely as the LORD lives, not a hair of his head will fall to the ground, for with God's help he has accomplished this today."

So the people rescued Jonathan, and he did not die. Then Saul gave up his pursuit of the Philistines, and the Philistines returned to their own land.

After Saul had assumed the kingship over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side — the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines. Wherever he turned, he routed them. He fought valiantly and defeated the Amalekites, delivering Israel from the hands of its plunderers.

Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malchishua. His two daughters were named Merab (his firstborn) and Michal (his younger daughter). His wife's name was Ahinoam daughter of Ahimaaz. The name of the commander of his army was Abner, the son of Saul's uncle Ner. Saul's father Kish and Abner's father Ner were sons of Abiel.

And the war with the Philistines was fierce for all the days of Saul. So whenever he noticed any strong or brave man, Saul would enlist him.

Then Samuel said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you king over His people Israel. Now therefore, listen to the words of the LORD. This is what the LORD of Hosts says: 'I witnessed what the Amalekites did to the Israelites when they opposed them on their way up from Egypt. Now go and attack the Amalekites and devote to destruction all that belongs to them. Do not spare them, but put to death men and women, children and infants, oxen and sheep, camels and donkeys.'"

So Saul summoned the troops and numbered them at Telaim — 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men of Judah. Saul came to the city of Amalek and lay in wait in the valley. And he warned the Kenites, "Since you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt, go on and get away from the Amalekites. Otherwise I will sweep you away with them."

So the Kenites moved away from the Amalekites.

Then Saul struck down the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, which is east of Egypt. He captured Agag king of Amalek alive, but devoted all the others to destruction with the sword.

Saul and his troops spared Agag, along with the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs,

and the best of everything else. They were unwilling to devote them to destruction, but they devoted to destruction all that was despised and worthless.

Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned away from following Me and has not carried out My instructions."

And Samuel was distressed and cried out to the LORD all that night.

Early in the morning Samuel got up to confront Saul, but he was told, "Saul has gone to Carmel, and behold, he has set up a monument for himself and has turned and gone down to Gilgal."

When Samuel reached him, Saul said to him, "May the LORD bless you. I have carried out the LORD's instructions."

But Samuel replied, "Then what is this bleating of sheep and lowing of cattle that I hear?"

Saul answered, "The troops brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD your God, but the rest we devoted to destruction."

"Stop!" exclaimed Samuel. "Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night."

"Tell me," Saul replied.

And Samuel said, "Although you were once small in your own eyes, have you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel and sent you on a mission, saying, 'Go and devote to destruction the sinful Amalekites. Fight against them until you have wiped them out.' So why did you not obey the LORD? Why did you rush upon the plunder and do evil in the sight of the LORD?"

"But I did obey the LORD," Saul replied. "I went on the mission that the LORD gave me. I brought back Agag king of Amalek and devoted the Amalekites to destruction. The troops took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of the things devoted to destruction, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal."

But Samuel declared:

> "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obedience to His voice? Behold, obedience is better than sacrifice, and attentiveness is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance is like the wickedness of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has rejected you as king."

Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned; I have transgressed the LORD's commandment and your instructions, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, please forgive my sin and return with me so I can worship the LORD."

"I will not return with you," Samuel replied. "For you have rejected the word of the LORD, and He has rejected you as king over Israel."

As Samuel turned to go, Saul grabbed the hem of his robe, and it tore. So Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor who is better than you. Moreover, the Glory of Israel does not lie or change His mind, for He is not a man, that He should change His mind."

"I have sinned," Saul replied. "Please honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel. Come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD your God."

So Samuel went back with Saul, and Saul worshiped the LORD.

Then Samuel said, "Bring me Agag king of the Amalekites."

Agag came to him cheerfully, for he thought, "Surely the bitterness of death is past."

But Samuel declared:

> "As your sword has made women childless, so your mother will be childless among women."

And Samuel hacked Agag to pieces before the LORD at Gilgal.

Then Samuel went to Ramah, but Saul went up to his home in Gibeah of Saul. And to the day of his death, Samuel never again visited Saul. Samuel mourned for Saul, and the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.

Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long are you going to mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have selected from his sons a king for Myself."

"How can I go?" Samuel asked. "Saul will hear of it and kill me!"

The LORD answered, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' Then invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you are to do. You are to anoint for Me the one I indicate."

So Samuel did what the LORD had said and went to Bethlehem. When the elders of the town met him, they trembled and asked, "Do you come in peace?"

"In peace," he replied. "I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice."

Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and said, "Surely here before the LORD is His anointed."

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or height, for I have rejected him; the LORD does not see as man does. For man sees the outward appearance, but the LORD sees the heart."

Then Jesse called Abinadab and presented him to Samuel, who said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either."

Next Jesse presented Shammah, but Samuel said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either."

Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel told him, "The LORD has not chosen any of these."

And Samuel asked him, "Are these all the sons you have?"

"There is still the youngest," Jesse replied, "but he is tending the sheep."

"Send for him," Samuel replied. "For we will not sit down to eat until he arrives."

So Jesse sent for his youngest son and brought him in. He was ruddy, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance. And the LORD said, "Rise and anoint him, for he is the one."

So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and the Spirit of the

LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. Then Samuel set out and went to Ramah.

Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a spirit of distress from the LORD began to torment him. Saul's servants said to him, "Surely a spirit of distress from God is tormenting you. Let our lord command your servants here to seek out someone who can skillfully play the harp. Whenever the spirit of distress from God is upon you, he is to play it, and you will be well."

And Saul commanded his servants, "Find me someone who plays well, and bring him to me."

One of the servants answered, "I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who knows how to play the harp. He is a mighty man of valor, a warrior, eloquent and handsome, and the LORD is with him."

So Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, "Send me your son David, who is with the sheep."

And Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread, a skin of wine, and one young goat and sent them to Saul with his son David. When David came to Saul and entered his service, Saul loved him very much, and David became his armor-bearer.

Then Saul sent word to Jesse, saying, "Let David remain in my service, for I am pleased with him." And whenever the spirit from God came upon Saul, David would pick up his harp and play. Then Saul would find relief and feel better, and the spirit of distress would depart from him.

Now the Philistines gathered their forces for war at Socoh in Judah, and they camped between Socoh and Azekah in Ephes-dammim. Saul and the men of Israel assembled and camped in the Valley of Elah, arraying themselves for battle against the Philistines.

The Philistines stood on one hill and the Israelites stood on another, with the valley between them.

Then a champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out from the Philistine camp. He was six cubits and a span in height, and he had a bronze helmet on his head. He wore a bronze coat of mail weighing five thousand shekels, and he had armor of bronze on his legs and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels. In addition, his shield bearer went before him.

And Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why do you come out and array yourselves for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose one of your men and have him come down against me. If he is able to fight me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and work for us."

Then the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day! Give me a man to fight!"

On hearing the words of the Philistine, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and greatly afraid.

Now David was the son of a man named Jesse, an Ephrathite from Bethlehem of Judah who had eight sons. And in the days of Saul, Jesse was old and well along in years. The three older sons of Jesse had followed Saul into battle: The firstborn was Eliab, the second was Abinadab, and the third was Shammah. And David was the youngest.

The three oldest had followed Saul, but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's sheep in Bethlehem.

For forty days the Philistine came forward every morning and evening to take his stand.

One day Jesse said to his son David, "Take this ephah of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread for your brothers and hurry to their camp. Take also these ten portions of cheese to the commander of their unit. Check on the welfare of your brothers and bring back an assurance from them. They are with Saul and all the men of Israel in the Valley of Elah, fighting against the Philistines."

So David got up early in the morning, left the flock with a keeper, loaded up, and set out as Jesse had instructed him. He reached the camp as the army was marching out to its position and shouting the battle cry. And Israel and the Philistines arrayed in formation against each other.

Then David left his supplies in the care of the quartermaster and ran to the battle line. When he arrived, he asked his brothers how they were doing. And as he was speaking with them, suddenly the champion named Goliath, the Philistine from Gath, came forward from the ranks of the Philistines and shouted his usual words, which David also heard.

When all the men of Israel saw Goliath, they fled from him in great fear.

Now the men of Israel had been saying, "Do you see how this man keeps coming out to defy Israel? To the man who kills him the king will give great riches. And he will give him his daughter in marriage and exempt his father's house from taxation in Israel."

David asked the men who were standing with him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Just who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

The people told him about the offer, saying, "That is what will be done for the man who kills him."

Now when David's oldest brother Eliab heard him speaking to the men, his anger burned against David. "Why have you come down here?" he asked. "And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your pride and wickedness of heart — you have come down to see the battle!"

"What have I done now?" said David. "Was it not just a question?" Then he turned from him toward another and asked about the offer, and those people answered him just as the first ones had answered.

Now David's words were overheard and reported to Saul, who sent for him.

And David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail on account of this Philistine. Your servant will go and fight him!"

But Saul replied, "You cannot go out against this Philistine to fight him. You are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth."

David replied, "Your servant has been tending his father's sheep, and whenever a lion or a bear came and carried off a lamb from the flock, I went after it, struck it down, and delivered the lamb from its mouth. If it reared up against me, I would grab it by its fur, strike it down, and kill it. Your servant has killed lions and

bears; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God."

David added, "The LORD, who delivered me from the claws of the lion and the bear, will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."

"Go," said Saul, "and may the LORD be with you."

Then Saul clothed David in his own tunic, put a bronze helmet on his head, and dressed him in armor. David strapped his sword over the tunic and tried to walk, but he was not accustomed to them.

"I cannot walk in these," David said to Saul. "I am not accustomed to them." So David took them off. And David took his staff in his hand, selected five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag. And with his sling in hand, he approached the Philistine.

Now the Philistine came closer and closer to David, with his shield-bearer before him. When the Philistine looked and saw David, he despised him because he was just a boy, ruddy and handsome. "Am I a dog," he said to David, "that you come at me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. "Come here," he called to David, "and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!"

But David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand. This day I will strike you down, cut off your head, and give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the creatures of the earth. Then the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. And all those assembled here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and He will give all of you into our hands."

As the Philistine started forward to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Then David reached into his bag, took out a stone, and slung it, striking the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.

Thus David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him. David ran and stood over him. He grabbed the Philistine's sword and pulled it from its sheath and killed him, and he cut off his head with the sword.

When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they turned and ran. Then the men of Israel and Judah charged forward with a shout and pursued the Philistines to the entrance of Gath and to the gates of Ekron. And the bodies of the Philistines were strewn along the Shaaraim road to Gath and Ekron.

When the Israelites returned from their pursuit of the Philistines, they plundered their camps. David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, and he put Goliath's weapons in his own tent.

As Saul had watched David going out to confront the Philistine, he said to Abner the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is this young man?"

"As surely as you live, O king," Abner replied, "I do not know."

"Find out whose son this young man is!" said the king.

So when David returned from killing the Philistine, still holding his head in his hand, Abner took him and brought him before Saul.

"Whose son are you, young man?" asked Saul.

"I am the son of your servant Jesse of Bethlehem," David replied.

After David had finished speaking with Saul, the souls of Jonathan and David were knit together, and Jonathan loved him as himself. And from that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return to his father's house.

Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. And Jonathan removed the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, his sword, his bow, and his belt.

So David marched out and prospered in everything Saul sent him to do, and Saul set him over the men of war. And this was pleasing in the sight of all the people, and of Saul's officers as well.

As the troops were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs, and with tambourines and other instruments. And as the women danced, they sang out:

> "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."

And Saul was furious and resented this song. "They have ascribed tens of thousands to David," he said, "but only thousands to me. What more can he have but the kingdom?" And from that day forward Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

The next day a spirit of distress sent from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied inside the house while David played the harp as usual. Now Saul was holding a spear, and he hurled it, thinking, "I will pin David to the wall." But David eluded him twice.

So Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with David but had departed from Saul. Therefore Saul sent David away and gave him command of a thousand men. David led the troops out to battle and back, and he continued to prosper in all his ways, because the LORD was with him.

When Saul saw that David was very successful, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he was leading them out to battle and back.

Then Saul said to David, "Here is my older daughter Merab. I will give her to you in marriage. Only be valiant for me and fight the LORD's battles." But Saul was thinking, "I need not raise my hand against him; let the hand of the Philistines be against him."

And David said to Saul, "Who am I, and what is my family or my father's clan in Israel, that I should become the son-in-law of the king?" So when it was time to give Saul's daughter Merab to David, she was given in marriage to Adriel of Meholah.

Now Saul's daughter Michal loved David, and when this was reported to Saul, it pleased him. "I will give her to David," Saul thought, "so that she may be a snare to him, and the hand of the Philistines may be against him." So Saul said to David, "For a second time now you can be my son-in-law."

Then Saul ordered his servants, “Speak to David privately and tell him, ‘Behold, the king is pleased with you, and all his servants love you. Now therefore, become his son-in-law.’”

But when Saul’s servants relayed these words to David, he replied, “Does it seem trivial in your sight to be the son-in-law of the king? I am a poor man and lightly esteemed.”

And the servants told Saul what David had said.

Saul replied, “Say to David, ‘The king desires no other dowry but a hundred Philistine foreskins as revenge on his enemies.’” But Saul intended to cause David’s death at the hands of the Philistines.

When the servants reported these terms to David, he was pleased to become the king’s son-in-law. Before the wedding day arrived, David and his men went out and killed two hundred Philistines. He brought their foreskins and presented them as payment in full to become the king’s son-in-law. Then Saul gave his daughter Michal to David in marriage.

When Saul realized that the LORD was with David and that his daughter Michal loved David, he grew even more afraid of David. So from then on Saul was David’s enemy.

Every time the Philistine commanders came out for battle, David was more successful than all of Saul’s officers, so that his name was highly esteemed.

Then Saul ordered his son Jonathan and all his servants to kill David.

But Jonathan delighted greatly in David, so he warned David, saying, “My father Saul intends to kill you. Be on your guard in the morning; find a secret place and hide there. I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, so I can ask about you. And if I find out anything, I will tell you.”

Then Jonathan spoke well of David to his father Saul and said to him, “The king should not sin against his servant David; he has not sinned against you. In fact, his actions have been highly beneficial to you. He took his life in his hands when he struck down the Philistine, and the LORD worked a great salvation for all Israel. You saw it and rejoiced, so why would you sin against innocent blood by killing David for no reason?”

Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan and swore an oath: “As surely as the LORD lives, David will not be put to death.”

So Jonathan summoned David and told him all these things. Then Jonathan brought David to Saul, and David was with Saul as before.

When war broke out again, David went out and fought the Philistines and struck them with such a mighty blow that they fled before him.

But as Saul was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand, a spirit of distress from the LORD came upon him. While David was playing the harp, Saul tried to pin him to the wall with his spear. But David eluded him and the spear struck the wall. And David fled and escaped that night.

Then Saul sent messengers to David’s house to watch him and kill him in the morning. But David’s wife Michal warned him, “If you do not run for your life tonight, tomorrow you will be dead!” So Michal lowered David from the window, and he ran away and escaped.

Then Michal took a household idol and laid it in the bed, placed some goat hair on its head, and covered it with a garment. When Saul sent the messengers to seize David, Michal said, “He is ill.”

But Saul sent the messengers back to see David and told them, “Bring him up to me in his bed so I can kill him.” And when the messengers entered, there was the idol in the bed with the goat hair on its head.

And Saul said to Michal, “Why did you deceive me like this? You sent my enemy away, and he has escaped!”

Michal replied, “He said to me, ‘Help me get away, or I will kill you!’”

So David ran away and escaped. And he went to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him. Then he and Samuel went to Naioth and stayed there.

When Saul was told that David was at Naioth in Ramah, he sent messengers to seize him. But when they saw the group of prophets prophesying, with Samuel leading them, the Spirit of God came upon them, and Saul’s messengers also began to prophesy.

When this was reported to Saul, he sent more messengers, but they began to prophesy as well.

So Saul tried again and sent messengers a third time, and even they began to prophesy.

Finally, Saul himself left for Ramah and came to the large cistern at Secu, where he asked, “Where are Samuel and David?”

“At Naioth in Ramah,” he was told.

So Saul went to Naioth in Ramah. But the Spirit of God came upon even Saul, and he walked along prophesying until he came to Naioth in Ramah. Then Saul stripped off his robes and also prophesied before Samuel. And he collapsed and lay naked all that day and night. That is why it is said, “Is Saul also among the prophets?”

Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah. He came to Jonathan and asked, “What have I done? What is my iniquity? How have I sinned against your father, that he wants to take my life?”

“Far from it!” Jonathan replied. “You will not die. Indeed, my father does nothing, great or small, without telling me. So why would he hide this matter from me? This cannot be true!”

But David again vowed, “Your father knows very well that I have found favor in your eyes, and he has said, ‘Jonathan must not know of this, or he will be grieved.’ As surely as the LORD lives and as you yourself live, there is but a step between me and death.”

Then Jonathan said to David, “Whatever you desire, I will do for you.”

So David told him, “Look, tomorrow is the New Moon, and I am supposed to dine with the king. Instead, let me go and hide in the field until the third evening from now. If your father misses me at all, tell him, ‘David urgently requested my permission to hurry to Bethlehem, his hometown, because there is an annual sacrifice for his whole clan.’ If he says, ‘Good,’ then your servant is safe, but if he is enraged, you will know he has evil intentions. Therefore show kindness to your servant, for you have brought me into a covenant with you before the LORD. If there is iniquity in me, then kill me yourself; why should you bring me to your father?”

"Never!" Jonathan replied. "If I ever found out that my father had evil intentions against you, would I not tell you?"

Then David asked Jonathan, "Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?"

"Come," he replied, "let us go out to the field."

So the two of them went out into the field, and Jonathan said, "By the LORD, the God of Israel, I will sound out my father by this time tomorrow or the next day. If he is favorable toward you, will I not send for you and tell you? But if my father intends to bring evil on you, then may the LORD punish me, and ever so severely, if I do not tell you and send you on your way in safety. May the LORD be with you, just as He has been with my father. And as long as I live, treat me with the LORD's loving devotion, that I may not die, and do not ever cut off your loving devotion from my household— not even when the LORD cuts off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth."

So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD hold David's enemies accountable." And Jonathan had David reaffirm his vow out of love for him, for Jonathan loved David as he loved himself.

Then Jonathan said to David, "Tomorrow is the New Moon, and you will be missed, because your seat will be empty. When you have stayed three days, hurry down to the place you hid on the day this trouble began, and remain beside the stone Ezel. I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as if I were aiming at a target. Then I will send a boy and say, 'Go, find the arrows!' Now, if I expressly say to him, 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you; bring them,' then come, because as surely as the LORD lives, it is safe for you, and there is no danger. But if I say to the young man, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you,' then you must go, for the LORD has sent you away. And as for the matter you and I have discussed, the LORD is a witness between you and me forever."

So David hid in the field, and when the New Moon had come, the king sat down to eat. He sat in his usual place by the wall, opposite Jonathan and beside Abner, but David's place was empty. Saul said nothing that day because he thought, "Something has happened to David to make him ceremonially unclean— surely he is unclean."

But on the day after the New Moon, the second day, David's place was still empty, and Saul asked his son Jonathan, "Why hasn't the son of Jesse come to the meal either yesterday or today?"

Jonathan answered, "David urgently requested my permission to go to Bethlehem, saying, 'Please let me go, because our clan is holding a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has told me to be there. So now, if I have found favor in your eyes, please let me go and see my brothers.' That is why he has not come to the king's table."

Then Saul's anger burned against Jonathan, and he said to him, "You son of a perverse and rebellious woman! Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you? For as long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom shall be established. Now send for him and bring him to me, for he must surely die!"

"Why must he be put to death?" Jonathan replied. "What has he done?"

Then Saul hurled his spear at Jonathan to kill him. So Jonathan knew that his father was determined to kill David. Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger and did not eat any food that second day of the month, for he was grieved by his father's shameful treatment of David.

In the morning Jonathan went out to the field for the appointment with David, and a small boy was with him. He said to the boy, "Run and find the arrows I shoot." And as the boy ran, Jonathan shot an arrow beyond him.

When the boy reached the place where Jonathan's arrow had fallen, Jonathan called to him, "Isn't the arrow beyond you?" Then Jonathan cried out, "Hurry! Make haste! Do not delay!" So the boy picked up the arrow and returned to his master.

But the boy did not know anything; only Jonathan and David knew the arrangement. Then Jonathan gave his equipment to the boy and said, "Go, take it back to the city."

When the young man had gone, David got up from the south side of the stone, fell facedown, and bowed three times. Then he and Jonathan kissed each other and wept together — though David wept more.

And Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, for the two of us have sworn in the name of the LORD, saying, 'May the LORD be a witness between you and me, and between your descendants and mine forever.'" Then David got up and departed, and Jonathan went back into the city.

Then David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. And when Ahimelech met David, he trembled and asked him, "Why are you alone? Why is no one with you?"

"The king has given me a mission," David replied. "He told me no one is to know about the mission on which I am sending you. And I have directed my young men to meet me at a certain place. Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever can be found."

"There is no common bread on hand," the priest replied, "but there is some consecrated bread — provided that the young men have kept themselves from women."

David answered, "Women have indeed been kept from us, as is usual when I set out. And the bodies of the young men are holy even on common missions. How much more so today!"

So the priest gave him the consecrated bread, since there was no bread there but the Bread of the Presence, which had been removed from before the LORD and replaced with hot bread on the day it was taken away.

Now one of Saul's servants was there that day, detained before the LORD. And his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief shepherd for Saul.

Then David asked Ahimelech, "Is there not a spear or sword on hand here? For I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's mission was urgent."

The priest replied, “The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the Valley of Elah, is here; it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you want, you may take it. For there is no other but this one here.”

And David said, “There is none like it; give it to me.”

That day David fled from Saul and went to Achish king of Gath. But the servants of Achish said to him, “Is this not David, the king of the land? Did they not sing about him in their dances, saying:

> ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands’?”

Now David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish the king of Gath. So he changed his behavior before them and feigned madness in their hands; he scratched on the doors of the gate and let his saliva run down his beard.

Then Achish said to his servants, “Look, you can see that the man is insane! Why have you brought him to me? Am I in need of madmen, that you have brought this man to rave in my presence? Must this man come into my house?”

So David left Gath and took refuge in the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and the rest of his father’s household heard about it, they went down to him there. And all who were distressed or indebted or discontented rallied around him, and he became their leader. About four hundred men were with him.

From there David went to Mizpeh of Moab, where he said to the king of Moab, “Please let my father and mother stay with you until I learn what God will do for me.” So he left them in the care of the king of Moab, and they stayed with him the whole time David was in the stronghold.

Then the prophet Gad said to David, “Do not stay in the stronghold. Depart and go into the land of Judah.” So David left and went to the forest of Hereth.

Soon Saul learned that David and his men had been discovered. At that time Saul was sitting under the tamarisk tree on the hill at Gibeah, with his spear in hand and all his servants standing around him.

Then Saul said to his servants, “Listen, men of Benjamin! Is the son of Jesse giving all of you fields and vineyards and making you commanders of thousands or hundreds? Is that why all of you have conspired against me? Not one of you told me that my own son had made a covenant with the son of Jesse. Not one of you has shown concern for me or revealed to me that my son has stirred up my own servant to lie in wait against me, as is the case today.”

But Doeg the Edomite, who had stationed himself with Saul’s servants, answered: “I saw the son of Jesse come to Ahimelech son of Ahitub at Nob. Ahimelech inquired of the LORD for him and gave him provisions. He also gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine.”

Then the king sent messengers to summon Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and his father’s whole family, who were priests at Nob. And all of them came to the king. “Listen now, son of Ahitub,” said Saul.

“Here I am, my lord,” he replied.

And Saul asked him, “Why have you and the son of Jesse conspired against me? You gave him bread and a sword and inquired of God for him so that he could rise up against me to lie in wait, as he is doing today.”

Ahimelech answered the king, “Who among all your servants is as faithful as David, the king’s son-in-law, the captain of your bodyguard and honored in your house? Was that day the first time I inquired of God for him? Far be it from me! Let not the king accuse your servant or any of my father’s household, for your servant knew nothing of this whole affair — not in part or in whole.”

But the king replied, “You will surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father’s house!”

Then the king ordered the guards at his side, “Turn and kill the priests of the LORD, because they too sided with David. For they knew he was fleeing, but they did not tell me.”

But the king’s servants would not lift a hand to strike the priests of the LORD.

So the king ordered Doeg, “You turn and strike down the priests!”

And Doeg the Edomite turned and struck down the priests himself. On that day he killed eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod. He also put to the sword Nob, the city of the priests, with its men and women, children and infants, oxen, donkeys, and sheep.

But one of the sons of Ahimelech son of Ahitub escaped. His name was Abiathar, and he fled to David. And Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD.

Then David said to Abiathar, “I knew that Doeg the Edomite was there that day, and that he was sure to tell Saul. I myself am responsible for the lives of everyone in your father’s house. Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks your life is seeking mine as well. You will be safe with me.”

Now it was reported to David, “Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and looting the threshing floors.”

So David inquired of the LORD, “Should I go and attack these Philistines?”

And the LORD said to David, “Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah.”

But David’s men said to him, “Look, we are afraid here in Judah; how much more if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?”

Once again, David inquired of the LORD, and the LORD answered him: “Go at once to Keilah, for I will deliver the Philistines into your hand.”

Then David and his men went to Keilah, fought against the Philistines, and carried off their livestock, striking them with a mighty blow. So David saved the people of Keilah.

(Now Abiathar son of Ahimelech had brought the ephod with him when he fled to David at Keilah.)

When Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah, he said, “God has delivered him into my hand, for he has trapped himself by entering a town with gates and bars.”

Then Saul summoned all his troops to go to war at Keilah and besiege David and his men.

When David learned that Saul was plotting evil against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, “Bring the ephod.”

And David said, “O LORD, God of Israel, Your servant has heard that Saul intends to come to Keilah and destroy the city on my account. Will the citizens

of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as Your servant has heard? O LORD, God of Israel, please tell Your servant."

"He will," said the LORD.

So David asked, "Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?"

"They will," said the LORD.

Then David and his men, about six hundred strong, set out and departed from Keilah, moving from place to place. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he declined to go forth.

And David stayed in the wilderness strongholds and in the hill country of the Wilderness of Ziph. Day after day Saul searched for him, but God would not deliver David into his hand.

While David was in Horesh in the Wilderness of Ziph, he saw that Saul had come out to take his life. And Saul's son Jonathan came to David in Horesh and strengthened his hand in God, saying, "Do not be afraid, for my father Saul will never lay a hand on you. And you will be king over Israel, and I will be your second-in-command. Even my father Saul knows this is true."

So the two of them made a covenant before the LORD. And David remained in Horesh, while Jonathan went home.

Then the Ziphites came up to Saul at Gibeah and said, "Is not David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah south of Jeshimon? Now, O king, come down whenever your soul desires, and we will be responsible for delivering him into your hand."

"May you be blessed by the LORD," replied Saul, "for you have had compassion on me. Please go and prepare further. Investigate and watch carefully where he goes and who has seen him there, for I am told that he is extremely cunning. Observe and find out all the places where he hides. Then come back to me with certainty, and I will go with you. If he is in the land, I will search him out among all the clans of Judah."

So they set out and went to Ziph ahead of Saul. Now David and his men were in the Wilderness of Maon in the Arabah south of Jeshimon, and Saul and his men went to seek him. When David was told about it, he went down to the rock and stayed in the Wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard of this, he pursued David there.

Saul was proceeding along one side of the mountain, and David and his men along the other side. Even though David was hurrying to get away, Saul and his men were closing in on David and his men to capture them.

Then a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Come quickly, for the Philistines have raided the land!" So Saul broke off his pursuit of David and went to meet the Philistines. That is why that place is called Sela-hammahlekoth. And David went up from there and lived in the strongholds of En-gedi.

After Saul had returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, "David is in the wilderness of En-gedi." So Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel and went to look for David and his men in the region of the Rocks of the Wild Goats.

Soon Saul came to the sheepfolds along the road, where there was a cave, and he went in to relieve himself. And David and his men were hiding in the recesses of the cave. So David's men said to him, "This is the day about which the LORD said to you, 'Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do with him as you wish.'"

Then David crept up and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul's robe.

Afterward, David's conscience was stricken because he had cut off the corner of Saul's robe. So he said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD's anointed. May I never lift my hand against him, since he is the LORD's anointed."

With these words David restrained his men, and he did not let them rise up against Saul. Then Saul left the cave and went on his way.

After that, David got up, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul, "My lord the king!"

When Saul looked behind him, David bowed face-down in reverence and said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Look, David intends to harm you'? Behold, this day you have seen with your own eyes that the LORD delivered you into my hand in the cave. I was told to kill you, but I spared you and said, 'I will not lift my hand against my lord, since he is the LORD's anointed.'

See, my father, look at the corner of your robe in my hand. For I cut it off, but I did not kill you. Know and see that there is no evil or rebellion in my hands. I have not sinned against you, even though you are hunting me down to take my life.

May the LORD judge between you and me, and may the LORD take vengeance on you, but my hand will never be against you. As the old proverb says, 'Wickedness proceeds from the wicked.' But my hand will never be against you.

Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog? A flea? May the LORD be our judge and decide between you and me. May He take notice and plead my case and deliver me from your hand."

When David had finished saying these things, Saul called back, "Is that your voice, David my son?"

Then Saul wept aloud and said to David, "You are more righteous than I, for you have rewarded me with good, though I have rewarded you with evil. And you have declared this day how you have treated me well, for when the LORD delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me. When a man finds his enemy, does he let him go away unharmed? May the LORD reward you with good for what you have done for me this day.

Now I know for sure that you will be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands. So now, swear to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants or wipe out my name from my father's house."

So David gave his oath to Saul. Then Saul returned home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

When Samuel died, all Israel gathered to mourn for him; and they buried him at his home in Ramah.

Then David set out and went down to the Wilderness of Paran.

Now there was a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel. He was a very wealthy man with a thousand

goats and three thousand sheep, which he was shearing in Carmel. His name was Nabal, and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband, a Calebite, was harsh and evil in his dealings.

While David was in the wilderness, he heard that Nabal was shearing sheep. So David sent ten young men and instructed them, "Go up to Nabal at Carmel. Greet him in my name and say to him, 'Long life to you, and peace to you and to your house and to all that belongs to you. Now I hear that it is time for shearing. When your shepherds were with us, we did not harass them, and nothing of theirs was missing the whole time they were in Carmel. Ask your young men, and they will tell you. So let my young men find favor with you, for we have come on the day of a feast. Please give whatever you can spare to your servants and to your son David.'"

When David's young men arrived, they relayed all these words to Nabal on behalf of David. Then they waited.

But Nabal asked them, "Who is David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants these days are breaking away from their masters. Why should I take my bread and water and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give them to these men whose origin I do not know?"

So David's men turned around and went back, and they relayed to him all these words.

And David said to his men, "Strap on your swords!" So David and all his men strapped on their swords, and about four hundred men followed David, while two hundred stayed with the supplies.

Meanwhile, one of Nabal's young men informed Nabal's wife Abigail, "Look, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master, but he screamed at them. Yet these men were very good to us. When we were in the field, we were not harassed, and nothing of ours went missing the whole time we lived among them. They were a wall around us, both day and night, the whole time we were herding our sheep near them. Now consider carefully what you must do, because disaster looms over our master and all his household. For he is such a scoundrel that nobody can speak to him!"

Then Abigail hurried and took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five butchered sheep, five seahs of roasted grain, a hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs. She loaded them on donkeys and said to her young men, "Go ahead of me. I will be right behind you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal.

As Abigail came riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, she saw David and his men coming down toward her, and she met them.

Now David had just said, "In vain I have protected all that belonged to this man in the wilderness. Nothing that belongs to him has gone missing, yet he has paid me back evil for good. May God punish David, and ever so severely, if I let one male belonging to Nabal survive until morning."

When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off the donkey, fell facedown, and bowed before him. She fell at his feet and said, "My lord, may the blame be on me alone, but please let your servant speak to you; hear the words of your servant. My lord should pay no attention to this scoundrel Nabal, for he lives up to his name: His name means Fool, and folly accompanies him. I, your servant, did not see my lord's young men whom you sent.

Now, my lord, as surely as the LORD lives and you yourself live, since the LORD has held you back from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hand, may your enemies and those who seek harm for my lord be like Nabal.

Now let this gift your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow you. Please forgive your servant's offense, for the LORD will surely make a lasting dynasty for my lord, because he fights the LORD's battles. May no evil be found in you as long as you live.

And should someone pursue you and seek your life, then the life of my lord will be bound securely by the LORD your God in the bundle of the living. But He shall fling away the lives of your enemies like stones from a sling.

When the LORD has done for my lord all the good He promised, and when He has appointed you ruler over Israel, then my lord will have no remorse or guilt of conscience over needless bloodshed and revenge. And when the LORD has dealt well with my lord, may you remember your servant."

Then David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who sent you to meet me this day! Blessed is your discernment, and blessed are you, because today you kept me from bloodshed and from avenging myself by my own hand. Otherwise, as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, who has restrained me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, then surely no male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by morning light."

Then David accepted from her hand what she had brought him, and he said to her, "Go home in peace. See, I have heeded your voice and granted your request."

When Abigail returned to Nabal, there he was in the house, holding a feast fit for a king, in high spirits and very drunk. So she told him nothing until morning light.

In the morning when Nabal was sober, his wife told him about these events, and his heart failed within him, and he became like a stone. About ten days later, the LORD struck Nabal dead.

On hearing that Nabal was dead, David said, "Blessed be the LORD, who has upheld my cause against the reproach of Nabal and has restrained His servant from evil. For the LORD has brought the wickedness of Nabal down upon his own head."

Then David sent word to Abigail, asking her to become his wife. When his servants came to Abigail at Carmel, they said, "David has sent us to take you as his wife."

She arose, bowed facedown, and said, "Here is your servant, ready to serve and to wash the feet of my lord's servants."

So Abigail hurried and got on a donkey, and attended by five of her maidens, she followed David's messengers and became his wife.

David had also married Ahinoam of Jezreel. So she and Abigail were both his wives. But Saul had given his daughter Michal, David's wife, to Palti son of Laish, who was from Gallim.

Then the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah and said, "Is not David hiding on the hill of Hachilah, opposite Jeshimon?" So Saul, accompanied by three thousand chosen men of Israel, went down to the Wilderness of Ziph to search for David there.

Saul camped beside the road at the hill of Hachilah opposite Jeshimon, but David was living in the wilderness. When he realized that Saul had followed him there, David sent out spies to verify that Saul had arrived.

Then David set out and went to the place where Saul had camped. He saw the place where Saul and Abner son of Ner, the general of his army, had lain down. Saul was lying inside the inner circle of the camp, with the troops camped around him. And David asked Ahimelech the Hittite and Abishai son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, "Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?"

"I will go with you," answered Abishai.

That night David and Abishai came to the troops, and Saul was lying there asleep in the inner circle of the camp, with his spear stuck in the ground by his head. And Abner and the troops were lying around him.

Abishai said to David, "Today God has delivered your enemy into your hand. Now, therefore, please let me thrust the spear through him into the ground with one stroke. I will not need to strike him twice!"

But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him, for who can extend a hand against the LORD's anointed and be guiltless?" David added, "As surely as the LORD lives, the LORD Himself will strike him down; either his day will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish. But the LORD forbid that I should extend my hand against the LORD's anointed. Instead, take the spear and water jug by his head, and let us go."

So David took the spear and water jug by Saul's head, and they departed. No one saw them or knew about it, nor did anyone wake up; they all remained asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen on them.

Then David crossed to the other side and stood atop the mountain at a distance; there was a wide gulf between them. And David shouted to the troops and to Abner son of Ner, "Will you not answer me, Abner?"

"Who are you who calls to the king?" Abner replied.

So David said to Abner, "You are a man, aren't you? And who in Israel is your equal? Why then did you not protect your lord the king when one of the people came to destroy him? This thing you have done is not good. As surely as the LORD lives, all of you deserve to die, since you did not protect your lord, the LORD's anointed. Now look around. Where are the king's spear and water jug that were by his head?"

Then Saul recognized David's voice and asked, "Is that your voice, David my son?"

"It is my voice, my lord and king," David said.

And he continued, "Why is my lord pursuing his servant? What have I done? What evil is in my hand? Now please, may my lord the king hear the words of his servant: If the LORD has stirred you up against me, then may He accept an offering. But if men have done it, may they be cursed in the presence of the LORD! For today they have driven me away from sharing in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.' So do not let my blood fall to the ground far from the presence of the LORD. For the king of Israel has come out to look for a flea, like one who hunts a partridge in the mountains."

Then Saul replied, "I have sinned. Come back, David my son. I will never harm you again, because today you considered my life precious. I have played the fool and have committed a grave error!"

"Here is the king's spear," David answered. "Let one of the young men come over and get it. May the LORD repay every man for his righteousness and faithfulness. For the LORD delivered you into my hand today, but I would not extend my hand against the LORD's anointed. As surely as I valued your life today, so may the LORD value my life and rescue me from all trouble."

Saul said to him, "May you be blessed, David my son. You will accomplish great things and will surely prevail."

So David went on his way, and Saul returned home.

David, however, said to himself, "One of these days now I will be swept away by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will stop searching for me all over Israel, and I will slip out of his hand."

So David set out with his six hundred men and went to Achish son of Maoch, the king of Gath. David and his men settled in Gath with Achish. Each man had his family with him, and David had his two wives: Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, the widow of Nabal. And when Saul learned that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him.

Then David said to Achish, "If I have found favor in your eyes, let me be assigned a place in one of the outlying towns, so I can live there. For why should your servant live in the royal city with you?"

That day Achish gave him Ziklag, and to this day it still belongs to the kings of Judah. And the time that David lived in Philistine territory amounted to a year and four months.

Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites. (From ancient times these people had inhabited the land extending to Shur and Egypt.) Whenever David attacked a territory, he did not leave a man or woman alive, but he took the flocks and herds, the donkeys, camels, and clothing.

Then he would return to Achish, who would ask him, "What have you raided today?"

And David would reply, "The Negev of Judah," or "The Negev of Jerahmeel," or "The Negev of the Kenites."

David did not leave a man or woman alive to be brought to Gath, for he said, "Otherwise they will report us, saying, 'This is what David did.'" And this was David's custom the whole time he lived in Philistine territory.

So Achish trusted David, thinking, "Since he has made himself an utter stench to his people Israel, he will be my servant forever."

Now in those days the Philistines gathered their forces for warfare against Israel. So Achish said to David, “You must understand that you and your men are to go out to battle with me.”

David replied, “Then you will come to know what your servant can do.”

“Very well,” said Achish. “I will make you my bodyguard for life.”

Now by this time Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. And Saul had removed the mediums and spiritists from the land.

The Philistines gathered together and camped at Shunem, while Saul gathered all Israel and camped at Gilboa. When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid and trembled violently. He inquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him by dreams or Urim or prophets.

Then Saul said to his servants, “Find me a woman who is a medium, so I can go and consult her.”

“There is a medium at Endor,” his servants replied.

So Saul disguised himself by putting on different clothes, and he set out with two of his men. They came to the woman at night, and Saul said, “Consult a spirit for me. Bring up for me the one I name.”

But the woman replied, “Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has killed the mediums and spiritists in the land. Why have you set a trap to get me killed?”

Then Saul swore to her by the LORD: “As surely as the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this.”

“Whom shall I bring up for you?” the woman asked.

“Bring up Samuel,” he replied.

But when the woman saw Samuel, she cried out in a loud voice and said to Saul, “Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!”

“Do not be afraid,” the king replied. “What do you see?”

“I see a god coming up out of the earth,” the woman answered.

“What does he look like?” asked Saul.

“An old man is coming up,” she replied. “And he is wearing a robe.”

So Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed facedown in reverence.

Then Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?”

“I am deeply distressed,” replied Saul. “The Philistines are fighting against me, and God has turned away from me. He no longer answers me, either by prophets or by dreams. So I have called on you to tell me what to do.”

“Why do you consult me,” asked Samuel, “since the LORD has turned away from you and become your enemy? He has done exactly what He spoke through me: The LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor David. Because you did not obey the LORD or carry out His burning anger against Amalek, the LORD has done this to you today. Moreover, the LORD will deliver Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. And the LORD will deliver the army of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.”

Immediately Saul fell flat on the ground, terrified by the words of Samuel. And his strength was gone, because he had not eaten anything all that day and night.

When the woman came to Saul and saw how distraught he was, she said to him, “Look, your maidservant has obeyed your voice. I took my life in my hands and did as you told me. Now please listen to your servant and let me set a morsel of bread before you so you may eat and have the strength to go on your way.”

Saul refused, saying, “I will not eat.” But his servants joined the woman in urging him, and he heeded their voice. He got up from the ground and sat on the bed.

The woman had a fattened calf at her house, and she quickly slaughtered it. She also took flour, kneaded it, and baked unleavened bread. She served it to Saul and his servants, and they ate. And that night they got up and left.

Now the Philistines brought all their forces together at Aphek, while Israel camped by the spring in Jezreel. As the Philistine leaders marched out with their units of hundreds and thousands, David and his men marched behind them with Achish.

Then the commanders of the Philistines asked, “What about these Hebrews?”

Achish replied, “Is this not David, the servant of King Saul of Israel? He has been with me all these days, even years, and from the day he defected until today I have found no fault in him.”

But the commanders of the Philistines were angry with Achish and told him, “Send that man back and let him return to the place you assigned him. He must not go down with us into battle only to become our adversary during the war. What better way for him to regain the favor of his master than with the heads of our men? Is this not the David about whom they sing in their dances:

> ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands’?”

So Achish summoned David and told him, “As surely as the LORD lives, you have been upright, and it seems right in my sight that you should march in and out with me in the army, because I have found no fault in you from the day you came to me until this day. But you are not good in the sight of the leaders. Therefore turn back now and go in peace, so that you will not do anything to displease the leaders of the Philistines.”

“But what have I done?” David replied. “What have you found against your servant, from the day I came to you until today, to keep me from going along to fight against the enemies of my lord the king?”

Achish replied, “I know that you are as pleasing in my sight as an angel of God. But the commanders of the Philistines have said, ‘He must not go into battle with us.’ Now then, get up early in the morning, along with your master’s servants who came with you, and go as soon as it is light.”

So David and his men got up early in the morning to return to the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

On the third day David and his men arrived in Ziklag, and the Amalekites had raided the Negev, attacked Ziklag, and burned it down. They had taken captive the women and all who were there, both young and old.

They had not killed anyone, but had carried them off as they went on their way.

When David and his men came to the city, they found it burned down and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. So David and the troops with him lifted up their voices and wept until they had no strength left to weep.

David's two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel, had been taken captive. And David was greatly distressed because the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of every man grieved for his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the LORD his God.

Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, "Bring me the ephod."

So Abiathar brought it to him, and David inquired of the LORD: "Should I pursue these raiders? Will I overtake them?"

"Pursue them," the LORD replied, "for you will surely overtake them and rescue the captives."

So David and his six hundred men went to the Brook of Besor, where some stayed behind because two hundred men were too exhausted to cross the brook. But David and four hundred men continued in pursuit.

Now his men found an Egyptian in the field and brought him to David. They gave the man water to drink and food to eat — a piece of a fig cake and two clusters of raisins. So he ate and was revived, for he had not had any food or water for three days and three nights.

Then David asked him, "To whom do you belong, and where are you from?"

"I am an Egyptian," he replied, "the slave of an Amalekite. My master abandoned me three days ago when I fell ill. We raided the Negev of the Cherethites, the territory of Judah, and the Negev of Caleb, and we burned down Ziklag."

"Will you lead me to these raiders?" David asked.

And the man replied, "Swear to me by God that you will not kill me or deliver me into the hand of my master, and I will lead you to them."

So he led David down, and there were the Amalekites spread out over all the land, eating, drinking, and celebrating the great amount of plunder they had taken from the land of the Philistines and the land of Judah. And David struck them down from twilight until the evening of the next day. Not a man escaped, except four hundred young men who fled, riding off on camels.

So David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives. Nothing was missing, young or old, son or daughter, or any of the plunder the Amalekites had taken. David brought everything back. And he took all the flocks and herds, which his men drove ahead of the other livestock, calling out, "This is David's plunder!"

When David came to the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to follow him and who were left behind at the Brook of Besor, they came out to meet him and the troops with him. As David approached the men, he greeted them, but all the wicked and worthless men among those who had gone with David said, "Because they did not go with us, we will not share with them the plunder we recovered, except for each man's wife and children. They may take them and go."

But David said, "My brothers, you must not do this with what the LORD has given us. He has protected us and delivered into our hands the raiders who came against us. Who will listen to your proposal? The share of the one who went to battle will match the share of the one who stayed with the supplies. They will share alike."

And so it has been from that day forward. David established this statute and ordinance for Israel to this very day.

When David arrived in Ziklag, he sent some of the plunder to his friends, the elders of Judah, saying, "Here is a gift for you from the plunder of the LORD's enemies." He sent gifts to those in Bethel, Ramoth Negev, and Jattir; to those in Aroer, Siphmoth, and Eshtemoa; to those in Racal and in the cities of the Jerahmeelites and Kenites; to those in Hormah, Bor-ashan, and Athach; and to those in Hebron and in all the places where David and his men had roamed.

Now the Philistines fought against Israel, and the men of Israel fled before them, and many fell slain on Mount Gilboa.

The Philistines hotly pursued Saul and his sons, and they killed Saul's sons Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua. When the battle intensified against Saul, the archers overtook him and wounded him critically.

Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through with it, or these uncircumcised men will come and run me through and torture me!"

But his armor-bearer was terrified and refused to do it. So Saul took his own sword and fell on it.

When his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his own sword and died with him.

So Saul, his three sons, his armor-bearer, and all his men died together that same day.

When the Israelites along the valley and those on the other side of the Jordan saw that the army of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons had died, they abandoned their cities and ran away. So the Philistines came and occupied their cities.

The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. They cut off Saul's head, stripped off his armor, and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to proclaim the news in the temples of their idols and among their people. They put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths and hung his body on the wall of Beth-shan.

When the people of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, all their men of valor set out, journeyed all night, and retrieved the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth-shan.

When they arrived at Jabesh, they burned the bodies there. Then they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh, and they fasted seven days.

2 Samuel

Second Book of Samuel

After the death of Saul, David returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites and stayed in Ziklag two days. On the third day a man with torn clothes and dust on his head arrived from Saul's camp. When he came to David, he fell to the ground to pay him homage.

"Where have you come from?" David asked.

"I have escaped from the Israelite camp," he replied.

"What was the outcome?" David asked. "Please tell me."

"The troops fled from the battle," he replied. "Many of them fell and died. And Saul and his son Jonathan are also dead."

Then David asked the young man who had brought him the report, "How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?"

"I happened to be on Mount Gilboa," he replied, "and there was Saul, leaning on his spear, with the chariots and the cavalry closing in on him. When he turned around and saw me, he called out to me, and I answered, 'Here I am!'

'Who are you?' he asked.

So I told him, 'I am an Amalekite.'

Then he begged me, 'Stand over me and kill me, for agony has seized me, but my life still lingers.'

So I stood over him and killed him, because I knew that after he had fallen he could not survive. And I took the crown that was on his head and the band that was on his arm, and I have brought them here to my lord."

Then David took hold of his own clothes and tore them, and all the men who were with him did the same. They mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the people of the LORD and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.

And David inquired of the young man who had brought him the report, "Where are you from?"

"I am the son of a foreigner," he answered. "I am an Amalekite."

So David asked him, "Why were you not afraid to lift your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?" Then David summoned one of the young men and said, "Go, execute him!" So the young man struck him down, and he died. For David had said to the Amalekite, "Your blood be on your own head because your own mouth has testified against you, saying, 'I killed the LORD's anointed.'"

Then David took up this lament for Saul and his son Jonathan, and he ordered that the sons of Judah be taught the Song of the Bow. It is written in the Book of Jashar:

> "Your glory, O Israel, lies slain on your heights.
> How the mighty have fallen! Tell it not in Gath;
> proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest
> the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, and the
> daughters of the uncircumcised exult. O moun-
> tains of Gilboa, may you have no dew or rain,
> no fields yielding offerings of grain. For there
> the shield of the mighty was defiled, the shield
> of Saul, no longer anointed with oil. From the
> blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty,
> the bow of Jonathan did not retreat, and the
> sword of Saul did not return empty. Saul and
> Jonathan, beloved and delightful in life, were
> not divided in death. They were swifter than
> eagles; they were stronger than lions. O daugh-
> ters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in
> scarlet and luxury, who decked your garments
> with ornaments of gold. How the mighty have
> fallen in the thick of battle! Jonathan lies slain
> on your heights. I grieve for you, Jonathan, my
> brother. You were delightful to me; your love to
> me was extraordinary, surpassing the love of
> women. How the mighty have fallen, and the
> weapons of war have perished!"

Some time later, David inquired of the LORD, "Should I go up to one of the towns of Judah?"

"Go up," the LORD answered.

Then David asked, "Where should I go?"

"To Hebron," replied the LORD.

So David went there with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel. David also took the men who were with him, each with his household, and they settled in the towns near Hebron.

Then the men of Judah came to Hebron, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, "It was the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul."

So David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead to tell them, "The LORD bless you, because you showed this kindness to Saul your lord when you buried him. Now may the LORD show you loving devotion and faithfulness, and I will also show you the same favor because you have done this. Now then, be strong and courageous, for though Saul your lord is dead, the house of Judah has anointed me as their king."

Meanwhile, Abner son of Ner, the commander of Saul's army, took Saul's son Ish-bosheth, moved him to Mahanaim, and made him king over Gilead, Asher, Jezreel, Ephraim, and Benjamin— over all Israel.

Saul's son Ish-bosheth was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned for two years.

The house of Judah, however, followed David. And the length of time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

One day Abner son of Ner and the servants of Ish-bosheth son of Saul marched out from Mahanaim to Gibeon. So Joab son of Zeruiah and the servants of David marched out and met them by the pool of Gibeon. And the two groups took up positions on opposite sides of the pool.

Then Abner said to Joab, "Let us have the young men get up and compete before us."

"Let them get up," Joab replied.

So they got up and were counted off — twelve for Benjamin and Ish-bosheth son of Saul, and twelve for David. Then each man grabbed his opponent by the head and thrust his sword into his opponent's side, and

they all fell together. So this place, which is in Gibeon, is called Helkath-hazzurim.

The battle that day was intense, and Abner and the men of Israel were defeated by the servants of David.

The three sons of Zeruiah were there: Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Now Asahel was fleet of foot like a wild gazelle, and he chased Abner, not turning to the right or to the left in his pursuit. And Abner glanced back and said, "Is that you, Asahel?"

"It is," Asahel replied.

So Abner told him, "Turn to your right or to your left, seize one of the young men, and take his equipment for yourself."

But Asahel would not stop chasing him.

Once again, Abner warned Asahel, "Stop chasing me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How could I show my face to your brother Joab?"

But Asahel refused to turn away. So Abner thrust the butt of his spear into his stomach, and it came out his back, and he fell dead on the spot. And every man paused when he came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died. But Joab and Abishai pursued Abner. By sunset, they had gone as far as the hill of Ammah opposite Giah on the way to the wilderness of Gibeon.

The Benjamites rallied to Abner, formed a single unit, and took their stand atop a hill. Then Abner called out to Joab: "Must the sword devour forever? Do you not realize that this will only end in bitterness? How long before you tell the troops to stop pursuing their brothers?"

"As surely as God lives," Joab replied, "if you had not spoken up, the troops would have continued pursuing their brothers until morning."

So Joab blew the ram's horn, and all the troops stopped; they no longer pursued Israel or continued to fight. And all that night Abner and his men marched through the Arabah. They crossed the Jordan, marched all morning, and arrived at Mahanaim.

When Joab returned from pursuing Abner, he gathered all the troops.

In addition to Asahel, nineteen of David's servants were missing, but they had struck down 360 Benjamites who were with Abner. And they took Asahel and buried him in his father's tomb in Bethlehem. Then Joab and his men marched all night and reached Hebron at daybreak.

Now the war between the house of Saul and the house of David was protracted. And David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.

And sons were born to David in Hebron:
His firstborn was Amnon, by Ahinoam of Jezreel;
his second was Chileab, by Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel;
his third was Absalom, the son of Maacah daughter of King Talmai of Geshur;
his fourth was Adonijah, the son of Haggith;
his fifth was Shephatiah, the son of Abital;
and his sixth was Ithream, by David's wife Eglah.
These sons were born to David in Hebron.

During the war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner had continued to strengthen his position in the house of Saul. Now Saul had a concubine named Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah. So Ish-bosheth questioned Abner, "Why did you sleep with my father's concubine?"

Abner was furious over Ish-bosheth's accusation. "Am I the head of a dog that belongs to Judah?" he asked. "All this time I have been loyal to the house of your father Saul, to his brothers, and to his friends. I have not delivered you into the hand of David, but now you accuse me of wrongdoing with this woman! May God punish Abner, and ever so severely, if I do not do for David what the LORD has sworn to him: to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and to establish the throne of David over Israel and Judah, from Dan to Beersheba."

And for fear of Abner, Ish-bosheth did not dare to say another word to him.

Then Abner sent messengers on his behalf to say to David, "To whom does the land belong? Make your covenant with me, and surely my hand will be with you to bring all Israel over to you."

"Good," replied David, "I will make a covenant with you. But there is one thing I require of you: Do not appear before me unless you bring Saul's daughter Michal when you come to see me."

Then David sent messengers to say to Ish-bosheth son of Saul, "Give me back my wife, Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for a hundred Philistine foreskins."

So Ish-bosheth sent and took Michal from her husband Paltiel son of Laish. Her husband followed her, weeping all the way to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, "Go back." So he returned home.

Now Abner conferred with the elders of Israel and said, "In the past you sought David as your king. Now take action, because the LORD has said to David, 'Through My servant David I will save My people Israel from the hands of the Philistines and of all their enemies.'"

Abner also spoke to the Benjamites. Then he went to Hebron to tell David all that seemed good to Israel and to the whole house of Benjamin. When Abner and twenty of his men came to David at Hebron, David held a feast for them.

Then Abner said to David, "Let me go at once, and I will gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may rule over all that your heart desires."

So David dismissed Abner, and he went in peace.

Just then David's soldiers and Joab returned from a raid, bringing with them a great plunder. But Abner was not with David in Hebron, because David had sent him on his way in peace. When Joab and all his troops arrived, he was informed, "Abner son of Ner came to see the king, who sent him on his way in peace."

So Joab went to the king and said, "What have you done? Look, Abner came to you. Why did you dismiss him? Now he is getting away! Surely you realize that Abner son of Ner came to deceive you and to track your movements and all that you are doing."

As soon as Joab had left David, he sent messengers after Abner, who brought him back from the well of Sirah. But David was unaware of it.

When Abner returned to Hebron, Joab pulled him aside into the gateway, as if to speak to him privately, and there Joab stabbed him in the stomach. So Abner died on account of the blood of Joab's brother Asahel.

Afterward, David heard about this and said, “I and my kingdom are forever guiltless before the LORD concerning the blood of Abner son of Ner. May it whirl over the head of Joab and over the entire house of his father, and may the house of Joab never be without one having a discharge or skin disease, or one who leans on a staff or falls by the sword or lacks food.”

(Joab and his brother Abishai murdered Abner because he had killed their brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon.)

Then David ordered Joab and all the people with him, “Tear your clothes, put on sackcloth, and mourn before Abner.” And King David himself walked behind the funeral bier.

When they buried Abner in Hebron, the king wept aloud at Abner’s tomb, and all the people wept. And the king sang this lament for Abner:

> “Should Abner die the death of a fool? Your hands were not bound, your feet were not fettered. As a man falls before the wicked, so also you fell.”

And all the people wept over him even more.

Then all the people came and urged David to eat something while it was still day, but David took an oath, saying, “May God punish me, and ever so severely, if I taste bread or anything else before the sun sets!”

All the people took note and were pleased. In fact, everything the king did pleased them. So on that day all the troops and all Israel were convinced that the king had no part in the murder of Abner son of Ner.

Then the king said to his servants, “Do you not realize that a great prince has fallen today in Israel? And I am weak this day, though anointed as king, and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too fierce for me. May the LORD repay the evildoer according to his evil!”

Now when Ish-bosheth son of Saul heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost courage, and all Israel was dismayed. Saul’s son had two men who were leaders of raiding parties. One was named Baanah and the other Rechab; they were sons of Rimmon the Beerothite of the tribe of Benjamin— Beeroth is considered part of Benjamin, because the Beerothites fled to Gittaim and have lived there as foreigners to this day.

And Jonathan son of Saul had a son who was lame in his feet. He was five years old when the report about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. His nurse picked him up and fled, but as she was hurrying to escape, he fell and became lame. His name was Mephibosheth.

Now Rechab and Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, set out and arrived at the house of Ish-bosheth in the heat of the day, while the king was taking his midday nap. They entered the interior of the house as if to get some wheat, and they stabbed him in the stomach. Then Rechab and his brother Baanah slipped away.

They had entered the house while Ish-bosheth was lying on his bed, and having stabbed and killed him, they beheaded him, took his head, and traveled all night by way of the Arabah. They brought the head of Ish-bosheth to David at Hebron and said to the king, “Here is the head of Ish-bosheth son of Saul, your enemy who sought your life. Today the LORD has granted vengeance to my lord the king against Saul and his offspring.”

But David answered Rechab and his brother Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, “As surely as the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life from all distress, when someone told me, ‘Look, Saul is dead,’ and thought he was a bearer of good news, I seized him and put him to death at Ziklag. That was his reward for his news! How much more, when wicked men kill a righteous man in his own house and on his own bed, shall I not now require his blood from your hands and remove you from the earth!”

So David commanded his young men, and they killed Rechab and Baanah. They cut off their hands and feet and hung their bodies by the pool in Hebron, but they took the head of Ish-bosheth and buried it in Abner’s tomb in Hebron.

Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, “Here we are, your own flesh and blood. Even in times past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and brought them back. And to you the LORD said, ‘You will shepherd My people Israel, and you will be ruler over them.’”

So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, where King David made with them a covenant before the LORD. And they anointed him king over Israel.

David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah.

Now the king and his men marched to Jerusalem against the Jebusites who inhabited the land. The Jebusites said to David: “You will never get in here. Even the blind and lame can repel you.” For they thought, “David cannot get in here.”

Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion (that is, the City of David). On that day he said, “Whoever attacks the Jebusites must use the water shaft to reach the lame and blind who are despised by David.” That is why it is said, “The blind and the lame will never enter the palace.”

So David took up residence in the fortress and called it the City of David. He built it up all the way around, from the supporting terraces inward. And David became greater and greater, for the LORD God of Hosts was with him.

Now Hiram king of Tyre sent envoys to David, along with cedar logs, carpenters, and stonemasons, and they built a palace for David.

And David realized that the LORD had established him as king over Israel and had exalted his kingdom for the sake of His people Israel.

After he had arrived from Hebron, David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, and more sons and daughters were born to him. These are the names of the children born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, they all went in search of him; but David learned of this and went down to the stronghold.

Now the Philistines had come and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim. So David inquired of the LORD, “Should I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand?”

“Go up,” replied the LORD, “for I will surely deliver the Philistines into your hand.”

So David went to Baal-perazim, where he defeated the Philistines and said, “Like a bursting flood, the LORD has burst out against my enemies before me.” So he called that place Baal-perazim. There the Philistines abandoned their idols, and David and his men carried them away.

Once again the Philistines came up and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim. So David inquired of the LORD, who answered, “Do not march straight up, but circle around behind them and attack them in front of the balsam trees. As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, move quickly, because this will mean that the LORD has gone out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines.”

So David did as the LORD had commanded him, and he struck down the Philistines all the way from Gibeon to Gezer.

David again assembled the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand in all. And he and all his troops set out for Baale of Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name— the name of the LORD of Hosts, who is enthroned between the cherubim that are on it.

They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart, bringing with it the ark of God. And Ahio was walking in front of the ark.

David and all the house of Israel were celebrating before the LORD with all kinds of wood instruments, harps, stringed instruments, tambourines, sistrums, and cymbals.

When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen had stumbled. And the anger of the LORD burned against Uzzah, and God struck him down on the spot for his irreverence, and he died there beside the ark of God.

Then David became angry because the LORD had burst forth against Uzzah. So he named that place Perez-uzzah, as it is called to this day.

That day David feared the LORD and asked, “How can the ark of the LORD ever come to me?” So he was unwilling to move the ark of the LORD to the City of David; instead, he took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. Thus the ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite for three months, and the LORD blessed him and all his household.

Now it was reported to King David, “The LORD has blessed the house of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God.”

So David went and had the ark of God brought up from the house of Obed-edom into the City of David with rejoicing. When those carrying the ark of the LORD had advanced six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fattened calf.

And David, wearing a linen ephod, danced with all his might before the LORD, while he and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and the sounding of the ram’s horn.

As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Saul’s daughter Michal looked down from a window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, and she despised him in her heart.

So they brought the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it. Then David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.

When David had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of Hosts. Then he distributed to every man and woman among the multitude of Israel a loaf of bread, a date cake, and a raisin cake. And all the people departed, each to his own home.

When David returned home to bless his own household, Saul’s daughter Michal came out to meet him. “How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today!” she said. “He has uncovered himself today in the sight of the maidservants of his subjects, like a vulgar person would do.”

But David said to Michal, “I was dancing before the LORD, who chose me over your father and all his house when He appointed me ruler over the LORD’s people Israel. I will celebrate before the LORD, and I will humiliate and humble myself even more than this. Yet I will be honored by the maidservants of whom you have spoken.”

And Michal the daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.

After the king had settled into his palace and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, he said to Nathan the prophet, “Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent.”

And Nathan replied to the king, “Go and do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.”

But that night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, “Go and tell My servant David that this is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build for Me a house to dwell in? For I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt until this day, but I have moved about with a tent as My dwelling. In all My journeys with all the Israelites, have I ever asked any of the leaders I appointed to shepherd My people Israel, ‘Why haven’t you built Me a house of cedar?’

Now then, you are to tell My servant David that this is what the LORD of Hosts says: I took you from the pasture, from following the flock, to be the ruler over My people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make for you a name like that of the greatest in the land.

And I will provide a place for My people Israel and will plant them so that they may dwell in a place of their own and be disturbed no more. No longer will the sons of wickedness oppress them as they did at the beginning and have done since the day I appointed judges over My people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies.

The LORD declares to you that He Himself will establish a house for you. And when your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He will build a house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he will be My son. When he does wrong, I will discipline him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men.

But My loving devotion will never be removed from him as I removed it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and kingdom will endure forever before Me, and your throne will be established forever."

So Nathan relayed to David all the words of this entire revelation.

Then King David went in, sat before the LORD, and said, "Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that You have brought me this far? And as if this was a small thing in Your eyes, O Lord GOD, You have also spoken about the future of the house of Your servant. Is this Your custom with man, O Lord GOD? What more can David say to You? For You know Your servant, O Lord GOD. For the sake of Your word and according to Your own heart, You have accomplished this great thing and revealed it to Your servant.

How great You are, O Lord GOD! For there is none like You, and there is no God but You, according to everything we have heard with our own ears. And who is like Your people Israel — the one nation on earth whom God went out to redeem as a people for Himself and to make a name for Himself? You performed great and awesome wonders by driving out nations and their gods from before Your people, whom You redeemed for Yourself from Egypt. For You have established Your people Israel as Your very own forever, and You, O LORD, have become their God.

And now, O LORD God, confirm forever the word You have spoken concerning Your servant and his house. Do as You have promised, so that Your name will be magnified forever when it is said, 'The LORD of Hosts is God over Israel.' And the house of Your servant David will be established before You. For You, O LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, have revealed this to Your servant when You said, 'I will build a house for you.' Therefore Your servant has found the courage to offer this prayer to You.

And now, O Lord GOD, You are God! Your words are true, and You have promised this goodness to Your servant. Now therefore, may it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue forever before You. For You, O Lord GOD, have spoken, and with Your blessing the house of Your servant will be blessed forever."

Some time later, David defeated the Philistines, subdued them, and took Metheg-ammah from the hand of the Philistines.

David also defeated the Moabites, made them lie down on the ground, and measured them off with a cord. He measured off with two lengths those to be put to death, and with one length those to be spared. So the Moabites became subject to David and brought him tribute.

David also defeated Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah, who had marched out to restore his dominion along the Euphrates River. David captured from him a thousand chariots, seven thousand charioteers, and twenty thousand foot soldiers, and he hamstrung all the horses except a hundred he kept for the chariots.

When the Arameans of Damascus came to help King Hadadezer of Zobah, David struck down twenty-two thousand of their men. Then he placed garrisons in Aram of Damascus, and the Arameans became subject to David and brought him tribute. So the LORD made David victorious wherever he went.

And David took the gold shields that belonged to the officers of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem. And from Betah and Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, King David took a large amount of bronze.

When King Toi of Hamath heard that David had defeated the entire army of Hadadezer, he sent his son Joram to greet King David and bless him for fighting and defeating Hadadezer, who had been at war with Toi. Joram brought with him articles of silver and gold and bronze, and King David dedicated these to the LORD, along with the silver and gold he had dedicated from all the nations he had subdued— from Edom and Moab, from the Ammonites and Philistines and Amalekites, and from the spoil of Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah.

And David made a name for himself when he returned from striking down eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt. He placed garrisons throughout Edom, and all the Edomites were subject to David. So the LORD made David victorious wherever he went.

Thus David reigned over all Israel and administered justice and righteousness for all his people:

Joab son of Zeruiah was over the army;
Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the recorder;
Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were priests;
Seraiah was the scribe;
Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and Pelethites;
and David's sons were priestly leaders.

Then David asked, "Is there anyone left from the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for the sake of Jonathan?"

And there was a servant of the house of Saul named Ziba. They summoned him to David, and the king inquired, "Are you Ziba?"

"I am your servant," he replied.

So the king asked, "Is there anyone left of the house of Saul to whom I can show the kindness of God?"

Ziba answered, "There is still Jonathan's son, who is lame in both feet."

"Where is he?" replied the king.

And Ziba said, "Indeed, he is in Lo-debar at the house of Machir son of Ammiel."

So King David had him brought from the house of Machir son of Ammiel in Lo-debar. And when Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he fell facedown in reverence.

Then David said, "Mephibosheth!"

"I am your servant," he replied.

"Do not be afraid," said David, "for surely I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table."

Mephibosheth bowed down and said, "What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog like me?"

Then the king summoned Saul's servant Ziba and said to him, "I have given to your master's grandson all that belonged to Saul and to all his house. You and your sons and servants are to work the ground for him and bring in the harvest, so that your master's grandson may have food to eat. But Mephibosheth, your master's grandson, is always to eat at my table."

Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. And Ziba said to the king, "Your servant will do all that my lord the king has commanded."

So Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's own sons. And Mephibosheth had a young son named Mica, and all who dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants of Mephibosheth. So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, because he always ate at the king's table, and he was lame in both feet.

Some time later, the king of the Ammonites died and was succeeded by his son Hanun. And David said, "I will show kindness to Hanun son of Nahash, just as his father showed kindness to me."

So David sent some of his servants to console Hanun concerning his father. But when they arrived in the land of the Ammonites, the princes of the Ammonites said to Hanun their lord, "Just because David has sent you comforters, do you really believe he is showing respect for your father? Has not David instead sent his servants to explore the city, spy it out, and overthrow it?"

So Hanun took David's servants, shaved off half of each man's beard, cut off their garments at the hips, and sent them away.

When this was reported to David, he sent messengers to meet the men, since they had been thoroughly humiliated. The king told them, "Stay in Jericho until your beards have grown back, and then return."

When the Ammonites realized that they had become a stench to David, they hired twenty thousand Aramean foot soldiers from Beth-rehob and Zoba, as well as a thousand men from the king of Maacah and twelve thousand men from Tob.

On hearing this, David sent Joab and the entire army of mighty men. The Ammonites marched out and arrayed themselves for battle at the entrance of the city gate, while the Arameans of Zobah and Rehob and the men of Tob and Maacah were by themselves in the open country.

When Joab saw the battle lines before him and behind him, he selected some of the best men of Israel and arrayed them against the Arameans. And he placed the rest of the troops under the command of his brother Abishai, who arrayed them against the Ammonites.

"If the Arameans are too strong for me," said Joab, "then you will come to my rescue. And if the Ammonites are too strong for you, then I will come to your rescue. Be strong and let us fight bravely for our people and for the cities of our God. May the LORD do what is good in His sight."

So Joab and his troops advanced to fight the Arameans, who fled before him. When the Ammonites saw that the Arameans had fled, they too fled before Abishai, and they entered the city. So Joab returned from fighting against the Ammonites and came to Jerusalem.

When the Arameans saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they regrouped. Hadadezer sent messengers to bring more Arameans from beyond the Euphrates, and they came to Helam with Shobach the commander of Hadadezer's army leading them.

When this was reported to David, he gathered all Israel, crossed the Jordan, and went to Helam. Then the Arameans arrayed themselves against David and fought against him. But the Arameans fled before Israel, and David killed seven hundred charioteers and forty thousand foot soldiers. He also struck down Shobach the commander of their army, who died there.

When all the kings who were subject to Hadadezer saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and became subject to them. So the Arameans were afraid to help the Ammonites anymore.

In the spring, at the time when kings march out to war, David sent out Joab and his servants with the whole army of Israel. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah, but David remained in Jerusalem.

One evening David got up from his bed and strolled around on the roof of the palace. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing— a very beautiful woman. So David sent and inquired about the woman, and he was told, "This is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite."

Then David sent messengers to get her, and when she came to him, he slept with her. (Now she had just purified herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned home. And the woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

At this, David sent orders to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." So Joab sent him to David.

When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the troops were doing and how the war was going. Then he said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet."

So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king followed him. But Uriah slept at the door of the palace with all his master's servants; he did not go down to his house.

And David was told, "Uriah did not go home."

"Haven't you just arrived from a journey?" David asked Uriah. "Why didn't you go home?"

Uriah answered, "The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my master Joab and his soldiers are camped in the open field. How can I go to my house to eat and drink and sleep with my wife? As surely as you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing!"

"Stay here one more day," David said to Uriah, "and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day and the next.

Then David invited Uriah to eat and drink with him, and he got Uriah drunk. And in the evening Uriah

went out to lie down on his cot with his master's servants, but he did not go home.

The next morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. In the letter he wrote: "Put Uriah at the front of the fiercest battle; then withdraw from him, so that he may be struck down and killed."

So as Joab besieged the city, he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew the strongest enemy soldiers were. And when the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of David's servants fell, and Uriah the Hittite also died.

Joab sent to David a full account of the battle and instructed the messenger, "When you have finished giving the king a full account of the battle, if the king's anger flares, he may ask you, 'Why did you get so close to the city to fight? Did you not realize they would shoot from atop the wall? Who struck Abimelech son of Jerubbesheth? Was it not a woman who dropped an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you get so close to the wall?'

If he asks you this, then you are to say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead as well.'"

So the messenger set out and reported to David all that Joab had sent him to say. The messenger said to David, "The men overpowered us and came out against us in the field, but we drove them back to the entrance of the gate. Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall, and some of the king's servants were killed. And your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead as well."

Then David told the messenger, "Say this to Joab: 'Do not let this matter upset you, for the sword devours one as well as another. Strengthen your attack against the city and demolish it.' Encourage him with these words."

When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. And when the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son.

But the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the LORD.

Then the LORD sent Nathan to David, and when he arrived, he said, "There were two men in a certain city, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a great number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one small ewe lamb that he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food and drank from his cup; it slept in his arms and was like a daughter to him.

Now a traveler came to the rich man, who refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for his guest."

David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan: "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die! Because he has done this thing and has shown no pity, he must pay for the lamb four times over."

Then Nathan said to David, "You are that man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master's house to you and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah, and if that was not enough, I would have given you even more.

Why then have you despised the command of the LORD by doing evil in His sight? You put Uriah the Hittite to the sword and took his wife as your own. You have slain him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.'

This is what the LORD says: 'I will raise up adversity against you from your own house. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to another, and he will lie with them in broad daylight. You have acted in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'"

Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."

"The LORD has taken away your sin," Nathan replied. "You will not die. Nevertheless, because by this deed you have shown utter contempt for the word of the LORD, the son born to you will surely die."

After Nathan had gone home, the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and he became ill. David pleaded with God for the boy. He fasted and went into his house and spent the night lying in sackcloth on the ground. The elders of his household stood beside him to help him up from the ground, but he was unwilling and would not eat anything with them.

On the seventh day the child died. But David's servants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, "Look, while the child was alive, we spoke to him, and he would not listen to us. So how can we tell him the child is dead? He may even harm himself."

When David saw that his servants were whispering to one another, he perceived that the child was dead. So he asked his servants, "Is the child dead?"

"He is dead," they replied.

Then David got up from the ground, washed and anointed himself, changed his clothes, and went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they set food before him, and he ate.

"What is this you have done?" his servants asked. "While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but when he died, you got up and ate."

David answered, "While the child was alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, 'Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let him live.' But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me."

Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and lay with her. So she gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon.

Now the LORD loved the child and sent word through Nathan the prophet to name him Jedidiah because the LORD loved him.

Meanwhile, Joab fought against Rabbah of the Ammonites and captured the royal fortress. Then Joab sent messengers to David to say, "I have fought against Rabbah and have captured the water supply of the city. Now, therefore, assemble the rest of the troops, lay siege to the city, and capture it. Otherwise I will capture the city, and it will be named after me."

So David assembled all the troops and went to Rabbah; and he fought against it and captured it. Then he took the crown from the head of their king. It weighed a talent of gold and was set with precious stones, and it was placed on David's head. And David took a great amount of plunder from the city.

David brought out the people who were there and put them to work with saws, iron picks, and axes, and he made them work at the brick kilns. He did the same to all the Ammonite cities. Then David and all his troops returned to Jerusalem.

After some time, David's son Amnon fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of David's son Absalom. Amnon was sick with frustration over his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed implausible for him to do anything to her.

Now Amnon had a friend named Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shimeah. Jonadab was a very shrewd man, and he asked Amnon, "Why are you, the son of the king, so depressed morning after morning? Won't you tell me?"

Amnon replied, "I am in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister."

Jonadab told him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend you are ill. When your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and give me something to eat. Let her prepare it in my sight so I may watch her and eat it from her hand.'"

So Amnon lay down and feigned illness. When the king came to see him, Amnon said, "Please let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, so that I may eat from her hand."

Then David sent word to Tamar at the palace: "Please go to the house of Amnon your brother and prepare a meal for him."

So Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon, who was lying down. She took some dough, kneaded it, made cakes in his sight, and baked them. Then she brought the pan and set it down before him, but he refused to eat. "Send everyone away!" said Amnon. And everyone went out.

Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the bedroom, so that I may eat it from your hand."

Tamar took the cakes she had made and went to her brother Amnon's bedroom. And when she had brought them to him to eat, he took hold of her and said, "Come lie with me, my sister!"

"No, my brother!" she cried. "Do not violate me, for such a thing should never be done in Israel. Do not do this disgraceful thing! Where could I ever take my shame? And you would be like one of the fools in Israel! Please speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you."

But Amnon refused to listen to her, and being stronger, he violated her and lay with her.

Then Amnon hated Tamar with such intensity that his hatred was greater than the love he previously had. "Get up!" he said to her. "Be gone!"

"No," she replied, "sending me away is worse than this great wrong you have already done to me!"

But he refused to listen to her. Instead, he called to his attendant and said, "Throw this woman out and bolt the door behind her!"

So Amnon's attendant threw her out and bolted the door behind her. Now Tamar was wearing a robe of many colors, because this is what the king's virgin daughters wore. And Tamar put ashes on her head and tore her robe. And putting her hand on her head, she went away crying aloud.

Her brother Absalom said to her, "Has your brother Amnon been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister. He is your brother. Do not take this thing to heart."

So Tamar lived as a desolate woman in the house of her brother Absalom.

When King David heard all this, he was furious. And Absalom never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad, because he hated Amnon for violating his sister Tamar.

Two years later, when Absalom's sheepshearers were at Baal-hazor near Ephraim, he invited all the sons of the king. And he went to the king and said, "Your servant has just hired shearers. Will the king and his servants please come with me?"

"No, my son," the king replied, "we should not all go, or we would be a burden to you." Although Absalom urged him, he was not willing to go, but gave him his blessing.

"If not," said Absalom, "please let my brother Amnon go with us."

"Why should he go with you?" the king asked.

But Absalom urged him, so the king sent Amnon and the rest of his sons.

Now Absalom had ordered his young men, "Watch Amnon until his heart is merry with wine, and when I order you to strike Amnon down, you are to kill him. Do not be afraid. Have I not commanded you? Be courageous and valiant!"

So Absalom's young men did to Amnon just as Absalom had ordered. Then all the other sons of the king got up, and each one fled on his mule.

While they were on the way, a report reached David: "Absalom has struck down all the sons of the king; not one of them is left!"

Then the king stood up, tore his clothes, and lay down on the ground. And all his servants stood by with their clothes torn.

But Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shimeah, spoke up: "My lord must not think they have killed all the sons of the king, for only Amnon is dead. In fact, Absalom has planned this since the day Amnon violated his sister Tamar. So now, my lord the king, do not take to heart the report that all the sons of the king are dead. Only Amnon is dead."

Meanwhile, Absalom had fled. When the young man standing watch looked up, he saw many people coming down the road west of him, along the side of the hill. And the watchman went and reported to the king, "I see men coming from the direction of Horonaim, along the side of the hill."

So Jonadab said to the king, "Look, the sons of the king have arrived! It is just as your servant said."

And as he finished speaking, the sons of the king came in, wailing loudly. Then the king and all his servants also wept very bitterly.

Now Absalom fled and went to Talmai son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur. But David mourned for his son every day.

After Absalom had fled and gone to Geshur, he stayed there three years. And King David longed to go to Absalom, for he had been consoled over Amnon's death.

Now Joab son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart longed for Absalom. So Joab sent to Tekoa to bring a wise woman from there. He told her, "Please pretend to be a mourner; put on clothes for mourning and do not anoint yourself with oil. Act like a woman who has mourned for the dead a long time. Then go to the king and speak these words to him." And Joab put the words in her mouth.

When the woman from Tekoa went to the king, she fell facedown in homage and said, "Help me, O king!"

"What troubles you?" the king asked her.

"Indeed," she said, "I am a widow, for my husband is dead. And your maidservant had two sons who were fighting in the field with no one to separate them, and one struck the other and killed him. Now the whole clan has risen up against your maidservant and said, 'Hand over the one who struck down his brother, that we may put him to death for the life of the brother whom he killed. Then we will cut off the heir as well!' So they would extinguish my one remaining ember by not preserving my husband's name or posterity on the earth."

"Go home," the king said to the woman, "and I will give orders on your behalf."

But the woman of Tekoa said to the king, "My lord the king, may any blame be on me and on my father's house, and may the king and his throne be guiltless."

"If anyone speaks to you," said the king, "bring him to me, and he will not trouble you again!"

"Please," she replied, "may the king invoke the LORD your God to prevent the avenger of blood from increasing the devastation, so that my son may not be destroyed!"

"As surely as the LORD lives," he vowed, "not a hair of your son's head will fall to the ground."

Then the woman said, "Please, may your servant speak a word to my lord the king?"

"Speak," he replied.

The woman asked, "Why have you devised a thing like this against the people of God? When the king says this, does he not convict himself, since he has not brought back his own banished son? For we will surely die and be like water poured out on the ground, which cannot be recovered. Yet God does not take away a life, but He devises ways that the banished one may not be cast out from Him.

Now therefore, I have come to present this matter to my lord the king because the people have made me afraid. Your servant thought, 'I will speak to the king. Perhaps he will grant the request of his maidservant. For the king will hear and deliver his maidservant from the hand of the man who would cut off both me and my son from God's inheritance.'

And now your servant says, 'May the word of my lord the king bring me rest, for my lord the king is able to discern good and evil, just like the angel of God. May the LORD your God be with you.'"

Then the king said to the woman, "I am going to ask you something; do not conceal it from me!"

"Let my lord the king speak," she replied.

So the king asked, "Is the hand of Joab behind all this?"

The woman answered, "As surely as you live, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right or to the left from anything that my lord the king says. Yes, your servant Joab is the one who gave me orders; he told your maidservant exactly what to say. Joab your servant has done this to bring about this change of affairs, but my lord has wisdom like the wisdom of the angel of God, to know everything that happens in the land."

Then the king said to Joab, "I hereby grant this request. Go, bring back the young man Absalom."

Joab fell facedown in homage and blessed the king. "Today," said Joab, "your servant knows that he has found favor in your eyes, my lord the king, because the king has granted his request."

So Joab got up, went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. But the king added, "He may return to his house, but he must not see my face." So Absalom returned to his own house, but he did not see the face of the king.

Now there was not a man in all Israel as handsome and highly praised as Absalom. From the sole of his foot to the top of his head, he did not have a single flaw. And when he cut the hair of his head— he shaved it every year because his hair got so heavy— he would weigh it out to be two hundred shekels, according to the royal standard.

Three sons were born to Absalom, and a daughter named Tamar, who was a beautiful woman.

Now Absalom lived in Jerusalem two years without seeing the face of the king. Then he sent for Joab to send him to the king, but Joab refused to come to him.

So Absalom sent a second time, but Joab still would not come.

Then Absalom said to his servants, "Look, Joab's field is next to mine, and he has barley there. Go and set it on fire!"

And Absalom's servants set the field on fire.

Then Joab came to Absalom's house and demanded, "Why did your servants set my field on fire?"

"Look," said Absalom, "I sent for you and said, 'Come here. I want to send you to the king to ask: Why have I come back from Geshur? It would be better for me if I were still there.' So now, let me see the king's face, and if there is iniquity in me, let him kill me."

So Joab went and told the king, and David summoned Absalom, who came to him and bowed facedown before him. Then the king kissed Absalom.

Some time later, Absalom provided for himself a chariot with horses and fifty men to run ahead of him. He would get up early and stand beside the road leading to the city gate.

Whenever anyone had a grievance to bring before the king for a decision, Absalom would call out and ask, "What city are you from?" And if he replied, "Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel," Absalom would say, "Look, your claims are good and right, but the king has no deputy to hear you."

And he would add, "If only someone would appoint me judge in the land, then everyone with a grievance or dispute could come to me, and I would give him justice."

Also, when anyone approached to bow down to him, Absalom would reach out his hand, take hold of

him, and kiss him. Absalom did this to all the Israelites who came to the king for justice. In this way he stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

After four years had passed, Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go to Hebron to fulfill a vow I have made to the LORD. For your servant made a vow while dwelling in Geshur of Aram, saying: 'If indeed the LORD brings me back to Jerusalem, I will worship the LORD in Hebron.'"

"Go in peace," said the king. So Absalom got up and went to Hebron.

Then Absalom sent spies throughout the tribes of Israel with this message: "When you hear the sound of the horn, you are to say, 'Absalom reigns in Hebron!'"

Two hundred men from Jerusalem accompanied Absalom. They had been invited as guests and they went along innocently, for they knew nothing about the matter. While Absalom was offering the sacrifices, he sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, to come from his hometown of Giloh.

So the conspiracy gained strength, and Absalom's following kept increasing.

Then a messenger came to David and reported, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom."

And David said to all the servants with him in Jerusalem, "Arise and let us flee, or we will not escape from Absalom! We must leave quickly, or he will soon overtake us, heap disaster on us, and put the city to the sword."

The king's servants replied, "Whatever our lord the king decides, we are your servants."

Then the king set out, and his entire household followed him. But he left behind ten concubines to take care of the palace.

So the king set out with all the people following him. He stopped at the last house, and all his servants marched past him — all the Cherethites and Pelethites, and six hundred Gittites who had followed him from Gath.

Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why should you also go with us? Go back and stay with the new king, since you are both a foreigner and an exile from your homeland. In fact, you arrived only yesterday; should I make you wander around with us today while I do not know where I am going? Go back and take your brothers with you. May the LORD show you loving devotion and faithfulness."

But Ittai answered the king, "As surely as the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether it means life or death, there will your servant be!"

"March on then," said David to Ittai. So Ittai the Gittite marched past with all his men and all the little ones who were with him.

Everyone in the countryside was weeping loudly as all the people passed by. And as the king crossed the Kidron Valley, all the people also passed toward the way of the wilderness.

Zadok was also there, and all the Levites with him were carrying the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God, and Abiathar offered sacrifices until all the people had passed out of the city.

Then the king said to Zadok, "Return the ark of God to the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me back and let me see both it and His dwelling place again. But if He should say, 'I do not delight in you,' then here I am; let Him do to me whatever seems good to Him."

The king also said to Zadok the priest, "Are you not a seer? Return to the city in peace— you with your son Ahimaaz, and Abiathar with his son Jonathan. See, I will wait at the fords of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me."

So Zadok and Abiathar returned the ark of God to Jerusalem and stayed there.

But David continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went up. His head was covered, and he was walking barefoot. And all the people with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went.

Now someone told David: "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom."

So David pleaded, "O LORD, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!"

When David came to the summit, where he used to worship God, Hushai the Archite was there to meet him with his robe torn and dust on his head.

David said to him, "If you go on with me, you will be a burden to me. But you can thwart the counsel of Ahithophel for me if you return to the city and say to Absalom: 'I will be your servant, my king; in the past I was your father's servant, but now I will be your servant.'

Will not Zadok and Abiathar the priests be there with you? Report to them everything you hear from the king's palace. Indeed, their two sons, Ahimaaz son of Zadok and Jonathan son of Abiathar, are there with them. Send them to me with everything you hear."

So David's friend Hushai arrived in Jerusalem just as Absalom was entering the city.

When David had gone a little beyond the summit, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth was there to meet him. He had a pair of saddled donkeys loaded with two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred clusters of raisins, a hundred summer fruits, and a skin of wine.

"Why do you have these?" asked the king.

Ziba replied, "The donkeys are for the king's household to ride, the bread and summer fruit are for the young men to eat, and the wine is to refresh those who become exhausted in the wilderness."

"Where is your master's grandson?" asked the king.

And Ziba answered, "Indeed, he is staying in Jerusalem, for he has said, 'Today, the house of Israel will restore to me the kingdom of my grandfather.'"

So the king said to Ziba, "All that belongs to Mephibosheth is now yours!"

"I humbly bow before you," said Ziba. "May I find favor in your eyes, my lord the king!"

As King David approached Bahurim, a man from the family of the house of Saul was just coming out. His name was Shimei son of Gera, and as he approached, he kept yelling out curses. He threw stones at David and at all the servants of the king, though the troops and all the mighty men were on David's right and left.

And as he yelled curses, Shimei said, "Get out, get out, you worthless man of bloodshed! The LORD has paid you back for all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned, and the LORD has delivered the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom.

See, you have come to ruin because you are a man of bloodshed!"

Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and cut off his head!"

But the king replied, "What have I to do with you, O sons of Zeruiah? If he curses me because the LORD told him, 'Curse David,' who can ask, 'Why did you do this?'"

Then David said to Abishai and to all his servants, "Behold, my own son, my own flesh and blood, seeks my life. How much more, then, this Benjamite! Leave him alone and let him curse me, for the LORD has told him so. Perhaps the LORD will see my affliction and repay me with good for the cursing I receive today."

So David and his men proceeded along the road as Shimei went along the ridge of the hill opposite him. As Shimei went, he yelled curses, threw stones, and flung dust at David. Finally, the king and all the people with him arrived, exhausted. And there he refreshed himself.

Then Absalom and all the men of Israel came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel was with him. And David's friend Hushai the Archite went to Absalom and said to him, "Long live the king! Long live the king!"

"Is this the loyalty you show your friend?" Absalom replied. "Why did you not go with your friend?"

"Not at all," Hushai answered. "For the one chosen by the LORD, by this people, and by all the men of Israel — his I will be, and with him I will remain. Furthermore, whom should I serve if not his son? As I served in your father's presence, so also I will serve in yours."

Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give me counsel. What should we do?"

Ahithophel replied, "Sleep with your father's concubines, whom he has left to take care of the palace. When all Israel hears that you have become a stench to your father, then the hands of all who are with you will be strengthened."

So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and he slept with his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.

Now in those days the advice of Ahithophel was like the consultation of the word of God. Such was the regard that both David and Absalom had for Ahithophel's advice.

Furthermore, Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Let me choose twelve thousand men and set out tonight in pursuit of David. I will attack him while he is weak and weary; I will throw him into a panic, and all the people with him will flee; I will strike down only the king and bring all the people back to you as a bride returning to her husband. You seek the life of only one man; then all the people will be at peace."

This proposal seemed good to Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

Then Absalom said, "Summon Hushai the Archite as well, and let us hear what he too has to say."

So Hushai came to Absalom, who told him, "Ahithophel has spoken this proposal. Should we carry it out? If not, what do you say?"

Hushai replied, "This time the advice of Ahithophel is not sound."

He continued, "You know your father and his men. They are mighty men, and as fierce as a wild bear robbed of her cubs. Moreover, your father is a man of war who will not spend the night with the troops. Surely by now he is hiding in a cave or some other location. If some of your troops fall first, whoever hears of it will say, 'There has been a slaughter among the troops who follow Absalom.' Then even the most valiant soldier with the heart of a lion will melt with fear, because all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man who has valiant men with him.

Instead, I advise that all Israel from Dan to Beersheba— a multitude like the sand on the seashore— be gathered to you, and that you yourself lead them into battle. Then we will attack David wherever we find him, and we will descend on him like dew on the ground. And of all the men with him, not even one will remain.

If he retreats to a city, all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we will drag it down to the valley until not even a pebble can be found there."

Then Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The advice of Hushai the Archite is better than that of Ahithophel." For the LORD had purposed to thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom.

So Hushai told Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, "This is what Ahithophel has advised Absalom and the elders of Israel, and this is what I have advised. Now send quickly and tell David, 'Do not spend the night at the fords of the wilderness, but be sure to cross over. Otherwise the king and all the people with him will be swallowed up.'"

Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying at Enrogel, where a servant girl would come and pass along information to them. They in turn would go and inform King David, for they dared not be seen entering the city. But a young man did see them and told Absalom. So the two left quickly and came to the house of a man in Bahurim. He had a well in his courtyard, and they climbed down into it. Then the man's wife took a covering, spread it over the mouth of the well, and scattered grain over it so nobody would know a thing.

When Absalom's servants came to the woman at the house, they asked, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?"

"They have crossed over the brook," she replied. The men searched but did not find them, so they returned to Jerusalem.

After the men had gone, Ahimaaz and Jonathan climbed up out of the well and went to inform King David, saying, "Get up and cross over the river at once, for Ahithophel has given this advice against you."

So David and all the people with him got up and crossed the Jordan. By daybreak, there was no one left who had not crossed the Jordan.

When Ahithophel saw that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his donkey and set out for his house in his hometown. He put his affairs in order and hanged himself. So he died and was buried in his father's tomb.

Then David went to Mahanaim, and Absalom crossed the Jordan with all the men of Israel. Absalom had appointed Amasa over the army in place of Joab. Amasa was the son of a man named Ithra, the

Ishmaelite who had married Abigail, the daughter of Nahash and sister of Zeruiah the mother of Joab. So the Israelites and Absalom camped in the land of Gilead.

When David came to Mahanaim, he was met by Shobi son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Ammonites, Machir son of Ammiel from Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim. They brought beds, basins, and earthen vessels, as well as wheat, barley, flour, roasted grain, beans, lentils, honey, curds, sheep, and cheese from the herd for David and his people to eat. For they said, "The people have become hungry, exhausted, and thirsty in the wilderness."

Then David reviewed his troops and appointed over them commanders of thousands and of hundreds. He sent out the troops, a third under Joab, a third under Joab's brother Abishai son of Zeruiah, and a third under Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the troops, "I will surely march out with you as well."

But the people pleaded, "You must not go out! For if we have to flee, they will not care about us. Even if half of us die, they will not care. But you are worth ten thousand of us. It is better now if you support us from the city."

"I will do whatever seems best to you," the king replied. So he stood beside the gate, while all the troops marched out by hundreds and by thousands.

Now the king had commanded Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, "Treat the young man Absalom gently for my sake." And all the people heard the king's orders to each of the commanders regarding Absalom.

So David's army marched into the field to engage Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim. There the people of Israel were defeated by David's servants, and the slaughter was great that day— twenty thousand men. The battle spread over the whole countryside, and that day the forest devoured more people than the sword.

Now Absalom was riding on his mule when he met the servants of David, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom's head was caught fast in the tree. The mule under him kept going, so that he was suspended in midair. When one of the men saw this, he told Joab, "I just saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree!"

"You just saw him!" Joab exclaimed. "Why did you not strike him to the ground right there? I would have given you ten shekels of silver and a warrior's belt!"

The man replied, "Even if a thousand shekels of silver were weighed out into my hands, I would not raise my hand against the son of the king. For we heard the king command you and Abishai and Ittai, 'Protect the young man Absalom for my sake.' If I had jeopardized my own life— and nothing is hidden from the king— you would have abandoned me."

But Joab declared, "I am not going to wait like this with you!" And he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through the heart of Absalom while he was still alive in the oak tree. And ten young men who carried Joab's armor surrounded Absalom, struck him, and killed him.

Then Joab blew the ram's horn, and the troops broke off their pursuit of Israel because Joab had restrained them. They took Absalom, cast him into a large pit in the forest, and piled a huge mound of stones over him. Meanwhile, all the Israelites fled, each to his home.

During his lifetime, Absalom had set up for himself a pillar in the King's Valley, for he had said, "I have no son to preserve the memory of my name." So he gave the pillar his name, and to this day it is called Absalom's Monument.

Then Ahimaaz son of Zadok said, "Please let me run and tell the king the good news that the LORD has avenged him of his enemies."

But Joab replied, "You are not the man to take good news today. You may do it another day, but you must not do so today, because the king's son is dead."

So Joab said to a Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." The Cushite bowed to Joab and took off running.

Ahimaaz son of Zadok, however, persisted and said to Joab, "No matter what, please let me also run behind the Cushite!"

"My son," Joab replied, "why do you want to run, since you will not receive a reward?"

"No matter what, I want to run!" he replied.

"Then run!" Joab told him.

So Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain and outran the Cushite.

Now David was sitting between the two gates when the watchman went up to the roof of the gateway by the wall, looked out, and saw a man running alone. So he called out and told the king.

"If he is alone," the king replied, "he bears good news."

As the first runner drew near, the watchman saw another man running, and he called out to the gatekeeper, "Look! Another man is running alone!"

"This one also brings good news," said the king.

The watchman said, "The first man appears to me to be running like Ahimaaz son of Zadok."

"This is a good man," said the king. "He comes with good news."

Then Ahimaaz called out to the king, "All is well!" And he bowed facedown before the king.

He continued, "Blessed be the LORD your God! He has delivered up the men who raised their hands against my lord the king."

The king asked, "Is the young man Absalom all right?"

And Ahimaaz replied, "When Joab sent the king's servant and your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I do not know what it was."

"Move aside," said the king, "and stand here."

So he stepped aside.

Just then the Cushite came and said, "May my lord the king hear the good news: Today the LORD has avenged you of all who rose up against you!"

The king asked the Cushite, "Is the young man Absalom all right?"

And the Cushite replied, "May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up against you to harm you be like that young man."

The king was shaken and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And as he walked, he cried out, "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Then it was reported to Joab, "The king is weeping and mourning over Absalom." And that day's victory

was turned into mourning for all the people, because on that day they were told, “The king is grieving over his son.”

So they returned to the city quietly that day, as people steal away in humiliation after fleeing a battle. But the king covered his face and cried out at the top of his voice, “O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!”

Then Joab went into the house and said to the king, “Today you have disgraced all your servants who have saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters, of your wives, and of your concubines. You love those who hate you and hate those who love you! For you have made it clear today that the commanders and soldiers mean nothing to you. I know today that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead, it would have pleased you!

Now therefore get up! Go out and speak comfort to your servants, for I swear by the LORD that if you do not go out, not a man will remain with you tonight. This will be worse for you than all the adversity that has befallen you from your youth until now!”

So the king got up and sat in the gate, and all the people were told: “Behold, the king is sitting in the gate.” So they all came before the king.

Meanwhile, the Israelites had fled, each man to his home. And all the people throughout the tribes of Israel were arguing, “The king rescued us from the hand of our enemies and delivered us from the hand of the Philistines, but now he has fled the land because of Absalom. But Absalom, the man we anointed over us, has died in battle. So why do you say nothing about restoring the king?”

Then King David sent this message to Zadok and Abiathar, the priests: “Say to the elders of Judah, ‘Why should you be the last to restore the king to his palace, since the talk of all Israel has reached the king at his quarters? You are my brothers, my own flesh and blood. So why should you be the last to restore the king?’ And say to Amasa, ‘Aren’t you my flesh and blood? May God punish me, and ever so severely, if from now on you are not the commander of my army in place of Joab!’”

So he swayed the hearts of all the men of Judah as though they were one man, and they sent word to the king: “Return, you and all your servants.”

So the king returned, and when he arrived at the Jordan, the men of Judah came to Gilgal to meet him and escort him across the Jordan.

Then Shimei son of Gera, a Benjamite from Bahurim, hurried down with the men of Judah to meet King David, along with a thousand men of Benjamin, as well as Ziba the steward of the house of Saul and his fifteen sons and twenty servants.

They rushed down to the Jordan before the king and crossed at the ford to carry over the king’s household and to do what was good in his sight.

When Shimei son of Gera crossed the Jordan, he fell down before the king and said, “My lord, do not hold me guilty, and do not remember your servant’s wrongdoing on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem. May the king not take it to heart. For your servant knows that I have sinned, so here I am today as the first of all the house of Joseph to come down to meet my lord the king.”

But Abishai son of Zeruiah said, “Shouldn’t Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD’s anointed?”

And David replied, “Sons of Zeruiah, what have I to do with you, that you should be my adversaries today? Should any man be put to death in Israel today? Am I not indeed aware that today I am king over Israel?”

So the king said to Shimei, “You shall not die.” And the king swore an oath to him.

Then Mephibosheth, Saul’s grandson, went down to meet the king. He had not cared for his feet or trimmed his mustache or washed his clothes from the day the king had left until the day he returned safely. And he came from Jerusalem to meet the king, who asked him, “Mephibosheth, why did you not go with me?”

“My lord the king,” he replied, “because I am lame, I said, ‘I will have my donkey saddled so that I may ride on it and go with the king.’ But my servant Ziba deceived me, and he has slandered your servant to my lord the king.

Yet my lord the king is like the angel of God, so do what is good in your eyes. For all the house of my grandfather deserves death from my lord the king, yet you have set your servant among those who eat at your table. What further right, then, do I have to keep appealing to the king?”

The king replied, “Why say any more? I hereby declare that you and Ziba are to divide the land.”

And Mephibosheth said to the king, “Instead, since my lord the king has safely come to his own house, let Ziba take it all!”

Now Barzillai the Gileadite had come down from Rogelim to cross the Jordan with the king and send him on his way from there. Barzillai was quite old, eighty years of age, and since he was a very wealthy man, he had provided for the king while he stayed in Mahanaim.

The king said to Barzillai, “Cross over with me, and I will provide for you at my side in Jerusalem.”

But Barzillai replied, “How many years of my life remain, that I should go up to Jerusalem with the king? I am now eighty years old. Can I discern what is good and what is not? Can your servant taste what he eats or drinks? Can I still hear the voice of singing men and women? Why should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king?

Your servant will go with the king only a short distance past the Jordan; why should the king repay me with such a reward? Please let your servant return, that I may die in my own city near the tomb of my father and mother. But here is your servant Chimham. Let him cross over with my lord the king, and do for him what is good in your sight.”

The king replied, “Chimham will cross over with me, and I will do for him what is good in your sight, and I will do for you whatever you desire of me.”

So all the people crossed the Jordan, and then the king crossed over. The king kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and Barzillai returned home.

Then the king crossed over to Gilgal, and Chimham crossed over with him. All the troops of Judah and half the troops of Israel escorted the king.

Soon all the men of Israel came to the king and asked, "Why did our brothers, the men of Judah, take you away secretly and bring the king and his household across the Jordan, together with all of David's men?"

And all the men of Judah replied to the men of Israel, "We did this because the king is our relative. Why does this anger you? Have we ever eaten at the king's expense or received anything for ourselves?"

"We have ten shares in the king," answered the men of Israel, "so we have more claim to David than you. Why then do you despise us? Were we not the first to speak of restoring our king?"

But the men of Judah spoke more fiercely than the men of Israel.

Now a worthless man named Sheba son of Bichri, a Benjamite, happened to be there, and he blew the ram's horn and shouted:

"We have no share in David, no inheritance in Jesse's son. Every man to his tent, O Israel!"

So all the men of Israel deserted David to follow Sheba son of Bichri. But the men of Judah stayed by their king all the way from the Jordan to Jerusalem.

When David returned to his palace in Jerusalem, he took the ten concubines he had left to take care of the palace, and he placed them in a house under guard. He provided for them, but he no longer slept with them. They were confined until the day of their death, living as widows.

Then the king said to Amasa, "Summon the men of Judah to come to me within three days, and be here yourself."

So Amasa went to summon Judah, but he took longer than the time allotted him.

And David said to Abishai, "Now Sheba the son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom. Take your lord's servants and pursue him, or he will find fortified cities and elude us."

So Joab's men, along with the Cherethites, the Pelethites, and all the mighty men, marched out of Jerusalem in pursuit of Sheba son of Bichri. And while they were at the great stone in Gibeon, Amasa joined them.

Now Joab was dressed in military attire, with a dagger strapped to his belt. And as he stepped forward, he slipped the dagger from its sheath. "Are you well, my brother?" Joab asked Amasa. And with his right hand Joab grabbed Amasa by the beard to kiss him.

Amasa was not on guard against the dagger in Joab's hand, and Joab stabbed him in the stomach and spilled out his intestines on the ground. And Joab did not need to strike him again, for Amasa was dead. Then Joab and his brother Abishai pursued Sheba son of Bichri.

One of Joab's young men stood near Amasa and said, "Whoever favors Joab, and whoever is for David, let him follow Joab!" But Amasa wallowed in his blood in the middle of the road, and when the man saw that all the troops were stopping there, he dragged the body off the road into a field and threw a garment over it. As soon as Amasa's body was removed from the road, all the men went on with Joab to pursue Sheba son of Bichri.

Sheba passed through all the tribes of Israel to Abel-beth-maacah and through the entire region of the Berites, who gathered together and followed him.

And Joab's troops came and besieged Sheba in Abel-beth-maacah and built a siege ramp against the outer rampart of the city.

As all the troops with Joab were battering the wall to topple it, a wise woman called out from the city, "Listen! Listen! Please tell Joab to come here so that I may speak with him."

When he had come near to her, the woman asked, "Are you Joab?"

"I am," he replied.

"Listen to the words of your servant," she said.

"I am listening," he answered.

Then the woman said, "Long ago they used to say, 'Seek counsel at Abel,' and that is how disputes were settled. I am among the peaceable and faithful in Israel, but you are trying to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why would you swallow up the LORD's inheritance?"

"Far be it!" Joab declared. "Far be it from me to swallow up or destroy! That is not the case. But a man named Sheba son of Bichri, from the hill country of Ephraim, has lifted up his hand against the king, against David. Deliver him alone, and I will depart from the city."

"Look," the woman replied, "his head will be thrown to you over the wall."

Then the woman went to all the people with her wise counsel, and they cut off the head of Sheba son of Bichri and threw it to Joab. So he blew the ram's horn and his men dispersed from the city, each to his own home. And Joab returned to the king in Jerusalem.

Now Joab was over the whole army of Israel; Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and Pelethites; Adoram was in charge of the forced labor; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the recorder; Sheva was the scribe; Zadok and Abiathar were priests; and Ira the Jairite was David's priest.

During the reign of David there was a famine for three successive years, and David sought the face of the LORD.

And the LORD said, "It is because of the blood shed by Saul and his family, because he killed the Gibeonites."

At this, David summoned the Gibeonites and spoke to them. (Now the Gibeonites were not Israelites, but a remnant of the Amorites. The Israelites had taken an oath concerning them, but in his zeal for Israel and Judah, Saul had sought to kill them.)

So David asked the Gibeonites, "What shall I do for you? How can I make amends so that you may bless the inheritance of the LORD?"

The Gibeonites said to him, "We need no silver or gold from Saul or his house, nor should you put to death anyone in Israel for us."

"Whatever you ask, I will do for you," he replied.

And they answered the king, "As for the man who consumed us and plotted against us to exterminate us from existing within any border of Israel, let seven of his male descendants be delivered to us so that we

may hang them before the LORD at Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of the LORD."

"I will give them to you," said the king.

Now the king spared Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, because of the oath before the LORD between David and Jonathan son of Saul. But the king took Armoni and Mephibosheth, the two sons whom Rizpah daughter of Aiah had borne to Saul, as well as the five sons whom Merab daughter of Saul had borne to Adriel son of Barzillai the Meholathite. And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them on the hill before the LORD. So all seven of them fell together; they were put to death in the first days of the harvest, at the beginning of the barley harvest.

And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it out for herself on a rock. From the beginning of the harvest until the rain from heaven poured down on the bodies, she did not allow the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night.

When David was told what Saul's concubine Rizpah, daughter of Aiah, had done, he went and took the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan from the men of Jabesh-gilead, who had stolen them from the public square of Beth-shan where the Philistines had hung the bodies after they had struck down Saul at Gilboa.

So David had the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan brought from there, and they also gathered the bones of those who had been hanged. And they buried the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan in Zela in the land of Benjamin, in the tomb of Saul's father Kish.

After they had done everything the king had commanded, God answered their prayers for the land.

Once again the Philistines waged war against Israel, and David and his servants went down and fought against the Philistines. But David became exhausted.

Then Ishbi-benob, a descendant of Rapha, whose bronze spear weighed three hundred shekels and who was bearing a new sword, resolved to kill David. But Abishai son of Zeruiah came to his aid, struck the Philistine, and killed him.

Then David's men swore to him, "You must never again go out with us to battle, so that the lamp of Israel may not be extinguished."

Some time later at Gob, there was another battle with the Philistines. At that time Sibbecai the Hushathite killed Saph, a descendant of Rapha.

Once again there was a battle with the Philistines at Gob, and Elhanan son of Jair the Bethlehemite killed the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

And there was also a battle at Gath, where there was a man of great stature with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot— twenty-four in all. He too was descended from Rapha, and when he taunted Israel, Jonathan the son of David's brother Shimei killed him.

So these four descendants of Rapha in Gath fell at the hands of David and his servants.

And David sang this song to the LORD on the day the LORD had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. He said:

"The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer. My God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation. My stronghold, my refuge, and my Savior, You save me from violence. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies. For the waves of death engulfed me; the torrents of chaos overwhelmed me. The cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the LORD; I cried out to my God. And from His temple He heard my voice, and my cry for help reached His ears. Then the earth shook and quaked; the foundations of the heavens trembled; they were shaken because He burned with anger. Smoke rose from His nostrils, and consuming fire came from His mouth; glowing coals blazed forth. He parted the heavens and came down with dark clouds beneath His feet. He mounted a cherub and flew; He soared on the wings of the wind. He made darkness a canopy around Him, a gathering of water and thick clouds. From the brightness of His presence coals of fire blazed forth. The LORD thundered from heaven; the voice of the Most High resounded. He shot His arrows and scattered the foes; He hurled lightning and routed them. The channels of the sea appeared, and the foundations of the world were exposed at the rebuke of the LORD, at the blast of the breath of His nostrils. He reached down from on high and took hold of me; He drew me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from foes too mighty for me. They confronted me in my day of calamity, but the LORD was my support. He brought me out into the open; He rescued me because He delighted in me. The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness; He has repaid me according to the cleanness of my hands. For I have kept the ways of the LORD and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all His ordinances are before me; I have not disregarded His statutes. And I have been blameless before Him and kept myself from iniquity. So the LORD has repaid me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in His sight. To the faithful You show Yourself faithful, to the blameless You show Yourself blameless; to the pure You show Yourself pure, but to the crooked You show Yourself shrewd. You save an afflicted people, but Your eyes are on the haughty to bring them down. For You, O LORD, are my lamp; the LORD lights up my darkness. For in You I can charge an army; with my God I can scale a wall. As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the LORD is flawless. He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him. For who is God besides the LORD? And who is the Rock except our God? God is my strong fortress, and He makes my way clear. He makes my feet like those of a deer and stations me upon

the heights. He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze. You have given me Your shield of salvation, and Your gentleness exalts me. You broaden the path beneath me so that my ankles do not give way. I pursued my enemies and destroyed them; I did not turn back until they were consumed. I devoured and crushed them so they could not rise; they have fallen under my feet. You have armed me with strength for battle; You have subdued my foes beneath me. You have made my enemies retreat before me; I destroyed those who hated me. They looked, but there was no one to save them — to the LORD, but He did not answer. I ground them as the dust of the earth; I crushed and trampled them like mud in the streets. You have delivered me from the strife of my people; You have preserved me as the head of nations; a people I had not known shall serve me. Foreigners cower before me; when they hear me, they obey me. Foreigners lose heart and come trembling from their strongholds. The LORD lives, and blessed be my Rock! And may God, the Rock of my salvation, be exalted — the God who avenges me and brings down nations beneath me, who frees me from my enemies. You exalt me above my foes; You rescue me from violent men. Therefore I will praise You, O LORD, among the nations; I will sing praises to Your name. Great salvation He brings to His king. He shows loving devotion to His anointed, to David and his descendants forever."

These are the last words of David:

"The oracle of David son of Jesse, the oracle of the man raised on high, the one anointed by the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel: The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; His word was on my tongue. The God of Israel spoke; the Rock of Israel said to me, 'He who rules the people with justice, who rules in the fear of God, is like the light of the morning at sunrise of a cloudless dawn, the glistening after the rain on the sprouting grass of the earth.' Is not my house right with God? For He has established with me an everlasting covenant, ordered and secured in every part. Will He not bring about my full salvation and my every desire? But the worthless are all like thorns raked aside, for they can never be gathered by hand. The man who touches them must be armed with iron or with the shaft of a spear. The fire burns them to ashes in the place where they lie."

These are the names of David's mighty men:

Josheb-basshebeth the Tahchemonite was chief of the Three. He wielded his spear against eight hundred men, whom he killed at one time.

Next in command was Eleazar son of Dodo the Ahohite. As one of the three mighty men, he went with David to taunt the Philistines who had gathered for battle at Pas-dammim. The men of Israel retreated, but Eleazar stood his ground and struck the Philistines until his hand grew weary and stuck to his sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day. Then the troops returned to him, but only to plunder the dead.

And after him was Shammah son of Agee the Hararite. When the Philistines had banded together near a field full of lentils, Israel's troops fled from them. But Shammah took his stand in the middle of the field, defended it, and struck down the Philistines. So the LORD brought about a great victory.

At harvest time, three of the thirty chief men went down to David at the cave of Adullam, while a company of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. At that time David was in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was at Bethlehem. David longed for water and said, "Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!"

So the three mighty men broke through the Philistine camp, drew water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem, and brought it back to David. But he refused to drink it; instead, he poured it out to the LORD, saying, "Far be it from me, O LORD, to do this! Is this not the blood of the men who risked their lives?" So he refused to drink it.

Such were the exploits of the three mighty men.

Now Abishai, the brother of Joab and son of Zeruiah, was chief of the Three, and he wielded his spear against three hundred men, killed them, and won a name along with the Three. Was he not more honored than the Three? And he became their commander, even though he was not included among the Three.

And Benaiah son of Jehoiada was a man of valor from Kabzeel, a man of many exploits. He struck down two champions of Moab, and on a snowy day he went down into a pit and killed a lion. He also struck down an Egyptian, a huge man. Although the Egyptian had a spear in his hand, Benaiah went against him with a club, snatched the spear from his hand, and killed the Egyptian with his own spear. These were the exploits of Benaiah son of Jehoiada, who won a name along with the three mighty men. He was most honored among the Thirty, but he did not become one of the Three. And David appointed him over his guard.

Now these were members of the Thirty:
Asahel the brother of Joab,
Elhanan son of Dodo of Bethlehem,
Shammah the Harodite,
Elika the Harodite,
Helez the Paltite,
Ira son of Ikkesh the Tekoite,
Abiezer the Anathothite,
Mebunnai the Hushathite,
Zalmon the Ahohite,
Maharai the Netophathite,
Heled son of Baanah the Netophathite,
Ittai son of Ribai from Gibeah of the Benjamites,
Benaiah the Pirathonite,
Hiddai from the brooks of Gaash,
Abi-albon the Arbathite,
Azmaveth the Barhumite,
Eliahba the Shaalbonite,
the sons of Jashen,
Jonathan son of Shammah the Hararite,

Ahiam son of Sharar the Hararite,
Eliphelet son of Ahasbai the Maacathite,
Eliam son of Ahithophel the Gilonite,
Hezro the Carmelite,
Paarai the Arbite,
Igal son of Nathan of Zobah,
Bani the Gadite,
Zelek the Ammonite,
Naharai the Beerothite, the armor-bearer of Joab son of Zeruiah,
Ira the Ithrite,
Gareb the Ithrite,
and Uriah the Hittite.
There were thirty-seven in all.

Again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He stirred up David against them, saying, "Go and take a census of Israel and Judah."

So the king said to Joab the commander of his army, who was with him, "Go now throughout the tribes of Israel from Dan to Beersheba and register the troops, so that I may know their number."

But Joab replied to the king, "May the LORD your God multiply the troops a hundred times over, and may the eyes of my lord the king see it. But why does my lord the king want to do such a thing?"

Nevertheless, the king's word prevailed against Joab and against the commanders of the army. So Joab and the commanders of the army departed from the presence of the king to register the troops of Israel.

They crossed the Jordan and camped near Aroer, south of the town in the middle of the valley, and proceeded toward Gad and Jazer. Then they went to Gilead and the land of Tahtim-hodshi, and on to Dan-jaan and around to Sidon. They went toward the fortress of Tyre and all the cities of the Hivites and Canaanites. Finally, they went on to the Negev of Judah, to Beersheba.

At the end of nine months and twenty days, having gone through the whole land, they returned to Jerusalem. And Joab reported to the king the total number of the troops. In Israel there were 800,000 men of valor who drew the sword, and in Judah there were 500,000.

After David had numbered the troops, his conscience was stricken and he said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. Now, O LORD, I beg You to take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have acted very foolishly."

When David got up in the morning, the word of the LORD had come to Gad the prophet, David's seer: "Go and tell David that this is what the LORD says: 'I am offering you three options. Choose one of them, and I will carry it out against you.'"

So Gad went and said to David, "Do you choose to endure three years of famine in your land, three months of fleeing the pursuit of your enemies, or three days of plague upon your land? Now then, think it over and decide how I should reply to Him who sent me."

David answered Gad, "I am deeply distressed. Please, let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men."

So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel from that morning until the appointed time, and seventy thousand of the people from Dan to Beersheba died.

But when the angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, the LORD relented from the calamity and said to the angel who was destroying the people, "Enough! Withdraw your hand now!" At that time the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

When David saw the angel striking down the people, he said to the LORD, "Surely I, the shepherd, have sinned and acted wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? Please, let Your hand fall upon me and my father's house."

And that day Gad came to David and said to him, "Go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." So David went up at the word of Gad, just as the LORD had commanded.

When Araunah looked out and saw the king and his servants coming toward him, he went out and bowed facedown before the king. "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?" Araunah said.

"To buy your threshing floor," David replied, "that I may build an altar to the LORD, so that the plague upon the people may be halted."

Araunah said to David, "May my lord the king take whatever seems good to him and offer it up. Here are the oxen for a burnt offering and the threshing sledges and ox yokes for the wood. O king, Araunah gives all these to the king." He also said to the king, "May the LORD your God accept you."

"No," replied the king, "I insist on paying a price, for I will not offer to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing."

So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. And there he built an altar to the LORD and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings.

Then the LORD answered the prayers on behalf of the land, and the plague upon Israel was halted.

1 Kings

First Book of Kings

Now King David was old and well along in years, and though they covered him with blankets, he could not keep warm. So his servants said to him, “Let us search for a young virgin for our lord the king, to attend to him and care for him and lie by his side to keep him warm.”

Then they searched throughout Israel for a beautiful girl, and they found Abishag the Shunammite and brought her to the king. The girl was unsurpassed in beauty; she cared for the king and served him, but he had no relations with her.

At that time Adonijah, David’s son by Haggith, began to exalt himself, saying, “I will be king!” And he acquired chariots and horsemen and fifty men to run ahead of him.

(His father had never once reprimanded him by saying, “Why do you act this way?” Adonijah was also very handsome, born next after Absalom.)

So Adonijah conferred with Joab son of Zeruiah and with Abiathar the priest, who supported him. But Zadok the priest, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shimei, Rei, and David’s mighty men would not join Adonijah.

And Adonijah sacrificed sheep, oxen, and fattened calves near the stone of Zoheleth, which is next to En-rogel. He invited all his royal brothers and all the men of Judah who were servants of the king. But he did not invite Nathan the prophet, Benaiah, the mighty men, or his brother Solomon.

Then Nathan said to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, “Have you not heard that Adonijah son of Haggith has become king, and our lord David does not know it? Now please, come and let me advise you. Save your own life and the life of your son Solomon. Go at once to King David and say, ‘My lord the king, did you not swear to your maidservant, “Surely your son Solomon will reign after me, and he will sit on my throne”? Why then has Adonijah become king?’ Then, while you are still there speaking with the king, I will come in after you and confirm your words.”

So Bathsheba went to see the king in his bedroom. Since the king was very old, Abishag the Shunammite was serving him. And Bathsheba bowed down in homage to the king, who asked, “What is your desire?”

“My lord,” she replied, “you yourself swore to your maidservant by the LORD your God: ‘Surely your son Solomon will reign after me, and he will sit on my throne.’ But now, behold, Adonijah has become king, and you, my lord the king, do not know it. And he has sacrificed an abundance of oxen, fattened calves, and sheep, and has invited all the other sons of the king, as well as Abiathar the priest and Joab the commander of the army. But he has not invited your servant Solomon. And as for you, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are upon you to tell them who will sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. Otherwise, when my lord the king rests with his fathers, I and my son Solomon will be counted as criminals.”

And just then, while Bathsheba was still speaking with the king, Nathan the prophet arrived. So the king was told, “Nathan the prophet is here.” And Nathan went in and bowed facedown before the king.

“My lord the king,” said Nathan, “did you say, ‘Adonijah will reign after me, and he will sit on my throne’? For today he has gone down and sacrificed an abundance of oxen, fattened calves, and sheep, and has invited all the sons of the king, the commanders of the army, and Abiathar the priest. And behold, they are eating and drinking before him, saying, ‘Long live King Adonijah!’ But me your servant he has not invited, nor Zadok the priest, nor Benaiah son of Jehoiada, nor your servant Solomon. Has my lord the king let this happen without informing your servant who should sit on the throne after my lord the king?”

Then King David said, “Call in Bathsheba for me.” So she came into the king’s presence and stood before him.

And the king swore an oath, saying, “As surely as the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life from all distress, I will carry out this very day exactly what I swore to you by the LORD, the God of Israel: Surely your son Solomon will reign after me, and he will sit on my throne in my place.”

Bathsheba bowed facedown in homage to the king and said, “May my lord King David live forever!”

Then King David said, “Call in for me Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada.” So they came before the king.

“Take my servants with you,” said the king. “Set my son Solomon on my own mule and take him down to Gihon. There Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet are to anoint him king over Israel. You are to blow the ram’s horn and declare, ‘Long live King Solomon!’ Then you shall go up with him, and he is to come and sit on my throne and reign in my place. For I have appointed him ruler over Israel and Judah.”

“Amen,” replied Benaiah son of Jehoiada. “May the LORD, the God of my lord the king, so declare it. Just as the LORD was with my lord the king, so may He be with Solomon and make his throne even greater than that of my lord King David.”

Then Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, along with the Cherethites and Pelethites, went down and set Solomon on King David’s mule, and they escorted him to Gihon. Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tabernacle and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the ram’s horn, and all the people proclaimed, “Long live King Solomon!”

All the people followed him, playing flutes and rejoicing with such a great joy that the earth was split by the sound.

Now Adonijah and all his guests were finishing their feast when they heard the sound of the ram’s horn. “Why is the city in such a loud uproar?” asked Joab.

As he was speaking, suddenly Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest arrived. “Come in,” said Adonijah, “for you are a man of valor. You must be bringing good news.”

"Not at all," Jonathan replied. "Our lord King David has made Solomon king. And with Solomon, the king has sent Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, along with the Cherethites and Pelethites, and they have set him on the king's mule. Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king at Gihon, and they have gone up from there with rejoicing that rings out in the city. That is the noise you hear.

Moreover, Solomon has taken his seat on the royal throne.

The king's servants have also gone to congratulate our lord King David, saying, 'May your God make the name of Solomon more famous than your own name, and may He make his throne greater than your throne.'

And the king has bowed in worship on his bed, saying, 'Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel! Today He has provided one to sit on my throne, and my eyes have seen it.'"

At this, all the guests of Adonijah arose in terror and scattered. But Adonijah, in fear of Solomon, got up and went to take hold of the horns of the altar.

It was reported to Solomon: "Behold, Adonijah fears King Solomon, and he has taken hold of the horns of the altar, saying, 'Let King Solomon first swear to me not to put his servant to the sword.'"

And Solomon replied, "If he is a man of character, not a single hair of his will fall to the ground. But if evil is found in him, he will die."

So King Solomon summoned Adonijah down from the altar, and he came and bowed down before King Solomon, who said to him, "Go to your home."

As the time drew near for David to die, he charged his son Solomon, "I am about to go the way of all the earth. So be strong and prove yourself a man. And keep the charge of the LORD your God to walk in His ways and to keep His statutes, commandments, ordinances, and decrees, as written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you turn, and so that the LORD may fulfill His promise to me: 'If your descendants take heed to walk faithfully before Me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.'

Moreover, you know what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me— what he did to Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether, the two commanders of the armies of Israel. He killed them in peacetime to avenge the blood of war. He stained with the blood of war the belt around his waist and the sandals on his feet. So act according to your wisdom, and do not let his gray head go down to Sheol in peace.

But show loving devotion to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table, because they stood by me when I fled from your brother Absalom.

Keep an eye on Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjamite from Bahurim who is with you. He called down bitter curses against me on the day I went to Mahanaim, but when he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the LORD: 'I will never put you to the sword.' Now therefore, do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man. You know what you ought to do to him to bring his gray head down to Sheol in blood."

Then David rested with his fathers and was buried in the City of David. The length of David's reign over Israel was forty years — seven years in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem.

So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David, and his kingdom was firmly established.

Now Adonijah son of Haggith went to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, and she asked, "Do you come in peace?"

"Yes, in peace," he replied. Then he said, "I have something to tell you."

"Say it," she answered.

"You know that the kingship was mine," he said. "All Israel expected that I should reign, but the kingship has turned to my brother, for it has come to him from the LORD. So now I have just one request of you; do not deny me."

"State your request," she told him.

Adonijah replied, "Please speak to King Solomon, since he will not turn you down. Let him give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife."

"Very well," Bathsheba replied. "I will speak to the king for you."

So Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah. The king stood up to greet her, bowed to her, and sat down on his throne. Then the king had a throne brought for his mother, who sat down at his right hand.

"I have just one small request of you," she said. "Do not deny me."

"Make your request, my mother," the king replied, "for I will not deny you."

So Bathsheba said, "Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to your brother Adonijah as his wife."

King Solomon answered his mother, "Why do you request Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Since he is my older brother, you might as well request the kingdom for him and for Abiathar the priest and for Joab son of Zeruiah!"

Then King Solomon swore by the LORD: "May God punish me, and ever so severely, if Adonijah has not made this request at the expense of his life. And now, as surely as the LORD lives — the One who established me, who set me on the throne of my father David, and who founded for me a dynasty as He promised— surely Adonijah shall be put to death today!"

So King Solomon gave orders to Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and he struck down Adonijah and he died.

Then the king said to Abiathar the priest, "Go back to your fields in Anathoth. Even though you deserve to die, I will not put you to death at this time, since you carried the ark of the Lord GOD before my father David, and you suffered through all that my father suffered." So Solomon banished Abiathar from the priesthood of the LORD and thus fulfilled the word that the LORD had spoken at Shiloh against the house of Eli.

When the news reached Joab, who had conspired with Adonijah but not with Absalom, he fled to the tent of the LORD and took hold of the horns of the altar.

It was reported to King Solomon: "Joab has fled to the tent of the LORD and is now beside the altar."

So Solomon sent Benaiah son of Jehoiada, saying, "Go, strike him down!"

And Benaiah entered the tent of the LORD and said to Joab, “The king says, ‘Come out!’”

But Joab replied, “No, I will die here.”

So Benaiah relayed the message to the king, saying, “This is how Joab answered me.”

And the king replied, “Do just as he says. Strike him down and bury him, and so remove from me and from the house of my father the innocent blood that Joab shed. The LORD will bring his bloodshed back upon his own head, for without the knowledge of my father David he struck down two men more righteous and better than he when he put to the sword Abner son of Ner, commander of Israel’s army, and Amasa son of Jether, commander of Judah’s army. Their blood will come back upon the heads of Joab and his descendants forever; but for David, his descendants, his house, and his throne, there shall be peace from the LORD forever.”

So Benaiah son of Jehoiada went up, struck down Joab, and killed him. He was buried at his own home in the wilderness. And the king appointed Benaiah son of Jehoiada in Joab’s place over the army, and he appointed Zadok the priest in Abiathar’s place.

Then the king summoned Shimei and said to him, “Build a house for yourself in Jerusalem and live there, but do not go anywhere else. On the day you go out and cross the Kidron Valley, know for sure that you will die; your blood will be on your own head.”

“The sentence is fair,” Shimei replied. “Your servant will do as my lord the king has spoken.” And Shimei lived in Jerusalem for a long time.

After three years, however, two of Shimei’s slaves ran away to Achish son of Maacah, king of Gath. And Shimei was told, “Look, your slaves are in Gath.”

So Shimei saddled his donkey and set out to Achish at Gath in search of his slaves, and he brought them back from Gath.

When Solomon was told that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and had returned, the king summoned Shimei and said to him, “Did I not make you swear by the LORD and warn you, ‘On the day you leave and go elsewhere, know for sure that you will die’? And you told me, ‘The sentence is fair; I will comply.’ So why have you not kept your oath to the LORD and the command that I gave you?”

The king also said, “You know in your heart all the evil that you did to my father David. Therefore the LORD will bring your evil back upon your head. But King Solomon will be blessed and David’s throne will remain secure before the LORD forever.”

Then the king commanded Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and he went out and struck Shimei down, and he died. Thus the kingdom was firmly established in the hand of Solomon.

Later, Solomon formed an alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt by marrying his daughter. Solomon brought her to the City of David until he had finished building his palace and the house of the LORD, as well as the wall around Jerusalem.

The people, however, were still sacrificing on the high places because a house for the Name of the LORD had not yet been built. And Solomon loved the LORD and walked in the statutes of his father David, except that he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.

Now the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for it was the great high place. Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on the altar there.

One night at Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream, and God said, “Ask, and I will give it to you!”

Solomon replied, “You have shown much loving devotion to Your servant, my father David, because he walked before You in faithfulness, righteousness, and uprightness of heart. And You have maintained this loving devotion by giving him a son to sit on his throne this very day.

And now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king in my father David’s place. But I am only a little child, not knowing how to go out or come in. Your servant is here among the people You have chosen, a people too numerous to count or number.

Therefore give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people and to discern between good and evil. For who is able to govern this great people of Yours?”

Now it pleased the Lord that Solomon had made this request. So God said to him, “Since you have asked for this instead of requesting long life or wealth for yourself or death for your enemies — but you have asked for discernment to administer justice — behold, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been another like you, nor will there ever be.

Moreover, I will give you what you did not request — both riches and honor — so that during all your days no man in any kingdom will be your equal. So if you walk in My ways and keep My statutes and commandments, just as your father David did, I will prolong your days.”

Then Solomon awoke, and indeed it had been a dream. So he returned to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. Then he held a feast for all his servants.

At that time two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him.

One woman said, “Please, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house, and I gave birth while she was in the house. On the third day after I gave birth, this woman also had a baby. We were alone, with no one in the house but the two of us. During the night this woman’s son died because she rolled over on him. So she got up in the middle of the night and took my son from my side while I was asleep. She laid him in her bosom and put her dead son at my bosom. The next morning, when I got up to nurse my son, I discovered he was dead. But when I examined him, I realized that he was not the son I had borne.”

“No,” said the other woman, “the living one is my son and the dead one is your son.”

But the first woman insisted, “No, the dead one is yours and the living one is mine.” So they argued before the king.

Then the king replied, “This woman says, ‘My son is alive and yours is dead,’ but that woman says, ‘No, your son is dead and mine is alive.’”

The king continued, “Bring me a sword.” So they brought him a sword, and the king declared, “Cut the

living child in two and give half to one and half to the other."

Then the woman whose son was alive spoke to the king because she yearned with compassion for her son. "Please, my lord," she said, "give her the living baby. Do not kill him!"

But the other woman said, "He will be neither mine nor yours. Cut him in two!"

Then the king gave his ruling: "Give the living baby to the first woman. By no means should you kill him; she is his mother."

When all Israel heard of the judgment the king had given, they stood in awe of him, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice.

So King Solomon ruled over Israel, and these were his chief officials:

Azariah son of Zadok was the priest;
Elihoreph and Ahijah, the sons of Shisha, were secretaries;
Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the recorder;
Benaiah son of Jehoiada was in charge of the army;
Zadok and Abiathar were priests;
Azariah son of Nathan was in charge of the governors;
Zabud son of Nathan was a priest and adviser to the king;
Ahishar was in charge of the palace;
and Adoniram son of Abda was in charge of the forced labor.

Solomon had twelve governors over all Israel to provide food for the king and his household. Each one would arrange provisions for one month of the year, and these were their names:

Ben-hur in the hill country of Ephraim;
Ben-deker in Makaz, in Shaalbim, in Beth-shemesh, and in Elon-beth-hanan;
Ben-hesed in Arubboth (Socoh and all the land of Hepher belonged to him);
Ben-abinadab in Naphath-dor (Taphath, a daughter of Solomon, was his wife);
Baana son of Ahilud in Taanach, in Megiddo, and in all of Beth-shean next to Zarethan below Jezreel, from Beth-shean to Abel-meholah and on past Jokmeam;
Ben-geber in Ramoth-gilead (the villages of Jair son of Manasseh in Gilead belonged to him, as well as the region of Argob in Bashan with its sixty great cities with walls and bronze bars);
Ahinadab son of Iddo in Mahanaim;
Ahimaaz in Naphtali (he had married Basemath, a daughter of Solomon);
Baana son of Hushai in Asher and in Aloth;
Jehoshaphat son of Paruah in Issachar;
Shimei son of Ela in Benjamin;
Geber son of Uri in the land of Gilead, including the territories of Sihon king of the Amorites and of Og king of Bashan.

There was also one governor in the land of Judah.

The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore, and they were eating and drinking and rejoicing. And Solomon reigned over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. These kingdoms offered tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.

Solomon's provisions for a single day were thirty cors of fine flour, sixty cors of meal, ten fat oxen, twenty range oxen, and a hundred sheep, as well as deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fattened poultry. For Solomon had dominion over everything west of the Euphrates — over all the kingdoms from Tiphsah to Gaza — and he had peace on all sides. Throughout the days of Solomon, Judah and Israel dwelt securely from Dan to Beersheba, each man under his own vine and his own fig tree.

Solomon had 4,000 stalls for his chariot horses and 12,000 horses. Each month the governors in turn provided food for King Solomon and all who came to his table. They saw to it that nothing was lacking. Each one also brought to the required place their quotas of barley and straw for the chariot horses and other horses.

And God gave Solomon wisdom, exceedingly deep insight, and understanding beyond measure, like the sand on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom was greater than that of all the men of the East, greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than all men— wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and wiser than Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame spread throughout the surrounding nations.

Solomon composed three thousand proverbs, and his songs numbered a thousand and five. He spoke of trees, from the cedar in Lebanon to the hyssop growing in the wall, and he taught about animals, birds, reptiles, and fish.

So men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.

Now when Hiram king of Tyre heard that Solomon had been anointed king in his father's place, he sent envoys to Solomon; for Hiram had always been a friend of David.

And Solomon relayed this message to Hiram:

"As you are well aware, due to the wars waged on all sides against my father David, he could not build a house for the Name of the LORD his God until the LORD had put his enemies under his feet. But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side, and there is no adversary or crisis.

So behold, I plan to build a house for the Name of the LORD my God, according to what the LORD said to my father David: 'I will put your son on your throne in your place, and he will build the house for My Name.'

Now therefore, order that cedars of Lebanon be cut down for me. My servants will be with your servants, and I will pay your servants whatever wages you set, for you know that there are none among us as skilled in logging as the Sidonians."

When Hiram received Solomon's message, he rejoiced greatly and said, "Blessed be the LORD this day! He has given David a wise son over this great people!"

Then Hiram sent a reply to Solomon, saying:

"I have received your message; I will do all you desire regarding the cedar and cypress timber. My servants will haul the logs from Lebanon to the Sea, and I will float them as rafts by sea to the place you specify. There I will separate the logs, and you can take them away. And in exchange, you can meet my needs by providing my household with food."

So Hiram provided Solomon with all the cedar and cypress timber he wanted, and year after year Solomon would provide Hiram with 20,000 cors of wheat as food for his household, as well as 20,000 baths of pure olive oil.

And the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, as He had promised him. There was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a treaty.

Then King Solomon conscripted a labor force of 30,000 men from all Israel. He sent them to Lebanon in monthly shifts of 10,000 men, so that they would spend one month in Lebanon and two months at home. And Adoniram was in charge of the forced labor.

Solomon had 70,000 porters and 80,000 stonecutters in the mountains, not including his 3,300 foremen who supervised the workers.

And the king commanded them to quarry large, costly stones to lay the foundation of the temple with dressed stones. So Solomon's and Hiram's builders, along with the Gebalites, quarried the stone and prepared the timber and stone for the construction of the temple.

In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites had come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the house of the LORD.

The house that King Solomon built for the LORD was sixty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high. The portico at the front of the main hall of the temple was twenty cubits long, extending across the width of the temple and projecting out ten cubits in front of the temple.

He also had narrow windows framed high in the temple.

Against the walls of the temple and the inner sanctuary, Solomon built a chambered structure around the temple, in which he constructed the side rooms. The bottom floor was five cubits wide, the middle floor six cubits, and the third floor seven cubits. He also placed offset ledges around the outside of the temple, so that nothing would be inserted into its walls.

The temple was constructed using finished stones cut at the quarry, so that no hammer or chisel or any other iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being built.

The entrance to the bottom floor was on the south side of the temple. A stairway led up to the middle level, and from there to the third floor.

So Solomon built the temple and finished it, roofing it with beams and planks of cedar. He built chambers all along the temple, each five cubits high and attached to the temple with beams of cedar.

Then the word of the LORD came to Solomon, saying: "As for this temple you are building, if you walk in My statutes, carry out My ordinances, and keep all My commandments by walking in them, I will fulfill through you the promise I made to your father David. And I will dwell among the Israelites and will not abandon My people Israel."

So Solomon built the temple and finished it. He lined the interior walls with cedar paneling from the floor of the temple to the ceiling, and he covered the floor with cypress boards.

He partitioned off the twenty cubits at the rear of the temple with cedar boards from floor to ceiling to form within the temple an inner sanctuary, the Most Holy Place. And the main hall in front of this room was forty cubits long.

The cedar paneling inside the temple was carved with gourds and open flowers. Everything was cedar; not a stone could be seen.

Solomon also prepared the inner sanctuary within the temple to set the ark of the covenant of the LORD there. The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high. He overlaid the inside with pure gold, and he also overlaid the altar of cedar.

So Solomon overlaid the inside of the temple with pure gold, and he extended gold chains across the front of the inner sanctuary, which was overlaid with gold. So he overlaid with gold the whole interior of the temple, until everything was completely finished. He also overlaid with gold the entire altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary.

In the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim, each ten cubits high, out of olive wood. One wing of the first cherub was five cubits long, and the other wing was five cubits long as well. So the full wingspan was ten cubits. The second cherub also measured ten cubits; both cherubim had the same size and shape, and the height of each cherub was ten cubits.

And he placed the cherubim inside the innermost room of the temple. Since their wings were spread out, the wing of the first cherub touched one wall, while the wing of the second cherub touched the other wall, and in the middle of the room their wingtips touched. He also overlaid the cherubim with gold.

Then he carved the walls all around the temple, in both the inner and outer sanctuaries, with carved engravings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers. And he overlaid the temple floor with gold in both the inner and outer sanctuaries.

For the entrance to the inner sanctuary, Solomon constructed doors of olive wood with five-sided doorposts. The double doors were made of olive wood, and he carved into them cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers and overlaid the cherubim and palm trees with hammered gold.

In the same way he made four-sided doorposts of olive wood for the sanctuary entrance. The two doors were made of cypress wood, and each had two folding panels. He carved into them cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, and he overlaid them with gold hammered evenly over the carvings.

Solomon built the inner courtyard with three rows of dressed stone and one row of trimmed cedar beams.

The foundation of the house of the LORD was laid in the fourth year of Solomon's reign, in the month of Ziv. In the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, the eighth month, the temple was finished in every detail and according to every specification. So he built the temple in seven years.

Solomon, however, took thirteen years to complete the construction of his entire palace.

He built the House of the Forest of Lebanon a hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide, and thirty cubits

high, with four rows of cedar pillars supporting the cedar beams.

The house was roofed with cedar above the beams that rested on the pillars — forty-five beams, fifteen per row. There were three rows of high windows facing one another in three tiers. All the doorways had rectangular frames, with the openings facing one another in three tiers.

Solomon made his colonnade fifty cubits long and thirty cubits wide, with a portico in front of it and a canopy with pillars in front of the portico.

In addition, he built a hall for the throne, the Hall of Justice, where he was to judge. It was paneled with cedar from floor to ceiling.

And the palace where Solomon would live, set further back, was of similar construction. He also made a palace like this hall for Pharaoh's daughter, whom he had married.

All these buildings were constructed with costly stones, cut to size and trimmed with saws inside and out from the foundation to the eaves, and from the outside to the great courtyard. The foundations were laid with large, costly stones, some ten cubits long and some eight cubits long. Above these were costly stones, cut to size, and cedar beams.

The great courtyard was surrounded by three rows of dressed stone and a row of trimmed cedar beams, as were the inner courtyard and portico of the house of the LORD.

Now King Solomon sent to bring Huram from Tyre. He was the son of a widow from the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a craftsman in bronze. Huram had great skill, understanding, and knowledge for every kind of bronze work. So he came to King Solomon and carried out all his work.

He cast two pillars of bronze, each eighteen cubits high and twelve cubits in circumference. He also made two capitals of cast bronze to set on top of the pillars, each capital five cubits high. For the capitals on top of the pillars he made a network of lattice, with wreaths of chainwork, seven for each capital.

Likewise, he made the pillars with two rows of pomegranates around each grating to cover each capital atop the pillars. And the capitals atop the pillars in the portico were shaped like lilies, four cubits high. On the capitals of both pillars, just above the rounded projection next to the network, were the two hundred pomegranates in rows encircling each capital.

Thus he set up the pillars at the portico of the temple. The pillar to the south he named Jachin, and the pillar to the north he named Boaz. And the tops of the pillars were shaped like lilies. So the work of the pillars was completed.

He also made the Sea of cast metal. It was circular in shape, measuring ten cubits from rim to rim, five cubits in height, and thirty cubits in circumference. Below the rim, ornamental buds encircled it, ten per cubit all the way around the Sea, cast in two rows as a part of the Sea.

The Sea stood on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east. The Sea rested on them, with all their hindquarters toward the center. It was a handbreadth thick, and its rim was fashioned like the brim of a cup, like a lily blossom. It could hold two thousand baths.

In addition, he made ten movable stands of bronze, each four cubits long, four cubits wide, and three cubits high.

This was the design of the stands: They had side panels attached to uprights, and on the panels between the uprights were lions, oxen, and cherubim. On the uprights was a pedestal above, and below the lions and oxen were wreaths of beveled work.

Each stand had four bronze wheels with bronze axles and a basin resting on four supports, with wreaths at each side. The opening to each stand inside the crown at the top was one cubit deep, with a round opening like the design of a pedestal, a cubit and a half wide. And around its opening were engravings, but the panels of the stands were square, not round.

There were four wheels under the panels, and the axles of the wheels were attached to the stand; each wheel was a cubit and a half in diameter. The wheels were made like chariot wheels; their axles, rims, spokes, and hubs were all of cast metal.

Each stand had four handles, one for each corner, projecting from the stand. At the top of each stand was a circular band half a cubit high. The supports and panels were cast as a unit with the top of the stand.

He engraved cherubim, lions, and palm trees on the surfaces of the supports and panels, wherever each had space, with wreaths all around. In this way he made the ten stands, each with the same casting, dimensions, and shape.

He also made ten bronze basins, each holding forty baths and measuring four cubits across, one basin for each of the ten stands.

He set five stands on the south side of the temple and five on the north, and he put the Sea on the south side, at the southeast corner of the temple.

Additionally, Huram made the pots, shovels, and sprinkling bowls.

So Huram finished all the work that he had undertaken for King Solomon in the house of the LORD:

the two pillars;
the two bowl-shaped capitals atop the pillars;
the two sets of network covering both bowls of the capitals atop the pillars;
the four hundred pomegranates for the two sets of network (two rows of pomegranates for each network covering both the bowl-shaped capitals atop the pillars);
the ten stands;
the ten basins on the stands;
the Sea;
the twelve oxen underneath the Sea;
and the pots, shovels, and sprinkling bowls.

All the articles that Huram made for King Solomon in the house of the LORD were made of burnished bronze. The king had them cast in clay molds in the plain of the Jordan between Succoth and Zarethan. Solomon left all these articles unweighed, because there were so many. The weight of the bronze could not be determined.

Solomon also made all the furnishings for the house of the LORD:

the golden altar;

the golden table on which was placed the Bread of the Presence;
the lampstands of pure gold in front of the inner sanctuary, five on the right side and five on the left;
the gold flowers, lamps, and tongs;
the pure gold basins, wick trimmers, sprinkling bowls, ladles, and censers;
and the gold hinges for the doors of the inner temple (that is, the Most Holy Place) as well as for the doors of the main hall of the temple.

So all the work that King Solomon had performed for the house of the LORD was completed.

Then Solomon brought in the items his father David had dedicated— the silver, the gold, and the furnishings— and he placed them in the treasuries of the house of the LORD.

At that time Solomon assembled before him in Jerusalem the elders of Israel — all the tribal heads and family leaders of the Israelites — to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from Zion, the City of David. And all the men of Israel came together to King Solomon at the feast in the seventh month, the month of Ethanim.

When all the elders of Israel had arrived, the priests took up the ark, and they brought up the ark of the LORD and the Tent of Meeting with all its sacred furnishings. So the priests and Levites carried them up.

There, before the ark, King Solomon and the whole congregation of Israel who had assembled with him sacrificed so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered.

Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place in the inner sanctuary of the temple, the Most Holy Place, beneath the wings of the cherubim. For the cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark and overshadowed the ark and its poles.

The poles extended far enough that their ends were visible from the Holy Place in front of the inner sanctuary, but not from outside the Holy Place; and they are there to this day.

There was nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the LORD had made a covenant with the Israelites after they had come out of the land of Egypt.

And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, the cloud filled the house of the LORD so that the priests could not stand there to minister because of the cloud. For the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.

Then Solomon declared:

> "The LORD has said that He would dwell in the thick cloud. I have indeed built You an exalted house, a place for You to dwell forever."

And as the whole assembly of Israel stood there, the king turned around and blessed them all and said:
"Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who has fulfilled with His own hand what He spoke with His mouth to my father David, saying, 'Since the day I brought My people Israel out of Egypt, I have not chosen a city from any tribe of Israel in which to build a house so that My Name would be there. But I have chosen David to be over My people Israel.'
Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a house for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel. But the LORD said to my father David, 'Since it was in your heart to build a house for My Name, you have done well to have this in your heart. Nevertheless, you are not the one to build it; but your son, your own offspring, will build the house for My Name.'
Now the LORD has fulfilled the word that He spoke. I have succeeded my father David, and I sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised. I have built the house for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel. And there I have provided a place for the ark, which contains the covenant of the LORD that He made with our fathers when He brought them out of the land of Egypt."

Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in front of the whole assembly of Israel, spread out his hands toward heaven, and said:
"O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like You in heaven above or on earth below, keeping Your covenant of loving devotion with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts. You have kept Your promise to Your servant, my father David. What You spoke with Your mouth You have fulfilled with Your hand this day.
Therefore now, O LORD, God of Israel, keep for Your servant, my father David, what You promised when You said: 'You will never fail to have a man to sit before Me on the throne of Israel, if only your descendants guard their way to walk before Me as you have done.' And now, O God of Israel, please confirm what You promised to Your servant, my father David.
But will God indeed dwell upon the earth? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain You, much less this temple I have built. Yet regard the prayer and plea of Your servant, O LORD my God, so that You may hear the cry and the prayer that Your servant is praying before You today.
May Your eyes be open toward this temple night and day, toward the place of which You said, 'My Name shall be there,' so that You may hear the prayer that Your servant prays toward this place. Hear the plea of Your servant and of Your people Israel when they pray toward this place. May You hear from heaven, Your dwelling place. May You hear and forgive.
When a man sins against his neighbor and is required to take an oath, and he comes to take an oath before Your altar in this temple, then may You hear from heaven and act. May You judge Your servants, condemning the wicked man by bringing down on his own head what he has done, and justifying the righteous man by rewarding him according to his righteousness.
When Your people Israel are defeated before an enemy because they have sinned against You, and they return to You and confess Your name, praying and pleading with You in this temple, then may You hear from heaven and forgive the sin of Your people Israel. May You restore them to the land You gave to their fathers.
When the skies are shut and there is no rain because Your people have sinned against You, and they pray toward this place and confess Your name, and they turn from their sins because You have afflicted them, then may You hear from heaven and forgive the sin of Your servants, Your people Israel, so that You may teach

them the good way in which they should walk. May You send rain on the land that You gave Your people as an inheritance.
When famine or plague comes upon the land, or blight or mildew or locusts or grasshoppers, or when their enemy besieges them in their cities, whatever plague or sickness may come, then may whatever prayer or petition Your people Israel make— each knowing his own afflictions and spreading out his hands toward this temple— be heard by You from heaven, Your dwelling place. And may You forgive and act, and repay each man according to all his ways, since You know his heart — for You alone know the hearts of all men — so that they may fear You all the days they live in the land that You gave to our fathers.
And as for the foreigner who is not of Your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of Your name — for they will hear of Your great name and mighty hand and outstretched arm— when he comes and prays toward this temple, then may You hear from heaven, Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You. Then all the peoples of the earth will know Your name and fear You, as do Your people Israel, and they will know that this house I have built is called by Your Name.
When Your people go to war against their enemies, wherever You send them, and when they pray to the LORD in the direction of the city You have chosen and the house I have built for Your Name, then may You hear from heaven their prayer and their plea, and may You uphold their cause.
When they sin against You — for there is no one who does not sin — and You become angry with them and deliver them to an enemy who takes them as captives to his own land, whether far or near, and when they come to their senses in the land to which they were taken, and they repent and plead with You in the land of their captors, saying, 'We have sinned and done wrong; we have acted wickedly,' and when they return to You with all their heart and soul in the land of the enemies who took them captive, and when they pray to You in the direction of the land that You gave to their fathers, the city You have chosen, and the house I have built for Your Name, then may You hear from heaven, Your dwelling place, their prayer and petition, and may You uphold their cause. May You forgive Your people who have sinned against You and all the transgressions they have committed against You, and may You grant them compassion in the eyes of their captors to show them mercy.
For they are Your people and Your inheritance; You brought them out of Egypt, out of the furnace for iron. May Your eyes be open to the pleas of Your servant and of Your people Israel, and may You listen to them whenever they call to You. For You, O Lord GOD, have set them apart from all the peoples of the earth as Your inheritance, as You spoke through Your servant Moses when You brought our fathers out of Egypt."

Now when Solomon had finished praying this entire prayer and petition to the LORD, he got up before the altar of the LORD, where he had been kneeling with his hands spread out toward heaven. And he stood and blessed the whole assembly of Israel in a loud voice, saying:
"Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel according to all that He promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises He made through His servant Moses.
May the LORD our God be with us, as He was with our fathers. May He never leave us or forsake us. May He incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways and to keep the commandments and statutes and ordinances He commanded our fathers.
And may these words with which I have made my petition before the LORD be near to the LORD our God day and night, so that He may uphold the cause of His servant and of His people Israel as each day requires, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God. There is no other!
So let your heart be fully devoted to the LORD our God, as it is this day, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments."

Then the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifices before the LORD. And Solomon offered as peace offerings to the LORD 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. So the king and all the Israelites dedicated the house of the LORD.

On that same day the king consecrated the middle of the courtyard in front of the house of the LORD, and there he offered the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, since the bronze altar before the LORD was too small to contain all these offerings.

So at that time Solomon and all Israel with him— a great assembly of people from Lebo-hamath to the Brook of Egypt— kept the feast before the LORD our God for seven days and seven more days— fourteen days in all.

On the fifteenth day Solomon sent the people away. So they blessed the king and went home, joyful and glad in heart for all the good things that the LORD had done for His servant David and for His people Israel.

Now when Solomon had finished building the house of the LORD and the royal palace, and had achieved all that he had desired to do, the LORD appeared to him a second time, as He had appeared to him at Gibeon. And the LORD said to him:
"I have heard your prayer and petition before Me. I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting My Name there forever; My eyes and My heart will be there for all time.
And as for you, if you walk before Me as your father David walked, with a heart of integrity and uprightness, doing all I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and ordinances, then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised your father David when I said, 'You will never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.'
But if indeed you or your sons turn away from following Me and do not keep the commandments and statutes I have set before you, and if you go off to serve and worship other gods, then I will cut off Israel from the land that I have given them, and I will banish from My presence this temple I have sanctified for My Name.

Then Israel will become an object of scorn and ridicule among all peoples.
And when this temple has become a heap of rubble, all who pass by it will be appalled and will hiss and say, 'Why has the LORD done such a thing to this land and to this temple?' And others will answer, 'Because they have forsaken the LORD their God who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, worshiping and serving them— because of this, the LORD has brought all this disaster upon them.'"

Now at the end of the twenty years during which Solomon built these two houses, the house of the LORD and the royal palace, King Solomon gave twenty towns in the land of Galilee to Hiram king of Tyre, who had supplied him with cedar and cypress logs and gold for his every desire. So Hiram went out from Tyre to inspect the towns that Solomon had given him, but he was not pleased with them.

"What are these towns you have given me, my brother?" asked Hiram, and he called them the Land of Cabul, as they are called to this day.

And Hiram had sent the king 120 talents of gold.

This is the account of the forced labor that King Solomon imposed to build the house of the LORD, his own palace, the supporting terraces, and the wall of Jerusalem, as well as Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer.

Pharaoh king of Egypt had attacked and captured Gezer. He had set it on fire, killed the Canaanites who lived in the city, and given it as a dowry to his daughter, Solomon's wife. So Solomon rebuilt Gezer, Lower Beth-horon, Baalath, and Tamar in the Wilderness of Judah, as well as all the store cities that Solomon had for his chariots and horses — whatever he desired to build in Jerusalem, Lebanon, and throughout the land of his dominion.

As for all the people who remained of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites (the people who were not Israelites) — their descendants who remained in the land, those whom the Israelites were unable to devote to destruction— Solomon conscripted these people to be forced laborers, as they are to this day.

But Solomon did not consign any of the Israelites to slavery, because they were his men of war, his servants, his officers, his captains, and the commanders of his chariots and cavalry. They were also the chief officers over Solomon's projects: 550 supervisors over the people who did the work.

As soon as Pharaoh's daughter had come up from the City of David to the palace that Solomon had built for her, he built the supporting terraces.

Three times a year Solomon offered burnt offerings and peace offerings on the altar he had built for the LORD, burning incense with them before the LORD. So he completed the temple.

King Solomon also assembled a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber, which is near Eloth in Edom, on the shore of the Red Sea. And Hiram sent his servants, sailors who knew the sea, to serve in the fleet with Solomon's servants. They sailed to Ophir and imported gold from there— 420 talents— and delivered it to Solomon.

Now when the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to test him with difficult questions. She arrived in Jerusalem with a very large caravan— with camels bearing spices, gold in great abundance, and precious stones.

And she came to Solomon and spoke to him all that was on her mind. And Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was too difficult for the king to explain.

When the queen of Sheba saw all the wisdom of Solomon, the palace he had built, the food at his table, the seating of his servants, the service and attire of his attendants, his cupbearers, and the burnt offerings he presented at the house of the LORD, it took her breath away.

She said to the king, "The report I heard in my own country about your words and wisdom is true. But I did not believe these things until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half was told to me. Your wisdom and prosperity have far exceeded the report I heard. How blessed are your men! How blessed are these servants of yours who stand continually before you and hear your wisdom! Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you to set you on the throne of Israel. Because of the LORD's eternal love for Israel, He has made you king to carry out justice and righteousness."

Then she gave the king 120 talents of gold, a great quantity of spices, and precious stones. Never again were spices in such abundance brought in as those the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

(The fleet of Hiram that brought gold from Ophir also brought from Ophir a great cargo of almug wood and precious stones. The king made the almug wood into steps for the house of the LORD and for the king's palace, and into lyres and harps for the singers. Never before had such almug wood been brought in, nor has such been seen again to this day.)

King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all she desired — whatever she asked — besides what he had given her out of his royal bounty. Then she left and returned to her own country, along with her servants.

The weight of gold that came to Solomon each year was 666 talents, not including the revenue from the merchants, traders, and all the Arabian kings and governors of the land.

King Solomon made two hundred large shields of hammered gold; six hundred shekels of gold went into each shield. He also made three hundred small shields of hammered gold; three minas of gold went into each shield. And the king put them in the House of the Forest of Lebanon.

Additionally, the king made a great throne of ivory and overlaid it with pure gold. The throne had six steps, and its back had a rounded top. There were armrests on both sides of the seat, with a lion standing beside each armrest. Twelve lions stood on the six steps, one at either end of each step. Nothing like this had ever been made for any kingdom.

All King Solomon's drinking cups were gold, and all the utensils of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. There was no silver, because it was accounted as nothing in the days of Solomon. For the king had the ships of Tarshish at sea with Hiram's fleet,

and once every three years the ships of Tarshish would arrive bearing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.

So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. The whole world sought an audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom that God had put in his heart. Year after year, each visitor would bring his tribute: articles of silver and gold, clothing, weapons, spices, horses, and mules.

Solomon accumulated 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horses, which he stationed in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem. The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as abundant as sycamore in the foothills.

Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and Kue; the royal merchants purchased them from Kue. A chariot could be imported from Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty. Likewise, they exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and to the kings of Aram.

King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh — women of Moab, Ammon, Edom, and Sidon, as well as Hittite women. These women were from the nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, for surely they will turn your hearts after their gods." Yet Solomon clung to these women in love. He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines — and his wives turned his heart away.

For when Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and he was not wholeheartedly devoted to the LORD his God, as his father David had been. Solomon followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD; unlike his father David, he did not follow the LORD completely.

At that time on a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

Now the LORD grew angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although He had warned Solomon explicitly not to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the LORD's command.

Then the LORD said to Solomon, "Because you have done this and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. Nevertheless, for the sake of your father David, I will not do it during your lifetime; I will tear it out of the hand of your son. Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom away from him. I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

Then the LORD raised up against Solomon an adversary, Hadad the Edomite, from the royal line of Edom.

Earlier, when David was in Edom, Joab the commander of the army had gone to bury the dead and had struck down every male in Edom. Joab and all Israel had stayed there six months, until he had killed every male in Edom. But Hadad, still just a young boy, had fled to Egypt, along with some Edomites who were servants of his father.

Hadad and his men set out from Midian and went to Paran. They took men from Paran with them and went to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave Hadad a house and land and provided him with food.

There Hadad found such great favor in the sight of Pharaoh that he gave to him in marriage the sister of Queen Tahpenes, his own wife. And the sister of Tahpenes bore Hadad a son named Genubath. Tahpenes herself weaned him in Pharaoh's palace, and Genubath lived there among the sons of Pharaoh.

When Hadad heard in Egypt that David had rested with his fathers and that Joab, the commander of the army, was dead, he said to Pharaoh, "Let me go, that I may return to my own country."

But Pharaoh asked him, "What have you lacked here with me that you suddenly want to go back to your own country?"

"Nothing," Hadad replied, "but please let me go."

And God raised up against Solomon another adversary, Rezon the son of Eliada, who had fled from his master, Hadadezer king of Zobah, and had gathered men to himself. When David killed the Zobaites, Rezon captained a band of raiders and went to Damascus, where they settled and gained control.

Rezon was Israel's enemy throughout the days of Solomon, adding to the trouble caused by Hadad. So Rezon ruled over Aram with hostility toward Israel.

Now Jeroboam son of Nebat was an Ephraimite from Zeredah whose mother was a widow named Zeruah. Jeroboam was a servant of Solomon, but he rebelled against the king, and this is the account of his rebellion against the king.

Solomon had built the supporting terraces and repaired the gap in the wall of the city of his father David. Now Jeroboam was a mighty man of valor. So when Solomon noticed that the young man was industrious, he put him in charge of the whole labor force of the house of Joseph.

During that time, the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite met Jeroboam on the road as he was going out of Jerusalem. Now Ahijah had wrapped himself in a new cloak, and the two of them were alone in the open field.

And Ahijah took hold of the new cloak he was wearing, tore it into twelve pieces, and said to Jeroboam, "Take ten pieces for yourself, for this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and I will give you ten tribes. But one tribe will remain for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel.

For they have forsaken Me to worship Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the Ammonites. They have not walked in My ways, nor done what is right in My eyes, nor kept My statutes and judgments, as Solomon's father David did.

Nevertheless, I will not take the whole kingdom out of Solomon's hand, because I have made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of David My servant, whom I chose because he kept My commandments and

statutes. But I will take ten tribes of the kingdom from the hand of his son and give them to you. I will give one tribe to his son, so that My servant David will always have a lamp before Me in Jerusalem, the city where I chose to put My Name. But as for you, I will take you, and you shall reign over all that your heart desires, and you will be king over Israel.

If you listen to all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight in order to keep My statutes and commandments as My servant David did, then I will be with you. I will build you a lasting dynasty just as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you. Because of this, I will humble David's descendants — but not forever.'"

Solomon therefore sought to kill Jeroboam. But Jeroboam arose and fled to Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, where he remained until the death of Solomon.

As for the rest of the acts of Solomon — all that he did, as well as his wisdom — are they not written in the Book of the Acts of Solomon? Thus the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years.

And Solomon rested with his fathers and was buried in the city of his father David. And his son Rehoboam reigned in his place.

Then Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone there to make him king. When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard about this, he was still in Egypt where he had fled from King Solomon and had been living ever since. So they sent for Jeroboam, and he and the whole assembly of Israel came to Rehoboam and said, "Your father put a heavy yoke on us. But now you must lighten the burden of your father's service and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you."

Rehoboam answered, "Go away for three days and then return to me." So the people departed.

Then King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon during his lifetime. "How do you advise me to respond to these people?" he asked.

They replied, "If you will be a servant to these people and serve them this day, and if you will respond by speaking kind words to them, they will be your servants forever."

But Rehoboam rejected the advice of the elders; instead, he consulted the young men who had grown up with him and served him. He asked them, "What message do you advise that we send back to these people who have spoken to me, saying, 'Lighten the yoke your father put on us'?"

The young men who had grown up with him replied, "This is how you should answer these people who said to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you must make it lighter.' This is what you should tell them: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist! Whereas my father burdened you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. Whereas my father scourged you with whips, I will scourge you with scorpions.'"

After three days, Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam, since the king had said, "Come back to me on the third day." And the king answered the people harshly. He rejected the advice of the elders and spoke to them as the young men had advised, saying, "Whereas my father made your yoke heavy, I will add to your yoke. Whereas my father scourged you with whips, I will scourge you with scorpions."

So the king did not listen to the people, and indeed this turn of events was from the LORD, to fulfill the word He had spoken to Jeroboam son of Nebat through Ahijah the Shilonite.

When all Israel saw that the king had refused to listen to them, they answered the king:

> "What portion do we have in David, and what inheritance in the son of Jesse? To your tents, O Israel! Look now to your own house, O David!"

So the Israelites went home, but Rehoboam still reigned over the Israelites living in the cities of Judah.

Then King Rehoboam sent out Adoram, who was in charge of the forced labor, but all Israel stoned him to death. And King Rehoboam mounted his chariot in haste and escaped to Jerusalem. So to this day Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David.

When all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, they summoned him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. Only the tribe of Judah followed the house of David.

And when Rehoboam arrived in Jerusalem, he mobilized the whole house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin — 180,000 chosen warriors — to fight against the house of Israel and restore the kingdom to Rehoboam son of Solomon.

But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God: "Tell Rehoboam son of Solomon king of Judah, all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and the rest of the people that this is what the LORD says: 'You are not to go up and fight against your brothers, the Israelites. Each of you must return home, for this is My doing.'"

So they listened to the word of the LORD and turned back according to the word of the LORD.

Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and lived there. And from there he went out and built Penuel.

Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom might revert to the house of David. If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, their hearts will return to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah; then they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah."

After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves and said to the people, "Going up to Jerusalem is too much for you. Here, O Israel, are your gods, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt."

One calf he set up in Bethel, and the other in Dan. And this thing became a sin; the people walked as far as Dan to worship before one of the calves.

Jeroboam also built shrines on the high places and appointed from every class of people priests who were not Levites. And Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the feast that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices on the altar; he made this offering in Bethel to sacrifice to the calves he had set up, and he installed priests in Bethel for the high places he had set up.

On the fifteenth day of the eighth month, a month of his own choosing, Jeroboam offered sacrifices on the altar he had set up in Bethel. So he ordained a feast for

the Israelites, offered sacrifices on the altar, and burned incense.

Suddenly, as Jeroboam was standing beside the altar to burn incense, there came a man of God from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD. And he cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD, "O altar, O altar, this is what the LORD says: 'A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David, and upon you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense upon you, and human bones will be burned upon you.'"

That day the man of God gave a sign, saying, "The LORD has spoken this sign: 'Surely the altar will be split apart, and the ashes upon it will be poured out.'"

Now when King Jeroboam, who was at the altar in Bethel, heard the word that the man of God had cried out against it, he stretched out his hand and said, "Seize him!" But the hand he stretched out toward him withered, so that he could not pull it back. And the altar was split apart, and the ashes poured out, according to the sign that the man of God had given by the word of the LORD.

Then the king responded to the man of God, "Intercede with the LORD your God and pray for me that my hand may be restored."

So the man of God interceded with the LORD, and the king's hand was restored to him as it was before.

Then the king said to the man of God, "Come home with me and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward."

But the man of God replied, "If you were to give me half your possessions, I still would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water in this place. For this is what I was commanded by the word of the LORD: 'You must not eat bread or drink water or return by the way you came.'"

So the man of God went another way and did not return by the way he had come to Bethel.

Now a certain old prophet was living in Bethel, and his sons came and told him all the deeds that the man of God had done that day in Bethel. They also told their father the words that the man had spoken to the king.

"Which way did he go?" their father asked.

And his sons showed him the way taken by the man of God, who had come from Judah. So the prophet said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me."

Then they saddled the donkey for him, and he mounted it and went after the man of God. He found him sitting under an oak tree and asked, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?"

"I am," he replied.

So the prophet said to the man of God, "Come home with me and eat some bread."

But the man replied, "I cannot go home with you, and I will not eat bread or drink water with you in this place. For I have been told by the word of the LORD: 'You must not eat bread or drink water there or return by the way you came.'"

Then the prophet replied, "I too am a prophet like you, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'Bring him back with you to your house, so that he may eat bread and drink water.'"

The old prophet was lying to him, but the man of God went back with him, ate bread in his house, and drank water.

While they were sitting at the table, the word of the LORD came to the prophet who had brought him back, and the prophet cried out to the man of God who had come from Judah, "This is what the LORD says: 'Because you have defied the word of the LORD and have not kept the commandment that the LORD your God gave you, but you went back and ate bread and drank water in the place where He told you not to do so, your body shall never reach the tomb of your fathers.'"

And after the man of God had finished eating and drinking, the old prophet who had brought him back saddled the donkey for him. As he went on his way, a lion met him on the road and killed him, and his body was left lying in the road, with the donkey and the lion standing beside it.

And there were men passing by who saw the body lying in the road with the lion standing beside it, and they went and reported this in the city where the old prophet lived.

When the prophet who had brought him back from his journey heard this, he said, "It is the man of God who disobeyed the command of the LORD. Therefore the LORD has delivered him to the lion, and it has mauled him and killed him, according to the word that the LORD had spoken to him."

Then the old prophet instructed his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me." So they saddled it, and he went and found the body lying in the road, with the donkey and the lion standing beside it. The lion had not eaten the body or mauled the donkey. So the old prophet lifted up the body of the man of God, laid it on the donkey, and brought it back to his own city to mourn for him and bury him. Then he laid the body in his own tomb, and they lamented over him, "Oh, my brother!"

After he had buried him, the prophet said to his sons, "When I die, you must bury me in the tomb where the man of God is buried. Lay my bones beside his bones, for the message that he cried out by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel and against all the shrines on the high places in the cities of Samaria will surely come to pass."

Even after these events, Jeroboam did not repent of his evil ways, but again he appointed priests for the high places from every class of people. He ordained anyone who desired to be a priest of the high places. And this was the sin of the house of Jeroboam that led to its extermination and destruction from the face of the earth.

At that time Abijah son of Jeroboam became ill, and Jeroboam said to his wife, "Now get up, disguise yourself so they will not recognize you as my wife, and go to Shiloh. For Ahijah the prophet is there; it was he who spoke about my kingship over this people. Take with you ten loaves of bread, some cakes, and a jar of honey, and go to him. He will tell you what will become of the boy."

Jeroboam's wife did as instructed; she arose and went to Shiloh and arrived at Ahijah's house. Now Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were dim because of his age. But the LORD had said to Ahijah, "Behold, the wife of Jeroboam is coming to ask you about her son, for he is ill. You are to say such and such to her, because when she arrives, she will be disguised."

So when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet entering the door, he said, “Come in, wife of Jeroboam! Why are you disguised? For I have been sent to you with bad news. Go, tell Jeroboam that this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘I raised you up from among the people and appointed you ruler over My people Israel. I tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you. But you have not been like My servant David, who kept My commandments and followed Me with all his heart, doing only what was right in My eyes.

You have done more evil than all who came before you. You have proceeded to make for yourself other gods and molten images to provoke Me, and you have flung Me behind your back. Because of all this, behold, I am bringing disaster on the house of Jeroboam:

> I will cut off from Jeroboam every male, both slave and free, in Israel; I will burn up the house of Jeroboam as one burns up dung until it is gone! Anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city will be eaten by dogs, and anyone who dies in the field will be eaten by the birds of the air.’ For the LORD has spoken.

As for you, get up and go home. When your feet enter the city, the child will die. All Israel will mourn for him and bury him. For this is the only one belonging to Jeroboam who will receive a proper burial, because only in him has the LORD, the God of Israel, found any good in the house of Jeroboam.

Moreover, the LORD will raise up for Himself a king over Israel who will cut off the house of Jeroboam. This is the day — yes, even today! For the LORD will strike Israel as a reed is shaken in the water. He will uproot Israel from this good land that He gave their fathers, and He will scatter them beyond the Euphrates, because they have made their Asherah poles, provoking the LORD to anger. So He will give Israel over on account of the sins Jeroboam has committed and has caused Israel to commit.”

Then Jeroboam’s wife got up and departed for Tirzah, and as soon as she stepped over the threshold of the house, the boy died. And they buried him, and all Israel mourned for him, according to the word that the LORD had spoken through His servant Ahijah the prophet.

As for the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he waged war and how he reigned, they are indeed written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

And the length of Jeroboam’s reign was twenty-two years, and he rested with his fathers, and his son Nadab reigned in his place.

Meanwhile, Rehoboam son of Solomon reigned in Judah. He was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city the LORD had chosen from all the tribes of Israel in which to put His Name. His mother’s name was Naamah the Ammonite.

And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and by the sins they committed they provoked Him to jealous anger more than all their fathers had done. They also built for themselves high places, sacred pillars, and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every green tree. There were even male shrine prostitutes in the land. They imitated all the abominations of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites.

In the fifth year of Rehoboam’s reign, Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem. He seized the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the royal palace. He took everything, including all the gold shields that Solomon had made.

Then King Rehoboam made bronze shields in their place and committed them to the care of the captains of the guard on duty at the entrance to the royal palace. And whenever the king entered the house of the LORD, the guards would bear the shields, and later they would return them to the guardroom.

As for the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, along with all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam throughout their days. And Rehoboam rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the City of David; his mother’s name was Naamah the Ammonite. And his son Abijam reigned in his place.

In the eighteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam son of Nebat, Abijam became king of Judah, and he reigned in Jerusalem three years. His mother’s name was Maacah daughter of Abishalom.

And Abijam walked in all the sins that his father before him had committed, and his heart was not as fully devoted to the LORD his God as the heart of David his forefather had been. Nevertheless, for the sake of David, the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem by raising up a son to succeed him and to make Jerusalem strong. For David had done what was right in the eyes of the LORD and had not turned aside from anything the LORD commanded all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.

And there was war between the houses of Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of Abijam’s life.

As for the rest of the acts of Abijam, along with all his accomplishments, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? And there was war between Abijam and Jeroboam.

And Abijam rested with his fathers and was buried in the City of David, and his son Asa reigned in his place.

In the twentieth year of Jeroboam’s reign over Israel, Asa became king of Judah, and he reigned in Jerusalem forty-one years. His grandmother’s name was Maacah daughter of Abishalom.

And Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father David had done. He banished the male shrine prostitutes from the land and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. He also removed his grandmother Maacah from her position as queen mother because she had made a detestable Asherah pole. Asa chopped down the pole and burned it in the Kidron Valley.

The high places were not removed, but Asa’s heart was fully devoted to the LORD all his days. And he brought into the house of the LORD the silver and gold and the articles that he and his father had dedicated.

Now there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel throughout their days. Baasha king of Israel went to war against Judah and fortified Ramah to prevent anyone from leaving or entering the territory of Asa king of Judah.

So Asa withdrew all the silver and gold that remained in the treasuries of the house of the LORD and the royal palace. He entrusted it to his servants and sent them with this message to Ben-hadad son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, the king of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus: “Let there be a treaty between me and you as there was between my father and your father. See, I have sent you a gift of silver and gold. Now go and break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel, so that he will withdraw from me.”

And Ben-hadad listened to King Asa and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel, conquering Ijon, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah, and the whole land of Naphtali, including the region of Chinnereth.

When Baasha learned of this, he stopped fortifying Ramah and withdrew to Tirzah. Then King Asa summoned all the men of Judah, with no exceptions, and they carried away the stones of Ramah and the timbers Baasha had used for building. And with these materials King Asa built up Geba of Benjamin, as well as Mizpah.

Now the rest of the acts of Asa, along with all his might, all his accomplishments, and the cities he built, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? In his old age, however, he became diseased in his feet.

And Asa rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the city of his father David, and his son Jehoshaphat reigned in his place.

In the second year of Asa’s reign over Judah, Nadab son of Jeroboam became king of Israel, and he reigned two years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD and walked in the way of his father and in his sin, which he had caused Israel to commit.

Then Baasha son of Ahijah of the house of Issachar conspired against Nadab, and Baasha struck him down at Gibbethon of the Philistines while Nadab and all Israel were besieging the city. In the third year of Asa’s reign over Judah, Baasha killed Nadab and reigned in his place.

As soon as Baasha became king, he struck down the entire household of Jeroboam. He did not leave to Jeroboam anyone who breathed, but destroyed them all according to the word that the LORD had spoken through His servant Ahijah the Shilonite, because of the sins Jeroboam had committed and had caused Israel to commit, and because he had provoked the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger.

As for the rest of the acts of Nadab, along with all his accomplishments, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel throughout their days.

In the third year of Asa’s reign over Judah, Baasha son of Ahijah became king of all Israel, and he reigned in Tirzah twenty-four years.

And Baasha did evil in the sight of the LORD and walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin, which he had caused Israel to commit.

Then the word of the LORD came to Jehu son of Hanani against Baasha, saying: “Even though I lifted you out of the dust and made you ruler over My people Israel, you have walked in the way of Jeroboam and have caused My people Israel to sin and to provoke Me to anger by their sins. So now I will consume Baasha and his house, and I will make your house like that of Jeroboam son of Nebat:

> Anyone belonging to Baasha who dies in the city will be eaten by dogs, and anyone who dies in the field will be eaten by the birds of the air.”

As for the rest of the acts of Baasha, along with his accomplishments and might, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? And Baasha rested with his fathers and was buried in Tirzah, and his son Elah reigned in his place.

Moreover, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Jehu son of Hanani against Baasha and his house, because of all the evil he had done in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of his hands and becoming like the house of Jeroboam, and also because Baasha had struck down the house of Jeroboam.

In the twenty-sixth year of Asa’s reign over Judah, Elah son of Baasha became king of Israel, and he reigned in Tirzah two years.

However, while Elah was in Tirzah getting drunk in the house of Arza the steward of his household there, Elah’s servant Zimri, the commander of half his chariots, conspired against him. So in the twenty-seventh year of Asa’s reign over Judah, Zimri went in, struck Elah down, and killed him. And Zimri reigned in his place.

As soon as Zimri began to reign and was seated on the throne, he struck down the entire household of Baasha. He did not leave a single male, whether a kinsman or friend. So Zimri destroyed the entire household of Baasha, according to the word that the LORD had spoken against Baasha through Jehu the prophet. This happened because of all the sins Baasha and his son Elah had committed and had caused Israel to commit, provoking the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger with their worthless idols.

As for the rest of the acts of Elah, along with all his accomplishments, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

In the twenty-seventh year of Asa’s reign over Judah, Zimri reigned in Tirzah for seven days. Now the troops were encamped against Gibbethon of the Philistines, and the people in the camp heard that Zimri had conspired against the king and struck him down. So there in the camp that very day, all Israel proclaimed Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel.

Then Omri and all the Israelites marched up from Gibbethon and besieged Tirzah. When Zimri saw that the city was captured, he entered the citadel of the royal palace and burned it down upon himself. So he died because of the sins he had committed, doing evil in the sight of the LORD and following the example of Jeroboam and the sin he had committed and had caused Israel to commit.

As for the rest of the acts of Zimri and the treason he committed, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

At that time the people of Israel were divided: Half of the people supported Tibni son of Ginath as king, and half supported Omri. But the followers of Omri proved

stronger than those of Tibni son of Ginath. So Tibni died and Omri became king.

In the thirty-first year of Asa's reign over Judah, Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned twelve years, six of them in Tirzah. He bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver and built a city there, calling it Samaria after the name of Shemer, who had owned the hill.

But Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD and acted more wickedly than all who were before him. For he walked in all the ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat and in his sins, which he caused Israel to commit, provoking the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger with their worthless idols.

As for the rest of the acts of Omri, along with his accomplishments and the might he exercised, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

And Omri rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria, and his son Ahab reigned in his place.

In the thirty-eighth year of Asa's reign over Judah, Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria twenty-two years.

However, Ahab son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. And as if it were not enough for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, he even married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and he then proceeded to serve and worship Baal.

First, Ahab set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he had built in Samaria. Then he set up an Asherah pole. Thus Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel before him.

In Ahab's days, Hiel the Bethelite rebuilt Jericho. At the cost of Abiram his firstborn he laid its foundation, and at the cost of Segub his youngest he set up its gates, according to the word that the LORD had spoken through Joshua son of Nun.

Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was among the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there will be neither dew nor rain in these years except at my word!"

Then a revelation from the LORD came to Elijah: "Leave here, turn eastward, and hide yourself by the Brook of Cherith, east of the Jordan. And you are to drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there."

So Elijah did what the LORD had told him, and he went and lived by the Brook of Cherith, east of the Jordan. The ravens would bring him bread and meat in the morning and evening, and he would drink from the brook. Some time later, however, the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land.

Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah: "Get up and go to Zarephath of Sidon, and stay there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you."

So Elijah got up and went to Zarephath. When he arrived at the city gate, there was a widow gathering sticks. Elijah called to her and said, "Please bring me a little water in a cup, so that I may drink." And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a piece of bread."

But she replied, "As surely as the LORD your God lives, I have no bread— only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. Look, I am gathering a couple of sticks to take home and prepare a meal for myself and my son, so that we may eat it and die."

"Do not be afraid," Elijah said to her. "Go and do as you have said. But first make me a small cake of bread from what you have, and bring it out to me. Afterward, make some for yourself and your son, for this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be exhausted and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD sends rain upon the face of the earth.'"

So she went and did according to the word of Elijah, and there was food every day for Elijah and the woman and her household. The jar of flour was not exhausted and the jug of oil did not run dry, according to the word that the LORD had spoken through Elijah.

Later, the son of the woman who owned the house became ill, and his sickness grew worse and worse, until no breath remained in him. "O man of God," said the woman to Elijah, "what have you done to me? Have you come to remind me of my iniquity and cause the death of my son?"

But Elijah said to her, "Give me your son."

So he took him from her arms, carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed. Then he cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, have You also brought tragedy on this widow who has opened her home to me, by causing her son to die?" Then he stretched himself out over the child three times and cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, please let this boy's life return to him!"

And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah, and the child's life returned to him, and he lived. Then Elijah took the child, brought him down from the upper room into the house, and gave him to his mother. "Look, your son is alive," Elijah declared.

Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is truth."

After a long time, in the third year of the drought, the word of the LORD came to Elijah: "Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the face of the earth."

So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab. The famine was severe in Samaria, and Ahab summoned Obadiah, who was in charge of the palace.

(Now Obadiah greatly feared the LORD, for when Jezebel had slaughtered the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah had taken a hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty men per cave, providing them with food and water.)

Then Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go throughout the land to every spring and every valley. Perhaps we will find grass to keep the horses and mules alive so that we will not have to destroy any livestock."

So they divided the land to explore. Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went the other way by himself.

Now as Obadiah went on his way, Elijah suddenly met him. When Obadiah recognized him, he fell face-down and said, "Is it you, my lord Elijah?"

"It is I," he answered. "Go tell your master, 'Elijah is here!'"

But Obadiah replied, "How have I sinned, that you are handing your servant over to Ahab to put me to death? As surely as the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my lord has not sent someone to search for you. When they said, 'He is not here,' he made that kingdom or nation swear that they had not found you. And now you say, 'Go tell your master that Elijah is here!'

I do not know where the Spirit of the LORD may carry you off when I leave you. Then when I go and tell Ahab and he does not find you, he will kill me. But I, your servant, have feared the LORD from my youth. Was it not reported to my lord what I did when Jezebel slaughtered the prophets of the LORD? I hid a hundred prophets of the LORD, fifty men per cave, and I provided them with food and water. And now you say, 'Go tell your lord that Elijah is here!' He will kill me!"

Then Elijah said, "As surely as the LORD of Hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will present myself to Ahab today."

So Obadiah went to inform Ahab, who went to meet Elijah. When Ahab saw Elijah, he said to him, "Is that you, O troubler of Israel?"

"I have not troubled Israel," Elijah replied, "but you and your father's house have, for you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and have followed the Baals. Now summon all Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel, along with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah who eat at Jezebel's table."

So Ahab summoned all the Israelites and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. Then Elijah approached all the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him. But if Baal is God, follow him."

But the people did not answer a word.

Then Elijah said to the people, "I am the only remaining prophet of the LORD, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. Get two bulls for us. Let the prophets of Baal choose one bull for themselves, cut it into pieces, and place it on the wood but not light the fire. And I will prepare the other bull and place it on the wood but not light the fire. Then you may call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The God who answers by fire, He is God."

And all the people answered, "What you say is good."

Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Since you are so numerous, choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first. Then call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire."

And they took the bull that was given them, prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, shouting, "O Baal, answer us!"

But there was no sound, and no one answered as they leaped around the altar they had made.

At noon Elijah began to taunt them, saying, "Shout louder, for he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or occupied, or on a journey. Perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened!"

So they shouted louder and cut themselves with knives and lances, as was their custom, until the blood gushed over them.

Midday passed, and they kept on raving until the time of the evening sacrifice. But there was no response; no one answered, no one paid attention.

Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So all the people approached him, and he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been torn down.

And Elijah took twelve stones, one for each tribe of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come and said, "Israel shall be your name." And with the stones, Elijah built an altar in the name of the LORD. Then he dug a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed.

Next, he arranged the wood, cut up the bull, placed it on the wood, and said, "Fill four waterpots and pour the water on the offering and on the wood."

"Do it a second time," he said, and they did it a second time.

"Do it a third time," he said, and they did it a third time.

So the water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench.

At the time of the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet approached the altar and said, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and have done all these things at Your command. Answer me, O LORD! Answer me, so that this people will know that You, the LORD, are God, and that You have turned their hearts back again."

Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and it licked up the water in the trench.

When all the people saw this, they fell facedown and said, "The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!"

Then Elijah ordered them, "Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let a single one escape." So they seized them, and Elijah brought them down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered them there.

And Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain."

So Ahab went up to eat and drink. But Elijah climbed to the summit of Carmel, bent down on the ground, and put his face between his knees. "Go and look toward the sea," he said to his servant.

So the servant went and looked, and he said, "There is nothing there."

Seven times Elijah said, "Go back."

On the seventh time the servant reported, "There is a cloud as small as a man's hand rising from the sea."

And Elijah replied, "Go and tell Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.'"

Meanwhile, the sky grew dark with clouds and wind, and a heavy rain began to fall. So Ahab rode away and went to Jezreel.

And the hand of the LORD came upon Elijah, and he tucked his cloak into his belt and ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.

Now Ahab told Jezebel everything that Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "May the gods deal with me, and ever so severely, if by

this time tomorrow I have not made your life like the lives of those you killed!"

And Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He sat down under a broom tree and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life, for I am no better than my fathers."

Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep.

Suddenly an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat."

And he looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank and lay down again.

A second time the angel of the LORD returned and touched him, saying, "Get up and eat, or the journey will be too much for you."

So he got up and ate and drank. And strengthened by that food, he walked forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.

There Elijah entered a cave and spent the night. And the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

"I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of Hosts," he replied, "but the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I am the only one left, and they are seeking my life as well."

Then the LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD. Behold, the LORD is about to pass by."

And a great and mighty wind tore into the mountains and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind.

After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.

After the earthquake there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire.

And after the fire came a still, small voice. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

"I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of Hosts," he replied, "but the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I am the only one left, and they are seeking my life as well."

Then the LORD said to him, "Go back by the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you arrive, you are to anoint Hazael as king over Aram. You are also to anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel and Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel-meholah to succeed you as prophet.

Then Jehu will put to death whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death whoever escapes the sword of Jehu.

Nevertheless, I have reserved seven thousand in Israel— all whose knees have not bowed to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him."

So Elijah departed and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve teams of oxen, and he was with the twelfth team. Elijah passed by him and threw his cloak around him.

So Elisha left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, "Please let me kiss my father and mother goodbye, and then I will follow you."

"Go on back," Elijah replied, "for what have I done to you?"

So Elisha turned back from him, took his pair of oxen, and slaughtered them. Using the oxen's equipment for fuel, he cooked the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow and serve Elijah.

Now Ben-hadad king of Aram assembled his entire army. Accompanied by thirty-two kings with their horses and chariots, he marched up, besieged Samaria, and waged war against it. Then he sent messengers into the city to Ahab king of Israel, saying, "This is what Ben-hadad says: 'Your silver and gold are mine, and your best wives and children are mine!'"

And the king of Israel replied, "Just as you say, my lord the king: I am yours, along with all that I have."

The messengers came back and said, "This is what Ben-hadad says: 'I have sent to you to demand your silver, your gold, your wives, and your children. But about this time tomorrow I will send my servants to search your palace and the houses of your servants. They will seize and carry away all that is precious to you.'"

Then the king of Israel summoned all the elders of the land and said, "Please take note and see that this man is looking for trouble, for when he demanded my wives, my children, my silver, and my gold, I did not deny him."

And the elders and the people all said, "Do not listen to him or consent to his terms."

So Ahab answered the messengers of Ben-hadad, "Tell my lord the king, 'All that you demanded of your servant the first time I will do, but this thing I cannot do.'"

So the messengers departed and relayed the message to Ben-hadad.

Then Ben-hadad sent another message to Ahab: "May the gods deal with me, and ever so severely, if enough dust remains of Samaria for each of my men to have a handful."

And the king of Israel replied, "Tell him: 'The one putting on his armor should not boast like one taking it off.'"

Ben-hadad received this message while he and the kings were drinking in their tents, and he said to his servants, "Take your positions." So they stationed themselves against the city.

Meanwhile a prophet approached Ahab king of Israel and declared, "This is what the LORD says: 'Do you see this entire great army? Behold, I will deliver it into your hand this very day, and you will know that I am the LORD.'"

"By whom?" Ahab asked.

And the prophet replied, "This is what the LORD says: 'By the young officers of the district governors.'"

"Who will start the battle?" asked Ahab.

"You will," answered the prophet.

So Ahab assembled the young officers of the district governors, and there were 232 men. And after them, he assembled the rest of the Israelite troops, 7,000 in all.

They marched out at noon while Ben-hadad and the 32 kings allied with him were in their tents getting drunk. And the young officers of the district governors marched out first.

Now Ben-hadad had sent out scouts, who reported to him, "Men are marching out of Samaria."

"If they have marched out in peace," he said, "take them alive. Even if they have marched out for war, take them alive."

Meanwhile, these young officers of the district governors marched out of the city, with the army behind them, and each one struck down his opponent. So the Arameans fled, with the Israelites in pursuit. But Ben-hadad king of Aram escaped on horseback with the cavalry.

Then the king of Israel marched out and attacked the horses and chariots, inflicting a great slaughter on the Arameans.

Afterward, the prophet approached the king of Israel and said, "Go and strengthen your position, and take note what you must do, for in the spring the king of Aram will come up against you."

Meanwhile, the servants of the king of Aram said to him, "Their gods are gods of the hills. That is why they prevailed over us. Instead, we should fight them on the plains; surely then we will prevail. So do this: Dismiss all the kings from their positions and replace them with other officers. And you must raise an army like the one you have lost— horse for horse and chariot for chariot — so we can fight the Israelites on the plain, where we will surely prevail."

And the king approved their plan and acted accordingly.

In the spring, Ben-hadad mobilized the Arameans and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel. The Israelites also mobilized, gathered supplies, and marched out to meet them.

The Israelites camped before them like two small flocks of goats, while the Arameans covered the countryside.

Then the man of God approached the king of Israel and said, "This is what the LORD says: 'Because the Arameans have said that the LORD is a god of the hills and not of the valleys, I will deliver all this great army into your hand. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'"

For seven days the armies camped opposite each other, and on the seventh day the battle ensued, and the Israelites struck down the Arameans— a hundred thousand foot soldiers in one day.

The rest of them fled into the city of Aphek, where the wall fell on twenty-seven thousand of the remaining men. Ben-hadad also fled to the city and hid in an inner room.

Then the servants of Ben-hadad said to him, "Look now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful. Let us go out to the king of Israel with sackcloth around our waists and ropes around our heads. Perhaps he will spare your life."

So with sackcloth around their waists and ropes around their heads, they went to the king of Israel and said, "Your servant Ben-hadad says, 'Please spare my life.'"

And the king answered, "Is he still alive? He is my brother."

Now the men were looking for a sign of hope, and they quickly grasped at this word and replied, "Yes, your brother Ben-hadad."

"Go and get him!" said the king.

Then Ben-hadad came out, and Ahab had him come up into his chariot.

Ben-hadad said to him, "I will restore the cities my father took from your father; you may set up your own marketplaces in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria."

"By this treaty I release you," Ahab replied. So he made a treaty with him and sent him away.

Meanwhile, by the word of the LORD, one of the sons of the prophets said to his companion, "Strike me, please!"

But the man refused to strike him.

Then the prophet said to him, "Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, as soon as you depart from me a lion will kill you."

And when he left, a lion found him and killed him.

Then the prophet found another man and said, "Strike me, please!"

So the man struck him and wounded him, and the prophet went and waited on the road for the king, disguising himself with a bandage over his eyes.

As the king passed by, he cried out to the king: "Your servant had marched out into the middle of the battle, when suddenly a man came over with a captive and told me, 'Guard this man! If he goes missing for any reason, your life will be exchanged for his life, or you will weigh out a talent of silver.' But while your servant was busy here and there, the man disappeared."

And the king of Israel said to him, "So shall your judgment be; you have pronounced it on yourself."

Then the prophet quickly removed the bandage from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets.

And the prophet said to the king, "This is what the LORD says: 'Because you have let slip from your hand the man I had devoted to destruction, your life will be exchanged for his life, and your people for his people.'"

Sullen and angry, the king of Israel went home to Samaria.

Some time after these events, Naboth the Jezreelite owned a vineyard in Jezreel next to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. So Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard to use as a vegetable garden, since it is next to my palace. I will give you a better vineyard in its place — or if you prefer, I will give you its value in silver."

But Naboth replied, "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers."

So Ahab went to his palace, sullen and angry because Naboth the Jezreelite had told him, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." He lay down on his bed, turned his face away, and refused to eat.

Soon his wife Jezebel came in and asked, "Why are you so sullen that you refuse to eat?"

Ahab answered, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and told him, 'Give me your vineyard for silver, or if you wish, I will give you another vineyard in its place.' And he replied, 'I will not give you my vineyard!'"

But his wife Jezebel said to him, “Do you not reign over Israel? Get up, eat some food, and be cheerful, for I will get you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.”

Then Jezebel wrote letters in Ahab’s name, sealed them with his seal, and sent them to the elders and nobles who lived with Naboth in his city. In the letters she wrote:

“Proclaim a fast and give Naboth a seat of honor among the people. But seat two scoundrels opposite him and have them testify, ‘You have cursed both God and the king!’ Then take him out and stone him to death.”

So the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth’s city did as Jezebel had instructed in the letters she had written to them. They proclaimed a fast and gave Naboth a seat of honor among the people.

And the two scoundrels came in and sat opposite Naboth, and these men testified against him before the people, saying, “Naboth has cursed both God and the king!”

So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death. Then they sent word to Jezebel: “Naboth has been stoned to death.”

When Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, “Get up and take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, who refused to give it to you for silver. For Naboth is no longer alive, but dead.”

And when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up and went down to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, “Get up and go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria. See, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone to take possession of it.

Tell him that this is what the LORD says: ‘Have you not murdered a man and seized his land?’

Then tell him that this is also what the LORD says: ‘In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, there also the dogs will lick up your blood — yes, yours!’”

When Elijah arrived, Ahab said to him, “So you have found me out, my enemy.”

He replied, “I have found you out because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the LORD. This is what the LORD says:

> ‘I will bring calamity on you and consume your descendants; I will cut off from Ahab every male in Israel, both slave and free. I will make your house like that of Jeroboam son of Nebat and like that of Baasha son of Ahijah, because you have provoked My anger and caused Israel to sin.’

And the LORD also speaks concerning Jezebel:

> ‘The dogs will devour Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.’ Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city will be eaten by dogs, and anyone who dies in the field will be eaten by the birds of the air.”

(Surely there was never one like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the LORD, incited by his wife Jezebel. He committed the most detestable acts by going after idols, just like the Amorites whom the LORD had driven out before the Israelites.)

When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and fasted. He lay down in sackcloth and walked around meekly.

Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying: “Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity during his days, but I will bring it upon his house in the days of his son.”

Then three years passed without war between Aram and Israel.

However, in the third year, Jehoshaphat king of Judah went down to visit the king of Israel, who said to his servants, “Do you not know that Ramoth-gilead is ours, but we have failed to take it from the hand of the king of Aram?”

So he asked Jehoshaphat, “Will you go with me to fight against Ramoth-gilead?”

Jehoshaphat answered the king of Israel, “I am as you are, my people are your people, and my horses are your horses.”

But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, “Please inquire first for the word of the LORD.”

So the king of Israel assembled the prophets, about four hundred men, and asked them, “Should I go to war against Ramoth-gilead, or should I refrain?”

“Go up,” they replied, “and the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king.”

But Jehoshaphat asked, “Is there not still a prophet of the LORD here of whom we can inquire?”

The king of Israel answered, “There is still one man through whom we can inquire of the LORD, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good for me, but only bad. He is Micaiah son of Imlah.”

“The king should not say that!” Jehoshaphat replied.

So the king of Israel called one of his officials and said, “Bring Micaiah son of Imlah at once.”

Dressed in royal attire, the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting on their thrones at the threshing floor by the entrance of the gate of Samaria, with all the prophets prophesying before them.

Now Zedekiah son of Chenaanah had made for himself iron horns and declared, “This is what the LORD says: ‘With these you shall gore the Arameans until they are finished off.’”

And all the prophets were prophesying the same, saying, “Go up to Ramoth-gilead and triumph, for the LORD will deliver it into the hand of the king.”

Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah instructed him, “Behold now, with one accord the words of the prophets are favorable to the king. So please let your words be like theirs, and speak favorably.”

But Micaiah said, “As surely as the LORD lives, I will speak whatever the LORD tells me.”

When Micaiah arrived, the king asked him, “Micaiah, should we go to war against Ramoth-gilead, or should we refrain?”

“Go up and triumph,” Micaiah replied, “for the LORD will deliver it into the hand of the king.”

But the king said to him, “How many times must I make you swear not to tell me anything but the truth in the name of the LORD?”

So Micaiah declared:

> "I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd. And the LORD said, 'These people have no master; let each one return home in peace.'"

Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you that he never prophesies good for me, but only bad?"

Micaiah continued, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left.

And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab to march up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?'

And one suggested this, and another that.

Then a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will entice him.'

'By what means?' asked the LORD.

And he replied, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets.'

'You will surely entice him and prevail,' said the LORD. 'Go and do it.'

So you see, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has pronounced disaster against you."

Then Zedekiah son of Chenaanah went up, struck Micaiah in the face, and demanded, "Which way did the Spirit of the LORD go when He departed from me to speak with you?"

Micaiah replied, "You will soon see, on that day when you go and hide in an inner room."

And the king of Israel declared, "Take Micaiah and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son, and tell them that this is what the king says: 'Put this man in prison and feed him only bread and water until I return safely.'"

But Micaiah replied, "If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me." Then he added, "Take heed, all you people!"

So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead. And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and go into battle, but you wear your royal robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle.

Now the king of Aram had ordered his thirty-two chariot commanders, "Do not fight with anyone, small or great, except the king of Israel."

When the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they said, "Surely this is the king of Israel!" So they turned to fight against him, but Jehoshaphat cried out. And when the chariot commanders saw that he was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him.

However, a certain man drew his bow without taking special aim, and he struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor. So the king said to his charioteer, "Turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am badly wounded!"

The battle raged throughout that day, and the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans. And the blood from his wound ran out onto the floor of the chariot, and that evening he died. As the sun was setting, the cry rang out in the army:

> "Every man to his own city, and every man to his own land!"

So the king died and was brought to Samaria, where they buried him. And the chariot was washed at the pool of Samaria where the prostitutes bathed, and the dogs licked up Ahab's blood, according to the word that the LORD had spoken.

As for the rest of the acts of Ahab, along with all his accomplishments and the ivory palace and all the cities he built, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

And Ahab rested with his fathers, and his son Ahaziah reigned in his place.

In the fourth year of Ahab's reign over Israel, Jehoshaphat son of Asa became king of Judah. Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-five years. His mother's name was Azubah daughter of Shilhi.

And Jehoshaphat walked in all the ways of his father Asa; he did not turn away from them, but did what was right in the eyes of the LORD.

The high places, however, were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. Jehoshaphat also made peace with the king of Israel.

As for the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, along with the might he exercised and how he waged war, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? He banished from the land the male shrine prostitutes who remained from the days of his father Asa. And there was no king in Edom; a deputy served as king.

Jehoshaphat built ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold, but they never set sail, because they were wrecked at Ezion-geber. At that time Ahaziah son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "Let my servants sail with your servants," but Jehoshaphat refused.

And Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the city of his father David. And his son Jehoram reigned in his place.

In the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat's reign over Judah, Ahaziah son of Ahab became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria two years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD and walked in the ways of his father and mother and of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who had caused Israel to sin.

Ahaziah served and worshiped Baal, provoking the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger, just as his father had done.

2 Kings

Second Book of Kings

After the death of Ahab, Moab rebelled against Israel.

Now Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria and injured himself. So he sent messengers and instructed them: "Go inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I will recover from this injury."

But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and ask them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are on your way to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?' Therefore this is what the LORD says: 'You will not get up from the bed on which you are lying. You will surely die.'"

So Elijah departed.

When the messengers returned to the king, he asked them, "Why have you returned?"

They replied, "A man came up to meet us and said, 'Go back to the king who sent you and tell him that this is what the LORD says: Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending these men to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not get up from the bed on which you are lying. You will surely die.'"

The king asked them, "What sort of man came up to meet you and spoke these words to you?"

"He was a hairy man," they answered, "with a leather belt around his waist."

"It was Elijah the Tishbite," said the king.

Then King Ahaziah sent to Elijah a captain with his company of fifty men. So the captain went up to Elijah, who was sitting on top of a hill, and said to him, "Man of God, the king declares, 'Come down!'"

Elijah answered the captain, "If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men."

And fire came down from heaven and consumed the captain and his fifty men.

So the king sent to Elijah another captain with his fifty men. And the captain said to Elijah, "Man of God, the king declares, 'Come down at once!'"

Again Elijah replied, "If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men."

And the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed the captain and his fifty men.

So the king sent a third captain with his fifty men. And the third captain went up, fell on his knees before Elijah, and begged him, "Man of God, may my life and the lives of these fifty servants of yours please be precious in your sight. Behold, fire has come down from heaven and consumed the first two captains of fifty, with all their men. But now may my life be precious in your sight."

Then the angel of the LORD said to Elijah, "Go down with him. Do not be afraid of him."

So Elijah got up and went down with him to the king.

And Elijah said to King Ahaziah, "This is what the LORD says: Is there really no God in Israel for you to inquire of His word? Is that why you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not get up from the bed on which you are lying. You will surely die."

So Ahaziah died according to the word of the LORD that Elijah had spoken. And since he had no son, Jehoram succeeded him in the second year of the reign of Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat over Judah.

As for the rest of the acts of Ahaziah, along with his accomplishments, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

Shortly before the LORD took Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal, and Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me on to Bethel."

But Elisha replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you."

So they went down to Bethel.

Then the sons of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and said, "Do you know that the LORD will take your master away from you today?"

"Yes, I know," he replied. "Do not speak of it."

And Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me on to Jericho."

But Elisha replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you."

So they went to Jericho.

Then the sons of the prophets at Jericho came up to Elisha and said, "Do you know that the LORD will take your master away from you today?"

"Yes, I know," he replied. "Do not speak of it."

And Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me on to the Jordan."

But Elisha replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you."

So the two of them went on.

Then a company of fifty of the sons of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing Elijah and Elisha as the two of them stood by the Jordan. And Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up, and struck the waters, which parted to the right and to the left, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

After they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken away from you?"

"Please, let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," Elisha replied.

"You have requested a difficult thing," said Elijah. "Nevertheless, if you see me as I am taken from you, it will be yours. But if not, then it will not be so."

As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire with horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up into heaven in a whirlwind.

As Elisha watched, he cried out, "My father, my father, the chariots and horsemen of Israel!" And he saw Elijah no more. So taking hold of his own clothes, he tore them in two.

Elisha also picked up the cloak that had fallen from Elijah, and he went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen

from him and struck the waters. “Where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah?” he asked.

And when he had struck the waters, they parted to the right and to the left, and Elisha crossed over.

When the sons of the prophets who were watching him from Jericho saw what had happened, they said, “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.” And they went to meet him and bowed down to the ground before him.

“Look now,” they said to Elisha, “we your servants have fifty valiant men. Please let them go and search for your master. Perhaps the Spirit of the LORD has taken him up and put him on one of the mountains or in one of the valleys.”

“Do not send them,” Elisha replied.

But when they pressed him to the point of embarrassment, he said, “Send them.”

And they sent fifty men, who searched for three days but did not find Elijah.

When they returned to Elisha, who was staying in Jericho, he said to them, “Didn’t I tell you not to go?”

Then the men of the city said to Elisha, “Please note, our lord, that the city’s location is good, as you can see. But the water is bad and the land is unfruitful.”

“Bring me a new bowl,” he replied, “and put some salt in it.”

So they brought it to him, and Elisha went out to the spring, cast the salt into it, and said, “This is what the LORD says: ‘I have healed this water. No longer will it cause death or unfruitfulness.’”

And the waters there have been healthy to this day, according to the word spoken by Elisha.

From there, Elisha went up to Bethel, and as he was walking up the road, a group of boys came out of the city and jeered at him, chanting, “Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!”

Then he turned around, looked at them, and called down a curse on them in the name of the LORD.

Suddenly two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys.

And Elisha went on to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria.

In the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat’s reign over Judah, Jehoram son of Ahab became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria twelve years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as his father and mother had done. He removed the sacred pillar of Baal that his father had made.

Nevertheless, he clung to the sins that Jeroboam son of Nebat had caused Israel to commit; he did not turn away from them.

Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheep breeder, and he would render to the king of Israel a hundred thousand lambs and the wool of a hundred thousand rams. But after the death of Ahab, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. So at that time King Jehoram set out from Samaria and mobilized all Israel. And he sent a message to Jehoshaphat king of Judah: “The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to fight against Moab?”

“I will go,” replied Jehoshaphat. “I am as you are, my people are your people, and my horses are your horses.” Then he asked, “Which way shall we go up?”

“By way of the Desert of Edom,” replied Joram.

So the king of Israel, the king of Judah, and the king of Edom set out, and after they had traveled a roundabout route for seven days, they had no water for their army or for their animals.

“Alas,” said the king of Israel, “for the LORD has summoned these three kings to deliver them into the hand of Moab!”

But Jehoshaphat asked, “Is there no prophet of the LORD here? Let us inquire of the LORD through him.”

And one of the servants of the king of Israel answered, “Elisha son of Shaphat is here. He used to pour water on the hands of Elijah.”

Jehoshaphat affirmed, “The word of the LORD is with him.” So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

Elisha, however, said to the king of Israel, “What have we to do with each other? Go to the prophets of your father and of your mother!”

“No,” replied the king of Israel, “for it is the LORD who has summoned these three kings to deliver them into the hand of Moab.”

Then Elisha said, “As surely as the LORD of Hosts lives, before whom I stand, were it not for my regard for the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look at you or acknowledge you. But now, bring me a harpist.”

And while the harpist played, the hand of the LORD came upon Elisha and he said, “This is what the LORD says: ‘Dig this valley full of ditches.’ For the LORD says, ‘You will not see wind or rain, but the valley will be filled with water, and you will drink— you and your cattle and your animals.’ This is a simple matter in the sight of the LORD, and He will also deliver the Moabites into your hand. And you shall attack every fortified city and every city of importance. You shall cut down every good tree, stop up every spring, and ruin every good field with stones.”

The next morning, at the time of the morning sacrifice, water suddenly flowed from the direction of Edom and filled the land.

Now all the Moabites had heard that the kings had come up to fight against them. So all who could bear arms, young and old, were summoned and stationed at the border. When they got up early in the morning, the sun was shining on the water, and it looked as red as blood to the Moabites across the way.

“This is blood!” they exclaimed. “The kings have clashed swords and slaughtered one another. Now to the plunder, Moab!”

But when the Moabites came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and attacked them, and they fled before them. So the Israelites invaded their land and struck down the Moabites. They destroyed the cities, and each man threw stones on every good field until it was covered. They stopped up every spring and cut down every good tree. Only Kir-haraseth was left with stones in place, but men with slings surrounded it and attacked it as well.

When the king of Moab saw that the battle was too fierce for him, he took with him seven hundred swordsmen to break through to the king of Edom, but they could not prevail. So he took his firstborn son, who was to succeed him, and offered him as a burnt offering on the city wall.

And there was great fury against the Israelites, so they withdrew and returned to their own land.

Now the wife of one of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, “Your servant, my husband, is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD. And now his creditor is coming to take my two children as his slaves!”

“How can I help you?” asked Elisha. “Tell me, what do you have in the house?”

She answered, “Your servant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil.”

“Go,” said Elisha, “borrow empty jars from all your neighbors. Do not gather just a few. Then go inside, shut the door behind you and your sons, and pour oil into all these jars, setting the full ones aside.”

So she left him, and after she had shut the door behind her and her sons, they kept bringing jars to her, and she kept pouring. When all the jars were full, she said to her son, “Bring me another.”

But he replied, “There are no more jars.” Then the oil stopped flowing.

She went and told the man of God, and he said, “Go, sell the oil, and pay your debt. Then you and your sons can live on the remainder.”

One day Elisha went to Shunem, and a prominent woman who lived there persuaded him to have a meal. So whenever he would pass by, he would stop there to eat.

Then the woman said to her husband, “Behold, now I know that the one who often comes our way is a holy man of God. Please let us make a small room upstairs and put in it a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp for him. Then when he comes to us, he can stay there.”

One day Elisha came to visit and went to his upper room to lie down. And he said to Gehazi his servant, “Call the Shunammite woman.”

And when he had called her, she stood before him, and Elisha said to Gehazi, “Now tell her, ‘Look, you have gone to all this trouble for us. What can we do for you? Can we speak on your behalf to the king or the commander of the army?’”

“I have a home among my own people,” she replied.

So he asked, “Then what should be done for her?”

“Well, she has no son,” Gehazi replied, “and her husband is old.”

“Call her,” said Elisha.

So Gehazi called her, and she stood in the doorway. And Elisha declared, “At this time next year, you will hold a son in your arms.”

“No, my lord,” she said. “Do not lie to your maidservant, O man of God.”

But the woman did conceive, and at that time the next year she gave birth to a son, just as Elisha had told her.

And the child grew, and one day he went out to his father, who was with the harvesters.

“My head! My head!” he complained to his father.

So his father told a servant, “Carry him to his mother.”

After the servant had picked him up and carried him to his mother, the boy sat on her lap until noon, and then he died. And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God. Then she shut the door and went out.

And the woman called her husband and said, “Please send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, that I may go quickly to the man of God and return.”

“Why would you go to him today?” he replied. “It is not a New Moon or a Sabbath.”

“Everything is all right,” she said.

Then she saddled the donkey and told her servant, “Drive onward; do not slow the pace for me unless I tell you.” So she set out and went to the man of God at Mount Carmel.

When the man of God saw her at a distance, he said to his servant Gehazi, “Look, there is the Shunammite woman. Please run out now to meet her and ask, ‘Are you all right? Is your husband all right? Is your child all right?’”

And she answered, “Everything is all right.”

When she reached the man of God at the mountain, she clung to his feet. Gehazi came over to push her away, but the man of God said, “Leave her alone, for her soul is in deep distress, and the LORD has hidden it from me and has not told me.”

Then she said, “Did I ask you for a son, my lord? Didn’t I say, ‘Do not deceive me?’”

So Elisha said to Gehazi, “Tie up your garment, take my staff in your hand, and go! If you meet anyone, do not greet him, and if anyone greets you, do not answer him. Then lay my staff on the boy’s face.”

And the mother of the boy said, “As surely as the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So he got up and followed her.

Gehazi went on ahead of them and laid the staff on the boy’s face, but there was no sound or response. So he went back to meet Elisha and told him, “The boy has not awakened.”

When Elisha reached the house, there was the boy lying dead on his bed. So he went in, closed the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the LORD.

Then Elisha got on the bed and lay on the boy, mouth to mouth, eye to eye, and hand to hand. As he stretched himself out over him, the boy’s body became warm. Elisha turned away and paced back and forth across the room. Then he got on the bed and stretched himself out over the boy again, and the boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes.

Elisha summoned Gehazi and said, “Call the Shunammite woman.” So he called her and she came.

Then Elisha said, “Pick up your son.”

She came in, fell at his feet, and bowed to the ground. Then she picked up her son and went out.

When Elisha returned to Gilgal, there was a famine in the land. As the sons of the prophets were sitting at his feet, he said to his attendant, “Put on the large pot and boil some stew for the sons of the prophets.”

One of them went out to the field to gather herbs, and he found a wild vine from which he gathered as many wild gourds as his garment could hold. Then he came back and cut them up into the pot of stew, though no one knew what they were.

And they poured it out for the men to eat, but when they tasted the stew they cried out, “There is death in the pot, O man of God!” And they could not eat it.

Then Elisha said, “Get some flour.” He threw it into the pot and said, “Pour it out for the people to eat.” And there was nothing harmful in the pot.

Now a man from Baal-shalishah came to the man of God with a sack of twenty loaves of barley bread from the first ripe grain.

“Give it to the people to eat,” said Elisha.

But his servant asked, “How am I to set twenty loaves before a hundred men?”

“Give it to the people to eat,” said Elisha, “for this is what the LORD says: ‘They will eat and have some left over.’”

So he set it before them, and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the LORD.

Now Naaman, the commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man in his master’s sight and highly regarded, for through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. And he was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper.

At this time the Arameans had gone out in bands and had taken a young girl from the land of Israel, and she was serving Naaman’s wife. She said to her mistress, “If only my master would go to the prophet who is in Samaria, he would cure him of his leprosy.”

And Naaman went and told his master what the girl from the land of Israel had said.

“Go now,” said the king of Aram, “and I will send you with a letter to the king of Israel.”

So Naaman departed, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of clothing.

And the letter that he took to the king of Israel stated: “With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman, so that you may cure him of his leprosy.”

When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and asked, “Am I God, killing and giving life, that this man expects me to cure a leper? Surely you can see that he is seeking a quarrel with me!”

Now when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king: “Why have you torn your clothes? Please let the man come to me, and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel.”

So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha’s house.

Then Elisha sent him a messenger, who said, “Go and wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored, and you will be clean.”

But Naaman went away angry, saying, “I thought that he would surely come out, stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the spot to cure my leprosy. Are not the Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not have washed in them and been cleansed?” So he turned and went away in a rage.

Naaman’s servants, however, approached him and said, “My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, ‘Wash and be cleansed’?”

So Naaman went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored and became like that of a little child, and he was clean.

Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God, stood before him, and declared, “Now I know for sure that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant.”

But Elisha replied, “As surely as the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will not accept it.” And although Naaman urged him to accept it, he refused.

“If you will not,” said Naaman, “please let me, your servant, be given as much soil as a pair of mules can carry. For your servant will never again make a burnt offering or a sacrifice to any other god but the LORD. Yet may the LORD forgive your servant this one thing: When my master goes into the temple of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my arm, and I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD forgive your servant in this matter.”

“Go in peace,” said Elisha.

But after Naaman had traveled a short distance, Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, “Look, my master has spared this Aramean, Naaman, by not accepting what he brought. As surely as the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him.”

So Gehazi pursued Naaman. And when Naaman saw him running toward him, he got down from the chariot to meet him and asked, “Is everything all right?”

“Everything is all right,” Gehazi replied. “My master has sent me to say, ‘Look, two young men from the sons of the prophets have just now come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two sets of clothing.’”

But Naaman insisted, “Please, take two talents.” And he urged Gehazi to accept them. Then he tied up two talents of silver in two bags along with two sets of clothing and gave them to two of his servants, who carried them ahead of Gehazi.

When Gehazi came to the hill, he took the gifts from the servants and stored them in the house. Then he dismissed the men, and they departed.

When Gehazi went in and stood before his master, Elisha asked him, “Gehazi, where have you been?”

“Your servant did not go anywhere,” he replied.

But Elisha questioned him, “Did not my spirit go with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to accept money and clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, menservants and maidservants? Therefore, the leprosy of Naaman will cling to you and your descendants forever!”

And as Gehazi left his presence, he was leprous—as white as snow.

Now the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, “Please take note that the place where we meet with you is too small for us. Please let us go to the Jordan, where each of us can get a log so we can build ourselves a place to live there.”

“Go,” said Elisha.

Then one of them said, “Please come with your servants.”

“I will come,” he replied.

So Elisha went with them, and when they came to the Jordan, they began to cut down some trees. As one of them was cutting down a tree, the iron axe head fell

into the water. “Oh, my master,” he cried out, “it was borrowed!”

“Where did it fall?” asked the man of God.

And when he showed him the place, the man of God cut a stick, threw it there, and made the iron float.

“Lift it out,” he said, and the man reached out his hand and took it.

Now the king of Aram was at war against Israel. After consulting with his servants, he said, “My camp will be in such and such a place.”

Then the man of God sent word to the king of Israel: “Be careful not to pass by this place, for the Arameans are going down there.”

So the king of Israel sent word to the place the man of God had pointed out. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places. For this reason the king of Aram became enraged and called his servants to demand of them, “Tell me, which one of us is on the side of the king of Israel?”

But one of his servants replied, “No one, my lord the king. For Elisha, the prophet in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom.”

So the king said, “Go and see where he is, that I may send men to capture him.”

On receiving the report, “Elisha is in Dothan,” the king of Aram sent horses, chariots, and a great army. They went there by night and surrounded the city.

When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early in the morning, behold, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. So he asked Elisha, “Oh, my master, what are we to do?”

“Do not be afraid,” Elisha answered, “for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”

Then Elisha prayed, “O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.”

And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw that the hills were full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

As the Arameans came down against him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, “Please strike these people with blindness.” So He struck them with blindness, according to the word of Elisha.

And Elisha told them, “This is not the way, and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will take you to the man you are seeking.” And he led them to Samaria.

When they had entered Samaria, Elisha said, “O LORD, open the eyes of these men that they may see.”

Then the LORD opened their eyes, and they looked around and discovered that they were in Samaria.

And when the king of Israel saw them, he asked Elisha, “My father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?”

“Do not kill them,” he replied. “Would you kill those you have captured with your own sword or bow? Set food and water before them, that they may eat and drink and then return to their master.”

So the king prepared a great feast for them, and after they had finished eating and drinking, he sent them away, and they returned to their master. And the Aramean raiders did not come into the land of Israel again.

Some time later, Ben-hadad king of Aram assembled his entire army and marched up to besiege Samaria.

So there was a great famine in Samaria. Indeed, they besieged the city so long that a donkey’s head sold for eighty shekels of silver, and a quarter cab of dove’s dung sold for five shekels of silver.

As the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried out to him, “Help me, my lord the king!”

He answered, “If the LORD does not help you, where can I find help for you? From the threshing floor or the winepress?” Then the king asked her, “What is the matter?”

And she answered, “This woman said to me, ‘Give up your son, that we may eat him, and tomorrow we will eat my son.’ So we boiled my son and ate him, and the next day I said to her, ‘Give up your son, that we may eat him.’ But she had hidden her son.”

When the king heard the words of the woman, he tore his clothes. And as he passed by on the wall, the people saw the sackcloth under his clothes next to his skin. He announced, “May God punish me, and ever so severely, if the head of Elisha son of Shaphat remains on his shoulders through this day!”

Now Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. The king sent a messenger ahead, but before he arrived, Elisha said to the elders, “Do you see how this murderer has sent someone to cut off my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door to keep him out. Is not the sound of his master’s footsteps behind him?”

While Elisha was still speaking with them, the messenger came down to him. And the king said, “This calamity is from the LORD. Why should I wait for the LORD any longer?”

Then Elisha said, “Hear the word of the LORD! This is what the LORD says: ‘About this time tomorrow at the gate of Samaria, a seah of fine flour will sell for a shekel, and two seahs of barley will sell for a shekel.’”

But the officer on whose arm the king leaned answered the man of God, “Look, even if the LORD were to make windows in heaven, could this really happen?”

“You will see it with your own eyes,” replied Elisha, “but you will not eat any of it.”

Now there were four men with leprosy at the entrance of the city gate, and they said to one another, “Why just sit here until we die? If we say, ‘Let us go into the city,’ we will die there from the famine in the city; but if we sit here, we will also die. So come now, let us go over to the camp of the Arameans. If they let us live, we will live; if they kill us, we will die.”

So they arose at twilight and went to the camp of the Arameans. But when they came to the outskirts of the camp, there was not a man to be found. For the Lord had caused the Arameans to hear the sound of chariots, horses, and a great army, so that they said to one another, “Look, the king of Israel must have hired the kings of the Hittites and Egyptians to attack us.”

Thus the Arameans had arisen and fled at twilight, abandoning their tents and horses and donkeys. The camp was intact, and they had run for their lives.

When the lepers reached the edge of the camp, they went into a tent to eat and drink. Then they carried off the silver, gold, and clothing, and went and hid them. On returning, they entered another tent, carried off some items from there, and hid them.

Finally, they said to one another, “We are not doing what is right. Today is a day of good news. If we are silent and wait until morning light, our sin will overtake us. Now, therefore, let us go and tell the king’s household.”

So they went and called out to the gatekeepers of the city, saying, “We went to the Aramean camp and no one was there— not a trace — only tethered horses and donkeys, and the tents were intact.”

The gatekeepers shouted the news, and it was reported to the king’s household.

So the king got up in the night and said to his servants, “Let me tell you what the Arameans have done to us. They know we are starving, so they have left the camp to hide in the field, thinking, ‘When they come out of the city, we will take them alive and enter the city.’”

But one of his servants replied, “Please, have scouts take five of the horses that remain in the city. Their plight will be no worse than all the Israelites who are left here. You can see that all the Israelites here are doomed. So let us send them and find out.”

Then the scouts took two chariots with horses, and the king sent them after the Aramean army, saying, “Go and see.” And they tracked them as far as the Jordan, and indeed, the whole way was littered with the clothing and equipment the Arameans had thrown off in haste. So the scouts returned and told the king.

Then the people went out and plundered the camp of the Arameans. It was then that a seah of fine flour sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley sold for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD.

Now the king had appointed the officer on whose arm he leaned to be in charge of the gate, but the people trampled him in the gateway, and he died, just as the man of God had foretold when the king had come to him. It happened just as the man of God had told the king: “About this time tomorrow at the gate of Samaria, two seahs of barley will sell for a shekel, and a seah of fine flour will sell for a shekel.”

And the officer had answered the man of God, “Look, even if the LORD were to make windows in heaven, could this really happen?”

So Elisha had replied, “You will see it with your own eyes, but you will not eat any of it!”

And that is just what happened to him. The people trampled him in the gateway, and he died.

Now Elisha had said to the woman whose son he had restored to life, “Arise, you and your household; go and live as a foreigner wherever you can. For the LORD has decreed that a seven-year famine will come to the land.”

So the woman had proceeded to do as the man of God had instructed. And she and her household lived as foreigners for seven years in the land of the Philistines.

At the end of seven years, when the woman returned from the land of the Philistines, she went to the king to appeal for her house and her land.

Now the king had been speaking to Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, saying, “Please relate to me all the great things Elisha has done.”

And Gehazi was telling the king how Elisha had brought the dead back to life. Just then the woman whose son Elisha had revived came to appeal to the king for her house and her land. So Gehazi said, “My lord the king, this is the woman, and this is the son Elisha restored to life.”

When the king asked the woman, she confirmed it. So the king appointed for her an officer, saying, “Restore all that was hers, along with all the proceeds of the field from the day that she left the country until now.”

Then Elisha came to Damascus while Ben-hadad king of Aram was sick, and the king was told, “The man of God has come here.”

So the king said to Hazael, “Take a gift in your hand, go to meet the man of God, and inquire of the LORD through him, ‘Will I recover from this illness?’”

So Hazael went to meet Elisha, taking with him a gift of forty camel loads of every good thing from Damascus. And he went in and stood before him and said, “Your son Ben-hadad king of Aram has sent me to ask, ‘Will I recover from this illness?’”

Elisha answered, “Go and tell him, ‘You will surely recover.’ But the LORD has shown me that in fact he will die.”

Elisha fixed his gaze steadily on him until Hazael became uncomfortable. Then the man of God began to weep.

“Why is my lord weeping?” asked Hazael.

“Because I know the evil you will do to the Israelites,” Elisha replied. “You will set fire to their fortresses, kill their young men with the sword, dash their little ones to pieces, and rip open their pregnant women.”

“But how could your servant, a mere dog, do such a monstrous thing?” said Hazael.

And Elisha answered, “The LORD has shown me that you will be king over Aram.”

So Hazael left Elisha and went to his master, who asked him, “What did Elisha say to you?”

And he replied, “He told me that you would surely recover.” But the next day Hazael took a thick cloth, dipped it in water, and spread it over the king’s face.

So Ben-hadad died, and Hazael reigned in his place.

In the fifth year of the reign of Joram son of Ahab over Israel, Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat succeeded his father as king of Judah. Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years.

And Jehoram walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done. For he married a daughter of Ahab and did evil in the sight of the LORD.

Yet for the sake of His servant David, the LORD was unwilling to destroy Judah, since He had promised to maintain a lamp for David and his descendants forever.

In the days of Jehoram, Edom rebelled against the hand of Judah and appointed their own king. So Jehoram crossed over to Zair with all his chariots. When the Edomites surrounded him and his chariot commanders, he rose up and attacked by night. His troops, however, fled to their homes.

So to this day Edom has been in rebellion against the hand of Judah. Likewise, Libnah rebelled at the same time.

As for the rest of the acts of Jehoram, along with all his accomplishments, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

And Jehoram rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the City of David. And his son Ahaziah reigned in his place.

In the twelfth year of the reign of Joram son of Ahab over Israel, Ahaziah son of Jehoram became king of Judah. Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem one year. His mother's name was Athaliah, the granddaughter of Omri king of Israel.

And Ahaziah walked in the ways of the house of Ahab and did evil in the sight of the LORD like the house of Ahab, for he was a son-in-law of the house of Ahab.

Then Ahaziah went with Joram son of Ahab to fight against Hazael king of Aram at Ramoth-gilead, and the Arameans wounded Joram. So King Joram returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds that the Arameans had inflicted on him at Ramah when he fought against Hazael king of Aram. Then Ahaziah son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to Jezreel to visit Joram son of Ahab, because Joram had been wounded.

Now Elisha the prophet summoned one of the sons of the prophets and said to him, "Tuck your cloak under your belt, take this flask of oil, and go to Ramoth-gilead. When you arrive, look for Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi. Go in, get him away from his companions, and take him to an inner room. Then take the flask of oil, pour it on his head, and declare, 'This is what the LORD says: I anoint you king over Israel.' Then open the door and run. Do not delay!"

So the young prophet went to Ramoth-gilead, and when he arrived, the army commanders were sitting there. "I have a message for you, commander," he said.

"For which of us?" asked Jehu.

"For you, commander," he replied.

So Jehu got up and went into the house, where the young prophet poured the oil on his head and declared, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anoint you king over the LORD's people Israel. And you are to strike down the house of your master Ahab, so that I may avenge the blood of My servants the prophets and the blood of all the servants of the LORD shed by the hand of Jezebel. The whole house of Ahab will perish, and I will cut off from Ahab every male, both slave and free, in Israel. I will make the house of Ahab like the houses of Jeroboam son of Nebat and Baasha son of Ahijah. And on the plot of ground at Jezreel the dogs will devour Jezebel, and there will be no one to bury her.'"

Then the young prophet opened the door and ran.

When Jehu went out to the servants of his master, they asked, "Is everything all right? Why did this madman come to you?"

"You know his kind and their babble," he replied.

"That is a lie!" they said. "Tell us now!"

So Jehu answered, "He talked to me about this and that, saying, 'This is what the LORD says: I anoint you king over Israel.'"

Quickly, each man took his garment and put it under Jehu on the bare steps. Then they blew the ram's horn and proclaimed, "Jehu is king!"

Thus Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, conspired against Joram.

(Now Joram and all Israel had been defending Ramoth-gilead against Hazael king of Aram, but King Joram had returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds he had suffered at the hands of the Arameans in the battle against Hazael their king.)

So Jehu said, "If you commanders wish to make me king, then do not let anyone escape from the city to go and tell it in Jezreel."

Then Jehu got into his chariot and went to Jezreel, because Joram was laid up there. And Ahaziah king of Judah had gone down to see him.

Now the watchman standing on the tower in Jezreel saw Jehu's troops approaching, and he called out, "I see a company of troops!"

"Choose a rider," Joram commanded. "Send him out to meet them and ask, 'Have you come in peace?'"

So a horseman rode off to meet Jehu and said, "This is what the king asks: 'Have you come in peace?'"

"What do you know about peace?" Jehu replied. "Fall in behind me."

And the watchman reported, "The messenger reached them, but he is not coming back."

So the king sent out a second horseman, who went to them and said, "This is what the king asks: 'Have you come in peace?'"

"What do you know about peace?" Jehu replied. "Fall in behind me."

Again the watchman reported, "He reached them, but he is not coming back. And the charioteer is driving like Jehu son of Nimshi— he is driving like a madman!"

"Harness!" Joram shouted, and they harnessed his chariot.

Then Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah set out, each in his own chariot, and met Jehu on the property of Naboth the Jezreelite.

When Joram saw Jehu, he asked, "Have you come in peace, Jehu?"

"How can there be peace," he replied, "as long as the idolatry and witchcraft of your mother Jezebel abound?"

Joram turned around and fled, calling out to Ahaziah, "Treachery, Ahaziah!"

Then Jehu drew his bow and shot Joram between the shoulders. The arrow pierced his heart, and he slumped down in his chariot.

And Jehu said to Bidkar his officer, "Pick him up and throw him into the field of Naboth the Jezreelite. For remember that when you and I were riding together behind his father Ahab, the LORD lifted up this burden against him: 'As surely as I saw the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons yesterday, declares the LORD, so will I repay you on this plot of ground, declares the LORD.' Now then, according to the word of the LORD, pick him up and throw him on the plot of ground."

When King Ahaziah of Judah saw this, he fled up the road toward Beth-haggan.

And Jehu pursued him, shouting, "Shoot him too!"

So they shot Ahaziah in his chariot on the Ascent of Gur, near Ibleam, and he fled to Megiddo and died there. Then his servants carried him by chariot to Jerusalem and buried him with his fathers in his tomb in the City of David.

(In the eleventh year of Joram son of Ahab, Ahaziah had become king over Judah.)

Now when Jehu arrived in Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it. So she painted her eyes, adorned her head, and looked down from a window. And as Jehu entered the gate, she asked, “Have you come in peace, O Zimri, murderer of your master?”

He looked up at the window and called out, “Who is on my side? Who?”

And two or three eunuchs looked down at him.

“Throw her down!” yelled Jehu.

So they threw her down, and her blood splattered on the wall and on the horses as they trampled her underfoot.

Then Jehu went in and ate and drank. “Take care of this cursed woman,” he said, “and bury her, for she was the daughter of a king.”

But when they went out to bury her, they found nothing but her skull, her feet, and the palms of her hands.

So they went back and told Jehu, who replied, “This is the word of the LORD, which He spoke through His servant Elijah the Tishbite: ‘On the plot of ground at Jezreel the dogs will devour the flesh of Jezebel. And Jezebel’s body will lie like dung in the field on the plot of ground at Jezreel, so that no one can say: This is Jezebel.’”

Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. So Jehu wrote letters and sent them to Samaria to the officials of Jezreel, to the elders, and to the guardians of the sons of Ahab, saying: “When this letter arrives, since your master’s sons are with you and you have chariots and horses, a fortified city and weaponry, select the best and most worthy son of your master, set him on his father’s throne, and fight for your master’s house.”

But they were terrified and reasoned, “If two kings could not stand against him, how can we?”

So the palace administrator, the overseer of the city, the elders, and the guardians sent a message to Jehu: “We are your servants, and we will do whatever you say. We will not make anyone king. Do whatever is good in your sight.”

Then Jehu wrote them a second letter and said: “If you are on my side, and if you will obey me, then bring the heads of your master’s sons to me at Jezreel by this time tomorrow.”

Now the sons of the king, seventy in all, were being brought up by the leading men of the city. And when the letter arrived, they took the sons of the king and slaughtered all seventy of them. They put their heads in baskets and sent them to Jehu at Jezreel.

When the messenger arrived, he told Jehu, “They have brought the heads of the sons of the king.”

And Jehu ordered, “Pile them in two heaps at the entrance of the gate until morning.”

The next morning, Jehu went out and stood before all the people and said, “You are innocent. It was I who conspired against my master and killed him. But who killed all these? Know, then, that not a word the LORD has spoken against the house of Ahab will fail, for the LORD has done what He promised through His servant Elijah.”

So Jehu killed everyone in Jezreel who remained of the house of Ahab, as well as all his great men and close friends and priests, leaving him without a single survivor.

Then Jehu set out toward Samaria. At Beth-eked of the Shepherds, Jehu met some relatives of Ahaziah king of Judah and asked, “Who are you?”

“We are relatives of Ahaziah,” they answered, “and we have come down to greet the sons of the king and of the queen mother.”

Then Jehu ordered, “Take them alive.” So his men took them alive, then slaughtered them at the well of Beth-eked— forty-two men. He spared none of them.

When he left there, he found Jehonadab son of Rechab, who was coming to meet him. Jehu greeted him and asked, “Is your heart as true to mine as my heart is to yours?”

“It is!” Jehonadab replied.

“If it is,” said Jehu, “give me your hand.”

So he gave him his hand, and Jehu helped him into his chariot, saying, “Come with me and see my zeal for the LORD!” So he had him ride in his chariot.

When Jehu came to Samaria, he struck down everyone belonging to Ahab who remained there, until he had destroyed them, according to the word that the LORD had spoken to Elijah.

Then Jehu brought all the people together and said, “Ahab served Baal a little, but Jehu will serve him a lot. Now, therefore, summon to me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests. See that no one is missing, for I have a great sacrifice for Baal. Whoever is missing will not live.”

But Jehu was acting deceptively in order to destroy the servants of Baal.

And Jehu commanded, “Proclaim a solemn assembly for Baal.” So they announced it.

Then Jehu sent word throughout Israel, and all the servants of Baal came; there was not a man who failed to show. They entered the temple of Baal, and it was filled from end to end.

And Jehu said to the keeper of the wardrobe, “Bring out garments for all the servants of Baal.” So he brought out garments for them.

Next, Jehu and Jehonadab son of Rechab entered the temple of Baal, and Jehu said to the servants of Baal, “Look around to see that there are no servants of the LORD here among you— only servants of Baal.”

And they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings. Now Jehu had stationed eighty men outside and warned them, “If anyone allows one of the men I am delivering into your hands to escape, he will forfeit his life for theirs.”

When he had finished making the burnt offering, Jehu said to the guards and officers, “Go in and kill them. Do not let anyone out.”

So the guards and officers put them to the sword, threw the bodies out, and went into the inner room of the temple of Baal.

They brought out the sacred pillar of the temple of Baal and burned it. They also demolished the sacred pillar of Baal. Then they tore down the temple of Baal and made it into a latrine, which it is to this day.

Thus Jehu eradicated Baal from Israel, but he did not turn away from the sins that Jeroboam son of Nebat had caused Israel to commit— the worship of the golden calves at Bethel and Dan.

Nevertheless, the LORD said to Jehu, “Because you have done well in carrying out what is right in My sight

and have done to the house of Ahab all that was in My heart, four generations of your sons will sit on the throne of Israel."

Yet Jehu was not careful to follow the instruction of the LORD, the God of Israel, with all his heart. He did not turn away from the sins that Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit.

In those days the LORD began to reduce the size of Israel. Hazael defeated the Israelites throughout their territory from the Jordan eastward through all the land of Gilead (the region of Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh), and from Aroer by the Arnon Valley through Gilead to Bashan.

As for the rest of the acts of Jehu, along with all his accomplishments and all his might, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

And Jehu rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria, and his son Jehoahaz reigned in his place. So the duration of Jehu's reign over Israel in Samaria was twenty-eight years.

When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she proceeded to annihilate all the royal heirs. But Jehosheba daughter of King Joram, the sister of Ahaziah, took Joash son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the sons of the king who were being murdered. She put him and his nurse in a bedroom to hide him from Athaliah, and he was not killed.

And Joash remained hidden with his nurse in the house of the LORD for six years while Athaliah ruled the land.

Then in the seventh year, Jehoiada sent for the commanders of hundreds, the Carites, and the guards, and had them brought into the house of the LORD. There he made a covenant with them and put them under oath.

He showed them the king's son and commanded them, "This is what you are to do: A third of you who come on duty on the Sabbath shall guard the royal palace, a third shall be at the gate of Sur, and a third at the gate behind the guards. You are to take turns guarding the temple — the two divisions that would go off duty on the Sabbath are to guard the house of the LORD for the king. You must surround the king with weapons in hand, and anyone who approaches the ranks must be put to death. You must stay close to the king wherever he goes."

So the commanders of hundreds did everything that Jehoiada the priest had ordered. Each of them took his men— those coming on duty on the Sabbath and those going off duty— and came to Jehoiada the priest. Then the priest gave to the commanders of hundreds the spears and shields of King David from the house of the LORD. And the guards stood with weapons in hand surrounding the king by the altar and the temple, from the south side to the north side of the temple.

Then Jehoiada brought out the king's son, put the crown on him, presented him with the Testimony, and proclaimed him king. They anointed him, and the people clapped their hands and declared, "Long live the king!"

When Athaliah heard the noise from the guards and the people, she went out to the people in the house of the LORD. And she looked out and saw the king standing by the pillar, according to the custom. The officers and trumpeters were beside the king, and all the people of the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets.

Then Athaliah tore her clothes and screamed, "Treason! Treason!"

And Jehoiada the priest ordered the commanders of hundreds in charge of the army, "Bring her out between the ranks, and put to the sword anyone who follows her." For the priest had said, "She must not be put to death in the house of the LORD."

So they seized Athaliah as she reached the horses' entrance to the palace grounds, and there she was put to death.

Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and the people that they would be the LORD's people. He also made a covenant between the king and the people.

So all the people of the land went to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They smashed the altars and idols to pieces, and they killed Mattan the priest of Baal in front of the altars.

And Jehoiada the priest posted guards for the house of the LORD. He took with him the commanders of hundreds, the Carites, the guards, and all the people of the land, and they brought the king down from the house of the LORD and entered the royal palace by way of the Gate of the Guards.

Then Joash took his seat on the royal throne, and all the people of the land rejoiced. And the city was quiet, because Athaliah had been put to the sword at the royal palace.

Joash was seven years old when he became king.

In the seventh year of Jehu, Joash became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem forty years. His mother's name was Zibiah; she was from Beersheba. And Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the days he was instructed by Jehoiada the priest.

Nevertheless, the high places were not removed; the people continued sacrificing and burning incense there.

Then Joash said to the priests, "Collect all the money brought as sacred gifts into the house of the LORD — the census money, the money from vows, and the money brought voluntarily into the house of the LORD. Let every priest receive it from his constituency, and let it be used to repair any damage found in the temple."

By the twenty-third year of the reign of Joash, however, the priests had not yet repaired the damage to the temple. So King Joash called Jehoiada and the other priests and said, "Why have you not repaired the damage to the temple? Now, therefore, take no more money from your constituency, but hand it over for the repair of the temple."

So the priests agreed that they would not receive money from the people and that they would not repair the temple themselves.

Then Jehoiada the priest took a chest, bored a hole in its lid, and set it beside the altar on the right side as one enters the house of the LORD. There the priests who guarded the threshold put all the money brought into the house of the LORD.

Whenever they saw that there was a large amount of money in the chest, the royal scribe and the high priest would go up, count the money brought into the

house of the LORD, and tie it up in bags. Then they would put the counted money into the hands of those who supervised the work on the house of the LORD, who in turn would pay those doing the work — the carpenters, builders, masons, and stonecutters. They also purchased timber and dressed stone to repair the damage to the house of the LORD, and they paid the other expenses of the temple repairs.

However, the money brought into the house of the LORD was not used for making silver basins, wick trimmers, sprinkling bowls, trumpets, or any articles of gold or silver for the house of the LORD. Instead, it was paid to those doing the work, and with it they repaired the house of the LORD.

No accounting was required from the men who received the money to pay the workmen, because they acted with integrity. The money from the guilt offerings and sin offerings was not brought into the house of the LORD; it belonged to the priests.

At that time Hazael king of Aram marched up and fought against Gath and captured it. Then he decided to attack Jerusalem. So King Joash of Judah took all the sacred objects dedicated by his fathers— Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah, the kings of Judah— along with his own consecrated items and all the gold found in the treasuries of the house of the LORD and the royal palace, and he sent them to Hazael king of Aram. So Hazael withdrew from Jerusalem.

As for the rest of the acts of Joash, along with all his accomplishments, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

And the servants of Joash rose up and formed a conspiracy and killed him at Beth-millo, on the road down to Silla. His servants Jozabad son of Shimeath and Jehozabad son of Shomer struck him down, and he died. And they buried him with his fathers in the City of David, and his son Amaziah reigned in his place.

In the twenty-third year of the reign of Joash son of Ahaziah over Judah, Jehoahaz son of Jehu became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria seventeen years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD and followed the sins that Jeroboam son of Nebat had caused Israel to commit; he did not turn away from them. So the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He delivered them continually into the hands of Hazael king of Aram and his son Ben-hadad.

Then Jehoahaz sought the favor of the LORD, and the LORD listened to him because He saw the oppression that the king of Aram had inflicted on Israel. So the LORD gave Israel a deliverer, and they escaped the power of the Arameans. Then the people of Israel lived in their own homes as they had before.

Nevertheless, they did not turn away from the sins that the house of Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit, but they continued to walk in them. The Asherah pole even remained standing in Samaria.

Jehoahaz had no army left, except fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand foot soldiers, because the king of Aram had destroyed them and made them like the dust at threshing.

As for the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, along with all his accomplishments and his might, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

And Jehoahaz rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria. And his son Jehoash reigned in his place.

In the thirty-seventh year of the reign of Joash over Judah, Jehoash son of Jehoahaz became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned sixteen years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD and did not turn away from all the sins that Jeroboam son of Nebat had caused Israel to commit, but he walked in them.

As for the rest of the acts of Jehoash, along with all his accomplishments and his might, including his war against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

And Jehoash rested with his fathers, and Jeroboam succeeded him on the throne. Jehoash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.

When Elisha had fallen sick with the illness from which he would die, Jehoash king of Israel came down to him and wept over him, saying, “My father, my father, the chariots and horsemen of Israel!”

Elisha told him, “Take a bow and some arrows.”

So Jehoash took a bow and some arrows.

Then Elisha said to the king of Israel, “Put your hand on the bow.”

So the king put his hand on the bow, and Elisha put his hands on the king’s hands.

“Open the east window,” said Elisha.

So he opened it and Elisha said, “Shoot!” So he shot.

And Elisha declared:

> “This is the LORD’s arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram, for you shall strike the Arameans in Aphek until you have put an end to them.”

Then Elisha said, “Take the arrows!”

So he took them, and Elisha said to the king of Israel, “Strike the ground!”

So he struck the ground three times and stopped.

But the man of God was angry with him and said, “You should have struck the ground five or six times. Then you would have struck down Aram until you had put an end to it. But now you will strike down Aram only three times.”

And Elisha died and was buried.

Now the Moabite raiders used to come into the land every spring. Once, as the Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders, so they threw the man’s body into Elisha’s tomb. And as soon as his body touched the bones of Elisha, the man was revived and stood up on his feet.

And Hazael king of Aram oppressed Israel throughout the reign of Jehoahaz. But the LORD was gracious to Israel and had compassion on them, and He turned toward them because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And to this day, the LORD has been unwilling to destroy them or cast them from His presence.

When Hazael king of Aram died, his son Ben-hadad reigned in his place. Then Jehoash son of Jehoahaz took back from Ben-hadad son of Hazael the cities that Hazael had taken in battle from his father Jehoahaz. Jehoash defeated Ben-hadad three times, and so recovered the cities of Israel.

In the second year of the reign of Jehoash son of Jehoahaz over Israel, Amaziah son of Joash became king of Judah. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother's name was Jehoaddan; she was from Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not as his father David had done. He did everything as his father Joash had done.

Nevertheless, the high places were not taken away, and the people continued sacrificing and burning incense on the high places.

As soon as the kingdom was firmly in his grasp, Amaziah executed the servants who had murdered his father the king. Yet he did not put the sons of the murderers to death, but acted according to what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, where the LORD commanded: "Fathers must not be put to death for their children, and children must not be put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin."

Amaziah struck down 10,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt. He took Sela in battle and called it Joktheel, which is its name to this very day.

Then Amaziah sent messengers to the king of Israel Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu. "Come, let us meet face to face," he said.

But Jehoash king of Israel replied to Amaziah king of Judah: "A thistle in Lebanon sent a message to a cedar in Lebanon, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son in marriage.' Then a wild beast in Lebanon came along and trampled the thistle. You have indeed defeated Edom, and your heart has become proud. Glory in that and stay at home. Why should you stir up trouble so that you fall— you and Judah with you?"

But Amaziah would not listen, so Jehoash king of Israel advanced. He and King Amaziah of Judah faced each other at Beth-shemesh in Judah. And Judah was routed before Israel, and every man fled to his home.

There at Beth-shemesh, Jehoash king of Israel captured Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash, the son of Ahaziah.

Then Jehoash went to Jerusalem and broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate — a section of four hundred cubits. He took all the gold and silver and all the articles found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the royal palace, as well as some hostages. Then he returned to Samaria.

As for the rest of the acts of Jehoash, along with his accomplishments, his might, and how he waged war against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

And Jehoash rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel. And his son Jeroboam reigned in his place.

Amaziah son of Joash king of Judah lived for fifteen years after the death of Jehoash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel. As for the rest of the acts of Amaziah, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

And conspirators plotted against Amaziah in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish. But men were sent after him to Lachish, and they killed him there. They carried him back on horses and buried him in Jerusalem with his fathers in the City of David.

Then all the people of Judah took Azariah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in place of his father Amaziah. Azariah was the one who rebuilt Elath and restored it to Judah after King Amaziah rested with his fathers.

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Amaziah son of Joash over Judah, Jeroboam son of Jehoash became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria forty-one years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD and did not turn away from all the sins that Jeroboam son of Nebat had caused Israel to commit.

This Jeroboam restored the boundary of Israel from Lebo-hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word that the LORD, the God of Israel, had spoken through His servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath-hepher. For the LORD saw that the affliction of the Israelites, both slave and free, was very bitter. There was no one to help Israel, and since the LORD had said that He would not blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam son of Jehoash.

As for the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, along with all his accomplishments and might, and how he waged war and recovered both Damascus and Hamath for Israel from Judah, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

And Jeroboam rested with his fathers, the kings of Israel. And his son Zechariah reigned in his place.

In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam's reign over Israel, Azariah son of Amaziah became king of Judah. He was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-two years. His mother's name was Jecoliah; she was from Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Amaziah had done.

Nevertheless, the high places were not taken away; the people continued sacrificing and burning incense there.

And the LORD afflicted the king with leprosy until the day he died, so that he lived in a separate house while his son Jotham had charge of the palace and governed the people of the land.

As for the rest of the acts of Azariah, along with all his accomplishments, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

And Azariah rested with his fathers and was buried near them in the City of David. And his son Jotham reigned in his place.

In the thirty-eighth year of Azariah's reign over Judah, Zechariah son of Jeroboam became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria six months. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done. He did not turn away from the sins that Jeroboam son of Nebat had caused Israel to commit.

Then Shallum son of Jabesh conspired against Zechariah, struck him down and killed him in front of the people, and reigned in his place.

As for the rest of the acts of Zechariah, they are indeed written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. So the word of the LORD spoken to Jehu was fulfilled: "Four generations of your sons will sit on the throne of Israel."

In the thirty-ninth year of Uzziah's reign over Judah, Shallum son of Jabesh became king, and he reigned in Samaria one full month.

Then Menahem son of Gadi went up from Tirzah to Samaria, struck down and killed Shallum son of Jabesh, and reigned in his place.

As for the rest of the acts of Shallum, along with the conspiracy he led, they are indeed written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

At that time Menahem, starting from Tirzah, attacked Tiphsah and everyone in its vicinity, because they would not open their gates. So he attacked Tiphsah and ripped open all the pregnant women.

In the thirty-ninth year of Azariah's reign over Judah, Menahem son of Gadi became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria ten years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and throughout his reign he did not turn away from the sins that Jeroboam son of Nebat had caused Israel to commit.

Then Pul king of Assyria invaded the land, and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver in order to gain his support and strengthen his own grip on the kingdom. Menahem exacted this money from each of the wealthy men of Israel — fifty shekels of silver from each man — to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria withdrew and did not remain in the land.

As for the rest of the acts of Menahem, along with all his accomplishments, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

And Menahem rested with his fathers, and his son Pekahiah reigned in his place.

In the fiftieth year of Azariah's reign over Judah, Pekahiah son of Menahem became king of Israel and reigned in Samaria two years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD and did not turn away from the sins that Jeroboam son of Nebat had caused Israel to commit.

Then his officer, Pekah son of Remaliah, conspired against him along with Argob, Arieh, and fifty men of Gilead. And at the citadel of the king's palace in Samaria, Pekah struck down and killed Pekahiah and reigned in his place.

As for the rest of the acts of Pekahiah, along with all his accomplishments, they are indeed written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

In the fifty-second year of Azariah's reign over Judah, Pekah son of Remaliah became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria twenty years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD and did not turn away from the sins that Jeroboam son of Nebat had caused Israel to commit.

In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and captured Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, including all the land of Naphtali, and he took the people as captives to Assyria.

Then Hoshea son of Elah led a conspiracy against Pekah son of Remaliah. In the twentieth year of Jotham son of Uzziah, Hoshea attacked Pekah, killed him, and reigned in his place.

As for the rest of the acts of Pekah, along with all his accomplishments, they are indeed written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

In the second year of the reign of Pekah son of Remaliah over Israel, Jotham son of Uzziah became king of Judah. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. His mother's name was Jerusha daughter of Zadok. And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Uzziah had done.

Nevertheless, the high places were not taken away; the people continued sacrificing and burning incense there.

Jotham rebuilt the Upper Gate of the house of the LORD.

As for the rest of the acts of Jotham, along with his accomplishments, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

(In those days the LORD began to send Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah against Judah.)

And Jotham rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the City of David his father. And his son Ahaz reigned in his place.

In the seventeenth year of Pekah son of Remaliah, Ahaz son of Jotham became king of Judah. Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. And unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD his God. Instead, he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and even sacrificed his son in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations that the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.

Then Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel came up to wage war against Jerusalem. They besieged Ahaz but could not overcome him.

At that time Rezin king of Aram recovered Elath for Aram, drove out the men of Judah, and sent the Edomites into Elath, where they live to this day.

So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, "I am your servant and your son. Come up and save me from the hands of the kings of Aram and Israel, who are rising up against me."

Ahaz also took the silver and gold found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's palace, and he sent it as a gift to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria responded to him, marched up to Damascus, and captured it. He took its people to Kir as captives and put Rezin to death.

Then King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria. On seeing the altar in Damascus, King Ahaz sent Uriah the priest a model of the altar and complete plans for its construction. And Uriah the priest built the altar according to all the instructions King Ahaz had sent from Damascus, and he completed it before King Ahaz returned.

When the king came back from Damascus and saw the altar, he approached it and presented offerings on it. He offered his burnt offering and his grain offering, poured out his drink offering, and splattered the blood of his peace offerings on the altar. He also took the bronze altar that stood before the LORD from the front of the temple (between the new altar and the house of

the LORD) and he put it on the north side of the new altar.

Then King Ahaz commanded Uriah the priest, “Offer on the great altar the morning burnt offering, the evening grain offering, and the king’s burnt offering and grain offering, as well as the burnt offerings, grain offerings, and drink offerings of all the people of the land. Splatter on the altar all the blood of the burnt offerings and sacrifices. But I will use the bronze altar to seek guidance.”

So Uriah the priest did just as King Ahaz had commanded.

King Ahaz also cut off the frames of the movable stands and removed the bronze basin from each of them. He took down the Sea from the bronze oxen that were under it and put it on a stone base. And on account of the king of Assyria, he removed the Sabbath canopy they had built in the temple and closed the royal entryway outside the house of the LORD.

As for the rest of the acts of Ahaz, along with his accomplishments, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

And Ahaz rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the City of David, and his son Hezekiah reigned in his place.

In the twelfth year of the reign of Ahaz over Judah, Hoshea son of Elah became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria nine years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, but not like the kings of Israel who preceded him.

Shalmaneser king of Assyria attacked him, and Hoshea became his vassal and paid him tribute. But the king of Assyria discovered that Hoshea had conspired to send envoys to King So of Egypt, and that he had not paid tribute to the king of Assyria as in previous years. Therefore the king of Assyria arrested Hoshea and put him in prison.

Then the king of Assyria invaded the whole land, marched up to Samaria, and besieged it for three years.

In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried away the Israelites to Assyria, where he settled them in Halah, in Gozan by the Habor River, and in the cities of the Medes.

All this happened because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They had worshiped other gods and walked in the customs of the nations that the LORD had driven out before the Israelites, as well as in the practices introduced by the kings of Israel.

The Israelites secretly did things against the LORD their God that were not right. From watchtower to fortified city, they built high places in all their cities. They set up for themselves sacred pillars and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every green tree. They burned incense on all the high places like the nations that the LORD had driven out before them. They did wicked things, provoking the LORD to anger. They served idols, although the LORD had told them, “You shall not do this thing.”

Yet through all His prophets and seers, the LORD warned Israel and Judah, saying, “Turn from your wicked ways and keep My commandments and statutes, according to the entire Law that I commanded your fathers and delivered to you through My servants the prophets.”

But they would not listen, and they stiffened their necks like their fathers, who did not believe the LORD their God. They rejected His statutes and the covenant He had made with their fathers, as well as the decrees He had given them. They pursued worthless idols and became worthless themselves, going after the surrounding nations that the LORD had commanded them not to imitate.

They abandoned all the commandments of the LORD their God and made for themselves two cast idols of calves and an Asherah pole. They bowed down to all the host of heaven and served Baal. They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire and practiced divination and soothsaying. They devoted themselves to doing evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger.

So the LORD was very angry with Israel, and He removed them from His presence. Only the tribe of Judah remained, and even Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but lived according to the customs Israel had introduced. So the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel. He afflicted them and delivered them into the hands of plunderers, until He had banished them from His presence.

When the LORD had torn Israel away from the house of David, they made Jeroboam son of Nebat king, and Jeroboam led Israel away from following the LORD and caused them to commit a great sin. The Israelites persisted in all the sins that Jeroboam had committed and did not turn away from them. Finally, the LORD removed Israel from His presence, as He had declared through all His servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their homeland into Assyria, where they are to this day.

Then the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim and settled them in the towns of Samaria to replace the Israelites. They took possession of Samaria and lived in its towns.

Now when the settlers first lived there, they did not worship the LORD, so He sent lions among them, which killed some of them. So they spoke to the king of Assyria, saying, “The peoples that you have removed and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the requirements of the God of the land. Because of this, He has sent lions among them, which are indeed killing them off.”

Then the king of Assyria commanded: “Send back one of the priests you carried off from Samaria, and have him go back to live there and teach the requirements of the God of the land.”

Thus one of the priests they had carried away came and lived in Bethel, and he began to teach them how they should worship the LORD.

Nevertheless, the people of each nation continued to make their own gods in the cities where they had settled, and they set them up in the shrines that the people of Samaria had made on the high places. The men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, the men of Hamath made Ashima, the

Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech the gods of Sepharvaim.

So the new residents worshiped the LORD, but they also appointed for themselves priests of all sorts to serve in the shrines of the high places. They worshiped the LORD, but they also served their own gods according to the customs of the nations from which they had been carried away.

To this day they are still practicing their former customs. None of them worship the LORD or observe the statutes, ordinances, laws, and commandments that the LORD gave the descendants of Jacob, whom He named Israel.

For the LORD had made a covenant with the Israelites and commanded them, "Do not worship other gods or bow down to them; do not serve them or sacrifice to them. Instead, worship the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt with great power and an outstretched arm. You are to bow down to Him and offer sacrifices to Him. And you must always be careful to observe the statutes, ordinances, laws, and commandments He wrote for you. Do not worship other gods. Do not forget the covenant I have made with you. Do not worship other gods, but worship the LORD your God, and He will deliver you from the hands of all your enemies."

But they would not listen, and they persisted in their former customs. So these nations worshiped the LORD but also served their idols, and to this day their children and grandchildren continue to do as their fathers did.

In the third year of the reign of Hoshea son of Elah over Israel, Hezekiah son of Ahaz became king of Judah. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother's name was Abi, the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done. He removed the high places, shattered the sacred pillars, and cut down the Asherah poles. He also demolished the bronze snake called Nehushtan that Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had burned incense to it.

Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. No king of Judah was like him, either before him or after him. He remained faithful to the LORD and did not turn from following Him; he kept the commandments that the LORD had given Moses.

And the LORD was with Hezekiah, and he prospered wherever he went. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and refused to serve him. He defeated the Philistines as far as Gaza and its borders, from watchtower to fortified city.

In the fourth year of Hezekiah's reign, which was the seventh year of the reign of Hoshea son of Elah over Israel, Shalmaneser king of Assyria marched against Samaria and besieged it. And at the end of three years, the Assyrians captured it.

So Samaria was captured in the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel. The king of Assyria exiled the Israelites to Assyria and settled them in Halah, in Gozan by the Habor River, and in the cities of the Medes. This happened because they did not listen to the voice of the LORD their God, but violated His covenant— all that Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded — and would neither listen nor obey.

In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked and captured all the fortified cities of Judah. So Hezekiah king of Judah sent word to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, "I have done wrong; withdraw from me, and I will pay whatever you demand from me."

And the king of Assyria exacted from Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the royal palace.

At that time Hezekiah stripped the gold with which he had plated the doors and doorposts of the temple of the LORD, and he gave it to the king of Assyria.

Nevertheless, the king of Assyria sent the Tartan, the Rabsaris, and the Rabshakeh, along with a great army, from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. They advanced up to Jerusalem and stationed themselves by the aqueduct of the upper pool, on the road to the Launderer's Field. Then they called for the king. And Eliakim son of Hilkiah the palace administrator, Shebnah the scribe, and Joah son of Asaph the recorder, went out to them.

The Rabshakeh said to them, "Tell Hezekiah that this is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says: What is the basis of this confidence of yours? You claim to have a strategy and strength for war, but these are empty words. In whom are you now trusting, that you have rebelled against me?

Look now, you are trusting in Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff that will pierce the hand of anyone who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him. But if you say to me, 'We trust in the LORD our God,' is He not the One whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem: 'You must worship before this altar in Jerusalem'?

Now, therefore, make a bargain with my master, the king of Assyria. I will give you two thousand horses — if you can put riders on them! For how can you repel a single officer among the least of my master's servants when you depend on Egypt for chariots and horsemen? So now, was it apart from the LORD that I have come up against this place to destroy it? The LORD Himself said to me, 'Go up against this land and destroy it.'"

Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah, along with Shebnah and Joah, said to the Rabshakeh, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, since we understand it. Do not speak with us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall."

But the Rabshakeh replied, "Has my master sent me to speak these words only to you and your master, and not to the men sitting on the wall, who are destined with you to eat their own dung and drink their own urine?"

Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out loudly in Hebrew: "Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria! This is what the king says: Do not let Hezekiah deceive you; he cannot deliver you from my hand. Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the LORD

when he says, 'The LORD will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.'

Do not listen to Hezekiah, for this is what the king of Assyria says: Make peace with me and come out to me. Then every one of you will eat from his own vine and his own fig tree and drink water from his own cistern, until I come and take you away to a land like your own— a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey — so that you may live and not die. But do not listen to Hezekiah, for he misleads you when he says, 'The LORD will deliver us.'

Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria from my hand? Who among all the gods of these lands has delivered his land from my hand? How then can the LORD deliver Jerusalem from my hand?"

But the people remained silent and did not answer a word, for Hezekiah had commanded, "Do not answer him."

Then Hilkiah's son Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the scribe, and Asaph's son Joah the recorder came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn, and they relayed to him the words of the Rabshakeh.

On hearing this report, King Hezekiah tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and entered the house of the LORD. And he sent Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the scribe, and the leading priests, all wearing sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz to tell him, "This is what Hezekiah says: Today is a day of distress, rebuke, and disgrace; for children have come to the point of birth, but there is no strength to deliver them. Perhaps the LORD your God will hear all the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to defy the living God, and He will rebuke him for the words that the LORD your God has heard. Therefore lift up a prayer for the remnant that still survives."

So the servants of King Hezekiah went to Isaiah, who replied, "Tell your master that this is what the LORD says: 'Do not be afraid of the words you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he will hear a rumor and return to his own land, where I will cause him to fall by the sword.'"

When the Rabshakeh heard that the king of Assyria had left Lachish, he withdrew and found the king fighting against Libnah.

Now Sennacherib had been warned about Tirhakah king of Cush: "Look, he has set out to fight against you."

So Sennacherib again sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, "Give this message to Hezekiah king of Judah:

'Do not let your God, in whom you trust, deceive you by saying that Jerusalem will not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. Surely you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the other countries, devoting them to destruction. Will you then be spared? Did the gods of the nations destroyed by my fathers rescue those nations— the gods of Gozan, Haran, and Rezeph, and of the people of Eden in Telassar? Where are the kings of Hamath, Arpad, Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah?'"

So Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers, read it, and went up to the house of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD:

"O LORD, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, You alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You made the heavens and the earth. Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see. Listen to the words that Sennacherib has sent to defy the living God.

Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste these nations and their lands. They have cast their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods, but only wood and stone — the work of human hands.

And now, O LORD our God, please save us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, O LORD, are God."

Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent a message to Hezekiah: "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I have heard your prayer concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria. This is the word that the LORD has spoken against him:

> 'The Virgin Daughter of Zion despises you and mocks you; the Daughter of Jerusalem shakes her head behind you. Whom have you taunted and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes in pride? Against the Holy One of Israel! Through your servants you have taunted the Lord, and you have said: "With my many chariots I have ascended to the heights of the mountains, to the remote peaks of Lebanon. I have cut down its tallest cedars, the finest of its cypresses. I have reached its farthest outposts, the densest of its forests. I have dug wells and drunk foreign waters. With the soles of my feet I have dried up all the streams of Egypt." Have you not heard? Long ago I ordained it; in days of old I planned it. Now I have brought it to pass, that you should crush fortified cities into piles of rubble. Therefore their inhabitants, devoid of power, are dismayed and ashamed. They are like plants in the field, tender green shoots, grass on the rooftops, scorched before it is grown. But I know your sitting down, your going out and coming in, and your raging against Me. Because your rage and arrogance against Me have reached My ears, I will put My hook in your nose and My bit in your mouth; I will send you back the way you came.'
>
> And this will be a sign to you, O Hezekiah:
>
> This year you will eat what grows on its own, and in the second year what springs from the same. But in the third year you will sow and reap; you will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. And the surviving remnant of the house of Judah will again take root below and bear fruit above. For a remnant will go forth from Jerusalem, and survivors from Mount Zion.

> The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will accomplish this.

So this is what the LORD says about the king of Assyria:

> 'He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow into it. He will not come before it with a shield or build up a siege ramp against it. He will go back the way he came, and he will not enter this city, declares the LORD. I will defend this city and save it for My own sake and for the sake of My servant David.'"

And that very night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 men in the camp of the Assyrians. When the people got up the next morning, there were all the dead bodies! So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there.

One day, while he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer put him to the sword and escaped to the land of Ararat. And his son Esar-haddon reigned in his place.

In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz came to him and said, "This is what the LORD says: 'Put your house in order, for you are about to die; you will not recover.'"

Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, saying, "Please, O LORD, remember how I have walked before You faithfully and with wholehearted devotion; I have done what is good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

Before Isaiah had left the middle courtyard, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "Go back and tell Hezekiah the leader of My people that this is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: 'I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. I will surely heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the house of the LORD. I will add fifteen years to your life. And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for My sake and for the sake of My servant David.'"

Then Isaiah said, "Prepare a poultice of figs." So they brought it and applied it to the boil, and Hezekiah recovered.

Now Hezekiah had asked Isaiah, "What will be the sign that the LORD will heal me and that I will go up to the house of the LORD on the third day?"

And Isaiah had replied, "This will be a sign to you from the LORD that He will do what He has promised: Would you like the shadow to go forward ten steps, or back ten steps?"

"It is easy for the shadow to lengthen ten steps," answered Hezekiah, "but not for it to go back ten steps."

So Isaiah the prophet called out to the LORD, and He brought the shadow back the ten steps it had descended on the stairway of Ahaz.

At that time Merodach-baladan son of Baladan king of Babylon sent letters and a gift to Hezekiah, for he had heard about Hezekiah's illness. And Hezekiah received the envoys and showed them all that was in his treasure house — the silver, the gold, the spices, and the precious oil, as well as his armory— all that was found in his storehouses. There was nothing in his palace or in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them.

Then the prophet Isaiah went to King Hezekiah and asked, "Where did those men come from, and what did they say to you?"

"They came from a distant land," Hezekiah replied, "from Babylon."

"What have they seen in your palace?" Isaiah asked.

"They have seen everything in my palace," answered Hezekiah. "There is nothing among my treasures that I did not show them."

Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD: The time will surely come when everything in your palace and all that your fathers have stored up until this day will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD. And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood, will be taken away to be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."

But Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD that you have spoken is good." For he thought, "Will there not at least be peace and security in my lifetime?"

As for the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, along with all his might and how he constructed the pool and the tunnel to bring water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

And Hezekiah rested with his fathers, and his son Manasseh reigned in his place.

Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years. His mother's name was Hephzibah. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD by following the abominations of the nations that the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had destroyed, and he raised up altars for Baal. He made an Asherah pole, as King Ahab of Israel had done, and he worshiped and served all the host of heaven.

Manasseh also built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem I will put My Name." In both courtyards of the house of the LORD, he built altars to all the host of heaven. He sacrificed his own son in the fire, practiced sorcery and divination, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did great evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger.

Manasseh even took the carved Asherah pole he had made and set it up in the temple, of which the LORD had said to David and his son Solomon, "In this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will establish My Name forever. I will never again cause the feet of the Israelites to wander from the land that I gave to their fathers, if only they are careful to do all I have commanded them— the whole Law that My servant Moses commanded them."

But the people did not listen and Manasseh led them astray, so that they did greater evil than the nations that the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites.

And the LORD spoke through His servants the prophets, saying, "Since Manasseh king of Judah has committed all these abominations, acting more wickedly than the Amorites who preceded him, and with his idols has caused Judah to sin, this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Behold, I am bringing such calamity upon Jerusalem and Judah that the news will reverberate in the ears of all who hear it.

I will stretch out over Jerusalem the measuring line used against Samaria and the plumb line used against the house of Ahab, and I will wipe out Jerusalem as one wipes out a bowl— wiping it and turning it upside down. So I will forsake the remnant of My inheritance and deliver them into the hands of their enemies. And they will become plunder and spoil to all their enemies, because they have done evil in My sight and have provoked Me to anger from the day their fathers came out of Egypt until this day.'"

Moreover, Manasseh shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem from end to end, in addition to the sin that he had caused Judah to commit, doing evil in the sight of the LORD.

As for the rest of the acts of Manasseh, along with all his accomplishments and the sin that he committed, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

And Manasseh rested with his fathers and was buried in his palace garden, the garden of Uzza. And his son Amon reigned in his place.

Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem two years. His mother's name was Meshullemeth daughter of Haruz; she was from Jotbah. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done. He walked in all the ways of his father, and he served and worshiped the idols his father had served. He abandoned the LORD, the God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the LORD.

Then the servants of Amon conspired against him and killed the king in his palace. But the people of the land killed all those who had conspired against King Amon, and they made his son Josiah king in his place.

As for the rest of the acts of Amon, along with his accomplishments, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? And he was buried in his tomb in the garden of Uzza, and his son Josiah reigned in his place.

Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. His mother's name was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah; she was from Bozkath. And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right or to the left.

Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, King Josiah sent the scribe, Shaphan son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, to the house of the LORD, saying, "Go up to Hilkiah the high priest and have him count the money that has been brought into the house of the LORD, which the doorkeepers have collected from the people. And let them deliver it into the hands of the supervisors of those doing the work on the house of the LORD, who in turn are to give it to the workmen repairing the damages to the house of the LORD — to the carpenters, builders, and masons — to buy timber and dressed stone to repair the temple. But they need not account for the money put into their hands, since they work with integrity."

Then Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD!" And he gave it to Shaphan, who read it.

And Shaphan the scribe went to the king and reported, "Your servants have paid out the money that was found in the temple and have put it into the hands of the workers and supervisors of the house of the LORD."

Moreover, Shaphan the scribe told the king, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it in the presence of the king.

When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes and commanded Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Achbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the servant of the king: "Go and inquire of the LORD for me, for the people, and for all Judah concerning the words in this book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the LORD that burns against us because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book by doing all that is written about us."

So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went and spoke to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, the keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the Second District.

And Huldah said to them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Tell the man who sent you that this is what the LORD says: I am about to bring calamity on this place and on its people, according to all the words of the book that the king of Judah has read, because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. My wrath will be kindled against this place and will not be quenched.'

But as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, tell him that this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'As for the words that you heard, because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its people, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and because you have torn your clothes and wept before Me, I have heard you,' declares the LORD.

'Therefore I will indeed gather you to your fathers, and you will be gathered to your grave in peace. Your eyes will not see all the calamity that I will bring on this place.'"

So they brought her answer back to the king.

Then the king summoned all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And he went up to the house of the LORD with all the people of Judah and Jerusalem, as well as the priests and the prophets— all the people small and great— and in their hearing he read all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD.

So the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD to follow the LORD and to keep His commandments, decrees, and statutes with all his heart and all his soul, and to carry out the words of the covenant that were written in this book. And all the people entered into the covenant.

Then the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, the priests second in rank, and the doorkeepers to remove from the temple of the LORD all the articles made for Baal, Asherah, and all the host of heaven. And he

burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron and carried their ashes to Bethel.

Josiah also did away with the idolatrous priests ordained by the kings of Judah to burn incense on the high places of the cities of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem — those who had burned incense to Baal, to the sun and moon, to the constellations, and to all the host of heaven.

He brought the Asherah pole from the house of the LORD to the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem, and there he burned it, ground it to powder, and threw its dust on the graves of the common people. He also tore down the quarters of the male shrine prostitutes that were in the house of the LORD, where the women had woven tapestries for Asherah.

Then Josiah brought all the priests from the cities of Judah and desecrated the high places, from Geba to Beersheba, where the priests had burned incense. He tore down the high places of the gates at the entrance of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which was to the left of the city gate. Although the priests of the high places did not come up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, they ate unleavened bread with their fellow priests.

He also desecrated Topheth in the Valley of Ben-hinnom so that no one could sacrifice his son or daughter in the fire to Molech. And he removed from the entrance to the house of the LORD the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun. They were in the court near the chamber of an official named Nathan-melech. And Josiah burned up the chariots of the sun.

He pulled down the altars that the kings of Judah had set up on the roof near the upper chamber of Ahaz, and the altars that Manasseh had set up in the two courtyards of the house of the LORD. The king pulverized them there and threw their dust into the Kidron Valley.

The king also desecrated the high places east of Jerusalem, to the south of the Mount of Corruption, which King Solomon of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. He smashed the sacred pillars to pieces, cut down the Asherah poles, and covered the sites with human bones.

He even pulled down the altar at Bethel, the high place set up by Jeroboam son of Nebat, who had caused Israel to sin. Then he burned the high place, ground it to powder, and burned the Asherah pole. And as Josiah turned, he saw the tombs there on the hillside, and he sent someone to take the bones out of the tombs, and he burned them on the altar to defile it, according to the word of the LORD proclaimed by the man of God who had foretold these things.

Then the king asked, “What is this monument I see?”

And the men of the city replied, “It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things that you have done to the altar of Bethel.”

“Let him rest,” said Josiah. “Do not let anyone disturb his bones.”

So they left his bones undisturbed, along with those of the prophet who had come from Samaria.

Just as Josiah had done at Bethel, so also in the cities of Samaria he removed all the shrines of the high places set up by the kings of Israel who had provoked the LORD to anger. On the altars he slaughtered all the priests of the high places, and he burned human bones on them. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

The king commanded all the people, “Keep the Passover of the LORD your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant.”

No such Passover had been observed from the days of the judges who had governed Israel through all the days of the kings of Israel and Judah. But in the eighteenth year of Josiah’s reign, this Passover was observed to the LORD in Jerusalem.

Furthermore, Josiah removed the mediums and spiritists, the household gods and idols, and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem. He did this to carry out the words of the law written in the book that Hilkiah the priest had found in the house of the LORD.

Neither before nor after Josiah was there any king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, according to all the Law of Moses.

Nevertheless, the LORD did not turn away from the fury of His burning anger, which was kindled against Judah because of all that Manasseh had done to provoke Him to anger. For the LORD had said, “I will remove Judah from My sight, just as I removed Israel. I will reject this city Jerusalem, which I chose, and the temple of which I said, ‘My Name shall be there.’”

As for the rest of the acts of Josiah and all his accomplishments, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

During Josiah’s reign, Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt marched up to help the king of Assyria at the Euphrates River. King Josiah went out to confront him, but Neco faced him and killed him at Megiddo.

From Megiddo his servants carried his body in a chariot, brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own tomb. Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz son of Josiah, anointed him, and made him king in place of his father.

Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother’s name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah; she was from Libnah. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, just as his fathers had done.

And Pharaoh Neco imprisoned Jehoahaz at Riblah in the land of Hamath so that he could not reign in Jerusalem, and he imposed on Judah a levy of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. Then Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim son of Josiah king in place of his father Josiah, and he changed Eliakim’s name to Jehoiakim. But Neco took Jehoahaz and carried him off to Egypt, where he died.

So Jehoiakim paid the silver and gold to Pharaoh Neco, but to meet Pharaoh’s demand he taxed the land and exacted the silver and the gold from the people, each according to his wealth.

Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years.

His mother's name was Zebidah daughter of Pedaiah; she was from Rumah. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, just as his fathers had done.

During Jehoiakim's reign, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invaded. So Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years, until he turned and rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar.

And the LORD sent Chaldean, Aramean, Moabite, and Ammonite raiders against Jehoiakim in order to destroy Judah, according to the word that the LORD had spoken through His servants the prophets. Surely this happened to Judah at the LORD's command, to remove them from His presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all that he had done, and also for the innocent blood he had shed. For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was unwilling to forgive.

As for the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, along with all his accomplishments, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

And Jehoiakim rested with his fathers, and his son Jehoiachin reigned in his place.

Now the king of Egypt did not march out of his land again, because the king of Babylon had taken all his territory, from the Brook of Egypt to the Euphrates River.

Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother's name was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan; she was from Jerusalem. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, just as his father had done.

At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched up to Jerusalem, and the city came under siege. And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to the city while his servants were besieging it. Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his servants, his commanders, and his officials all surrendered to the king of Babylon.

So in the eighth year of his reign, the king of Babylon took him captive. As the LORD had declared, Nebuchadnezzar also carried off all the treasures from the house of the LORD and the royal palace, and he cut into pieces all the gold articles that Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD. He carried into exile all Jerusalem — all the commanders and mighty men of valor, all the craftsmen and metalsmiths — ten thousand captives in all. Only the poorest people of the land remained.

Nebuchadnezzar carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, as well as the king's mother, his wives, his officials, and the leading men of the land. He took them into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. The king of Babylon also brought into exile to Babylon all seven thousand men of valor and a thousand craftsmen and metalsmiths— all strong and fit for battle.

Then the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah.

Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah; she was from Libnah.

And Zedekiah did evil in the sight of the LORD, just as Jehoiakim had done. For because of the anger of the LORD, all this happened in Jerusalem and Judah, until He finally banished them from His presence.

And Zedekiah also rebelled against the king of Babylon.

So in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his entire army. They encamped outside the city and built a siege wall all around it. And the city was kept under siege until King Zedekiah's eleventh year.

By the ninth day of the fourth month, the famine in the city was so severe that the people of the land had no food. Then the city was breached; and though the Chaldeans had surrounded the city, all the men of war fled by night by way of the gate between the two walls near the king's garden.

They headed toward the Arabah, but the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho, and his whole army deserted him. The Chaldeans seized the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where they pronounced judgment on him. And they slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. Then they put out his eyes, bound him with bronze shackles, and took him to Babylon.

On the seventh day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign over Babylon, Nebuzaradan captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, entered Jerusalem. He burned down the house of the LORD, the royal palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem — every significant building. And the whole army of the Chaldeans under the captain of the guard broke down the walls around Jerusalem.

Then Nebuzaradan captain of the guard carried into exile the people who remained in the city, along with the deserters who had defected to the king of Babylon and the rest of the population. But the captain of the guard left behind some of the poorest of the land to tend the vineyards and fields.

Moreover, the Chaldeans broke up the bronze pillars and stands and the bronze Sea in the house of the LORD, and they carried the bronze to Babylon. They also took away the pots, shovels, wick trimmers, dishes, and all the articles of bronze used in the temple service. The captain of the guard also took away the censers and sprinkling bowls— anything made of pure gold or fine silver.

As for the two pillars, the Sea, and the movable stands that Solomon had made for the house of the LORD, the weight of the bronze from all these articles was beyond measure. Each pillar was eighteen cubits tall. The bronze capital atop one pillar was three cubits high, with a network of bronze pomegranates all around. The second pillar, with its network, was similar.

The captain of the guard also took away Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the priest of second rank, and the three doorkeepers. Of those still in the city, he took a court official who had been appointed over the men of war, as well as five royal advisors. He also took the scribe of the captain of the army, who had enlisted the

people of the land, and sixty men who were found in the city.

Nebuzaradan captain of the guard took them and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. There at Riblah in the land of Hamath, the king of Babylon struck them down and put them to death. So Judah was taken into exile, away from its own land.

Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, over the people he had left behind in the land of Judah.

When all the commanders of the armies and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah as governor, they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah — Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah son of the Maacathite, as well as their men. And Gedaliah took an oath before them and their men, assuring them, “Do not be afraid of the servants of the Chaldeans. Live in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will be well with you.”

In the seventh month, however, Ishmael son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, who was a member of the royal family, came with ten men and struck down and killed Gedaliah, along with the Judeans and Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah. Then all the people small and great, together with the commanders of the army, arose and fled to Egypt for fear of the Chaldeans.

On the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month of the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Judah’s King Jehoiachin, in the year Evil-merodach became king of Babylon, he released King Jehoiachin of Judah from prison. And he spoke kindly to Jehoiachin and set his throne above the thrones of the other kings who were with him in Babylon.

So Jehoiachin changed out of his prison clothes, and he dined regularly at the king’s table for the rest of his life. And the king provided Jehoiachin a daily portion for the rest of his life.

1 Chronicles

First Book of Chronicles

Adam, Seth, Enosh,
Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared,
Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah.
The sons of Noah:
Shem, Ham, and Japheth.
The sons of Japheth:
Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.
The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.
And the sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, the Kittites, and the Rodanites.
The sons of Ham:
Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.
The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabta, Raamah, and Sabteca.
The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan.
Cush was the father of Nimrod, who began to be a mighty one on the earth.
Mizraim was the father of the Ludites, the Anamites, the Lehabites, the Naphtuhites, the Pathrusites, the Casluhites (from whom the Philistines came), and the Caphtorites.
And Canaan was the father of Sidon his firstborn, and of the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites.
The sons of Shem:
Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram.
[The sons of Aram:] Uz, Hul, Gether, and Meshech.
Arphaxad was the father of Shelah, and Shelah was the father of Eber.
Two sons were born to Eber: One was named Peleg, because in his days the earth was divided, and his brother was named Joktan.
And Joktan was the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, Obal, Abimael, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were sons of Joktan.
So from Shem came Arphaxad, Shelah, Eber, Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, Terah, and Abram (that is, Abraham).

The sons of Abraham were Isaac and Ishmael. These are their genealogies:
Nebaioth the firstborn of Ishmael, then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. These were the sons of Ishmael.
The sons born to Keturah, Abraham's concubine:
Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.
The sons of Jokshan:
Sheba and Dedan.
The sons of Midian:
Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah.
All of these were Keturah's sons.
Abraham was the father of Isaac. The sons of Isaac:
Esau and Israel.
The sons of Esau:
Eliphaz, Reuel, Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.
The sons of Eliphaz: Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz; and by Timna, Amalek.
The sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah.
The sons of Seir:
Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan.
The sons of Lotan: Hori and Homam. Timna was Lotan's sister.
The sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam.
The sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah.
The son of Anah: Dishon.
The sons of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran.
The sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan.
The sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran.

These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the Israelites:
Bela son of Beor. His city was named Dinhabah.
When Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah from Bozrah reigned in his place.
When Jobab died, Husham from the land of the Temanites reigned in his place.
When Husham died, Hadad son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab, reigned in his place. And the name of his city was Avith.
When Hadad died, Samlah from Masrekah reigned in his place.
When Samlah died, Shaul from Rehoboth on the Euphrates reigned in his place.
When Shaul died, Baal-hanan son of Achbor reigned in his place.
When Baal-hanan died, Hadad reigned in his place. His city was named Pau, and his wife's name was Mehetabel daughter of Matred, the daughter of Me-zahab.
Then Hadad died.

Now the chiefs of Edom were Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, Magdiel, and Iram. These were the chiefs of Edom.

These were the sons of Israel:
Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Joseph, Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.
The sons of Judah:
Er, Onan, and Shelah. These three were born to him by Bath-shua the Canaanite. Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD put him to death.
Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law, bore to him Perez and Zerah. Judah had five sons in all.
The sons of Perez:
Hezron and Hamul.
The sons of Zerah:
Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Calcol, and Dara— five in all.
The son of Carmi:
Achar, who brought trouble upon Israel by violating the ban on devoted things.
The son of Ethan:
Azariah.

The sons who were born to Hezron:
Jerahmeel, Ram, and Caleb.
Ram was the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab was the father of Nahshon, a leader of the descendants of Judah.
Nahshon was the father of Salmon, and Salmon was the father of Boaz.
Boaz was the father of Obed, and Obed was the father of Jesse.
Jesse was the father of Eliab his firstborn; Abinadab was born second, Shimea third, Nethanel fourth, Raddai fifth, Ozem sixth, and David seventh. Their sisters were Zeruiah and Abigail. And the three sons of Zeruiah were Abishai, Joab, and Asahel. Abigail was the mother of Amasa, whose father was Jether the Ishmaelite.
Caleb son of Hezron had children by his wife Azubah and by Jerioth. These were the sons of Azubah: Jesher, Shobab, and Ardon. When Azubah died, Caleb married Ephrath, who bore to him Hur. Hur was the father of Uri, and Uri was the father of Bezalel.
Later, Hezron slept with the daughter of Machir the father of Gilead. He had married her when he was sixty years old, and she bore to him Segub. Segub was the father of Jair, who had twenty-three cities in the land of Gilead. But Geshur and Aram captured Havvoth-jair, along with Kenath and its sixty surrounding villages. All these were descendants of Machir the father of Gilead.
After Hezron died in Caleb-ephrathah, his wife Abijah bore to him Ashhur the father of Tekoa.
The sons of Jerahmeel the firstborn of Hezron:
Ram his firstborn, Bunah, Oren, Ozem, and Ahijah. Jerahmeel had another wife named Atarah, who was the mother of Onam.
The sons of Ram the firstborn of Jerahmeel:
Maaz, Jamin, and Eker.
The sons of Onam:
Shammai and Jada.
The sons of Shammai:
Nadab and Abishur. Abishur's wife was named Abihail, and she bore to him Ahban and Molid.
The sons of Nadab:
Seled and Appaim. Seled died without children.
The son of Appaim:
Ishi.
The son of Ishi:
Sheshan.
The son of Sheshan:
Ahlai.
The sons of Jada the brother of Shammai:
Jether and Jonathan. Jether died without children.
The sons of Jonathan:
Peleth and Zaza.
These were the descendants of Jerahmeel.
Sheshan had no sons, but only daughters. He also had an Egyptian servant named Jarha. Sheshan gave his daughter in marriage to his servant Jarha, and she bore to him Attai.
Attai was the father of Nathan, Nathan was the father of Zabad, Zabad was the father of Ephlal, Ephlal was the father of Obed, Obed was the father of Jehu, Jehu was the father of Azariah, Azariah was the father of Helez, Helez was the father of Elasah, Elasah was the father of Sismai, Sismai was the father of Shallum, Shallum was the father of Jekamiah, and Jekamiah was the father of Elishama.
The sons of Caleb the brother of Jerahmeel:
Mesha his firstborn, who was the father of Ziph, and Mareshah his second son, who was the father of Hebron.
The sons of Hebron:
Korah, Tappuah, Rekem, and Shema. Shema was the father of Raham the father of Jorkeam, and Rekem was the father of Shammai. The son of Shammai was Maon, and Maon was the father of Beth-zur.
Caleb's concubine Ephah was the mother of Haran, Moza, and Gazez. Haran was the father of Gazez.
The sons of Jahdai:
Regem, Jotham, Geshan, Pelet, Ephah, and Shaaph.
Caleb's concubine Maacah was the mother of Sheber and Tirhanah. She was also the mother of Shaaph father of Madmannah, and of Sheva father of Machbenah and Gibea. Caleb's daughter was Acsah. These were the descendants of Caleb.
The sons of Hur the firstborn of Ephrathah:
Shobal the father of Kiriath-jearim, Salma the father of Bethlehem, and Hareph the father of Beth-gader.
These were the descendants of Shobal the father of Kiriath-jearim:
Haroeh, half the Manahathites, and the clans of Kiriath-jearim— the Ithrites, Puthites, Shumathites, and Mishraites. From these descended the Zorathites and Eshtaolites.
The descendants of Salma:
Bethlehem, the Netophathites, Atroth-beth-joab, half the Manahathites, the Zorites, and the clans of the scribes who lived at Jabez— the Tirathites, Shimeathites, and Sucathites. These are the Kenites who came from Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab.
These were the sons of David who were born to him in Hebron:
The firstborn was Amnon by Ahinoam of Jezreel;
the second was Daniel by Abigail of Carmel;
the third was Absalom the son of Maacah daughter of King Talmai of Geshur;
the fourth was Adonijah the son of Haggith;
the fifth was Shephatiah by Abital;
and the sixth was Ithream by his wife Eglah.
These six sons were born to David in Hebron, where he reigned seven years and six months.
And David reigned in Jerusalem thirty-three years, and these sons were born to him in Jerusalem:
Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon. These four were born to him by Bathsheba daughter of Ammiel.
David's other sons were Ibhar, Elishua, Eliphelet, Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet— nine in all.
These were all the sons of David, besides the sons by his concubines. And Tamar was their sister.

Solomon's son was Rehoboam:
Abijah was his son, Asa his son, Jehoshaphat his son, Joram his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash his son, Amaziah his son, Azariah his son, Jotham his son, Ahaz his son, Hezekiah his son, Manasseh his son, Amon his son, and Josiah his son.
The sons of Josiah:
Johanan was the firstborn, Jehoiakim the second, Zedekiah the third, and Shallum the fourth.
The successors of Jehoiakim:
Jeconiah his son, and Zedekiah.
The descendants of Jeconiah the captive:
Shealtiel his son, Malchiram, Pedaiah, Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah.
The sons of Pedaiah:
Zerubbabel and Shimei.
The children of Zerubbabel:
Meshullam and Hananiah, their sister Shelomith, and five others: Hashubah, Ohel, Berechiah, Hasadiah, and Jushab-hesed.
The descendants of Hananiah:
Pelatiah, Jeshaiah, and the sons of Rephaiah, of Arnan, of Obadiah, and of Shecaniah.
The six descendants of Shecaniah were Shemaiah and his sons:
Hattush, Igal, Bariah, Neariah, and Shaphat.
The sons of Neariah:
Elioenai, Hizkiah, and Azrikam— three in all.
The sons of Elioenai:
Hodaviah, Eliashib, Pelaiah, Akkub, Johanan, Delaiah, and Anani— seven in all.
The descendants of Judah:
Perez, Hezron, Carmi, Hur, and Shobal.
Reaiah son of Shobal was the father of Jahath, and Jahath was the father of Ahumai and Lahad. These were the clans of the Zorathites.
These were the sons of Etam: Jezreel, Ishma, and Idbash. And their sister was named Hazzelelponi. Penuel was the father of Gedor, and Ezer was the father of Hushah.
These were the descendants of Hur, the firstborn of Ephrathah and the father of Bethlehem.
Ashhur the father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah.
Naarah bore to him Ahuzzam, Hepher, Temeni, and Haahashtari. These were the descendants of Naarah.
The sons of Helah were Zereth, Zohar, Ethnan, and Koz, who was the father of Anub and Zobebah and of the clans of Aharhel son of Harum.
Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain."
And Jabez called out to the God of Israel, "If only You would bless me and enlarge my territory! May Your hand be with me and keep me from harm, so that I will be free from pain."
And God granted the request of Jabez.
Chelub the brother of Shuhah was the father of Mehir, who was the father of Eshton. Eshton was the father of Beth-rapha, of Paseah, and of Tehinnah the father of Ir-nahash. These were the men of Recah.
The sons of Kenaz:
Othniel and Seraiah.
The sons of Othniel:
Hathath and Meonothai.
Meonothai was the father of Ophrah, and Seraiah was the father of Joab, the father of those living in Ge-harashim, which was given this name because its people were craftsmen.
The sons of Caleb son of Jephunneh:
Iru, Elah, and Naam.
The son of Elah:
Kenaz.
The sons of Jehallelel:
Ziph, Ziphah, Tiria, and Asarel.
The sons of Ezrah:
Jether, Mered, Epher, and Jalon.
And Mered's wife Bithiah gave birth to Miriam, Shammai, and Ishbah the father of Eshtemoa. These were the children of Pharaoh's daughter Bithiah.
Mered also took a Judean wife, who gave birth to Jered the father of Gedor, Heber the father of Soco, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah.
The sons of Hodiah's wife, the sister of Naham, were the fathers of Keilah the Garmite and of Eshtemoa the Maacathite.
The sons of Shimon:
Amnon, Rinnah, Ben-hanan, and Tilon.
The descendants of Ishi:
Zoheth and Ben-zoheth.
The sons of Shelah son of Judah:
Er the father of Lecah, Laadah the father of Mareshah and the clans of the linen workers at Beth-ashbea, Jokim, the men of Cozeba, and Joash and Saraph, who ruled in Moab and Jashubi-lehem. (These names are from ancient records.) These were the potters who lived at Netaim and Gederah. They lived there in the service of the king.
The descendants of Simeon:
Nemuel, Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, and Shaul.
The sons of Shaul:
Shallum, Mibsam, and Mishma.
The sons of Mishma:
Hammuel, Zaccur, and Shimei.
Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters, but his brothers did not have many children, so their whole clan did not become as numerous as the sons of Judah. They lived in Beersheba, Moladah, Hazar-shual, Bilhah, Ezem, Tolad, Bethuel, Hormah, Ziklag, Beth-marcaboth, Hazar-susim, Beth-biri, and Shaaraim. These were their cities until the reign of David. And their villages were Etam, Ain, Rimmon, Tochen, and Ashan— five towns— and all their surrounding villages as far as Baal. These were their settlements, and they kept a genealogical record:
Meshobab, Jamlech, Joshah son of Amaziah, Joel, Jehu son of Joshibiah (son of Seraiah, son of Asiel), Elioenai, Jaakobah, Jeshohaiah, Asaiah, Adiel, Jesimiel, Benaiah, and Ziza son of Shiphi (son of Allon, son of Jedaiah, son of Shimri, son of Shemaiah).

These men listed by name were the leaders of their clans. Their families increased greatly, and they journeyed to the entrance of Gedor, to the east side of the valley, in search of pasture for their flocks. There they found rich, good pasture, and the land was spacious, peaceful, and quiet; for some Hamites had lived there formerly.

These who were noted by name came in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah. They attacked the Hamites in their dwellings as well as the Meunites who were there, devoting them to destruction even to this day. Then they settled in their place, because there was pasture for their flocks. And five hundred of these Simeonites led by Pelatiah, Neariah, Rephaiah, and Uzziel, the sons of Ishi, went to Mount Seir and struck down the remnant of the Amalekites who had escaped. And they have lived there to this day.

These were the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel. Though he was the firstborn, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel, because Reuben defiled his father's bed. So he is not reckoned according to birthright. And though Judah prevailed over his brothers and a ruler came from him, the birthright belonged to Joseph. The sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel:

Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

The descendants of Joel:

Shemaiah his son, Gog his son, Shimei his son, Micah his son, Reaiah his son, Baal his son, and Beerah his son, whom Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria carried into exile.

Beerah was a leader of the Reubenites. His relatives by their clans are recorded in their genealogy:

Jeiel the chief, Zechariah, and Bela son of Azaz, the son of Shema, the son of Joel. They settled in Aroer and as far as Nebo and Baal-meon. They also settled in the east as far as the edge of the desert that extends to the Euphrates River, because their livestock had increased in the land of Gilead.

During the days of Saul they waged war against the Hagrites, who were defeated at their hands, and they occupied the dwellings of the Hagrites throughout the region east of Gilead.

The descendants of Gad lived next to the Reubenites in the land of Bashan, as far as Salecah:

Joel was the chief, Shapham the second, then Jaanai and Shaphat, who lived in Bashan.

Their kinsmen by families were Michael, Meshullam, Sheba, Jorai, Jacan, Zia, and Eber— seven in all. These were the sons of Abihail son of Huri, the son of Jaroah, the son of Gilead, the son of Michael, the son of Jeshishai, the son of Jahdo, the son of Buz. Ahi son of Abdiel, the son of Guni, was head of their family.

They lived in Gilead, in Bashan and its towns, and throughout the pasturelands of Sharon. All of them were recorded in the genealogies during the reigns of Jotham king of Judah and Jeroboam king of Israel.

The Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh had 44,760 warriors— valiant men who carried the shield and sword, drew the bow, and were trained for battle. They waged war against the Hagrites, as well as Jetur, Naphish, and Nodab.

And because they cried out to God in battle, they were helped against their enemies, and the Hagrites and all their allies were delivered into their hands. Because they put their trust in God, He answered their prayers. They seized the livestock of the Hagrites— 50,000 camels, 250,000 sheep, and 2,000 donkeys. They also took 100,000 captives, and many others fell slain, because the battle belonged to God. And they occupied the land until the exile.

Now the people of the half-tribe of Manasseh were numerous. They settled in the land from Bashan to Baal-hermon (that is, Senir, also known as Mount Hermon). These were the heads of their families:

Epher, Ishi, Eliel, Azriel, Jeremiah, Hodaviah, and Jahdiel.

They were mighty men of valor, famous men, and heads of their families. But they were unfaithful to the God of their fathers, and they prostituted themselves with the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them.

So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria (that is, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria) to take the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh into exile. And he brought them to Halah, Habor, Hara, and the river of Gozan, where they remain to this day.

The sons of Levi:

Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

The sons of Kohath:

Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

The children of Amram:

Aaron, Moses, and Miriam.

The sons of Aaron:

Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.
Eleazar was the father of Phinehas,
Phinehas was the father of Abishua,
Abishua was the father of Bukki,
Bukki was the father of Uzzi,
Uzzi was the father of Zerahiah,
Zerahiah was the father of Meraioth,
Meraioth was the father of Amariah,
Amariah was the father of Ahitub,
Ahitub was the father of Zadok,
Zadok was the father of Ahimaaz,
Ahimaaz was the father of Azariah,
Azariah was the father of Johanan,
Johanan was the father of Azariah, who served as priest in the temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem,
Azariah was the father of Amariah,
Amariah was the father of Ahitub,
Ahitub was the father of Zadok,
Zadok was the father of Shallum,
Shallum was the father of Hilkiah,
Hilkiah was the father of Azariah,
Azariah was the father of Seraiah,
and Seraiah was the father of Jehozadak.

Jehozadak went into captivity when the LORD sent Judah and Jerusalem into exile by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

The sons of Levi:
Gershom, Kohath, and Merari.
These are the names of the sons of Gershom:
Libni and Shimei.
The sons of Kohath:
Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.
The sons of Merari:
Mahli and Mushi.
These are the clans of the Levites listed according to their fathers:
Of Gershom:
Libni his son, Jahath his son, Zimmah his son, Joah his son, Iddo his son, Zerah his son, and Jeatherai his son.
The descendants of Kohath:
Amminadab his son, Korah his son, Assir his son, Elkanah his son, Ebiasaph his son, Assir his son, Tahath his son, Uriel his son, Uzziah his son, and Shaul his son.
The descendants of Elkanah:
Amasai, Ahimoth, Elkanah his son, Zophai his son, Nahath his son, Eliab his son, Jeroham his son, and Elkanah his son.
The sons of Samuel:
Joel his firstborn and Abijah his second son.
The descendants of Merari:
Mahli, Libni his son, Shimei his son, Uzzah his son, Shimea his son, Haggiah his son, and Asaiah his son.
These are the men David put in charge of the music in the house of the LORD after the ark rested there. They ministered with song before the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, until Solomon built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem. And they performed their duties according to the regulations given them. These are the men who served, together with their sons.
From the Kohathites:
Heman the singer, the son of Joel, the son of Samuel, the son of Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Eliel, the son of Toah, the son of Zuph, the son of Elkanah, the son of Mahath, the son of Amasai, the son of Elkanah, the son of Joel, the son of Azariah, the son of Zephaniah, the son of Tahath, the son of Assir, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, the son of Israel.
Heman's kinsman was Asaph, who served at his right hand:
Asaph the son of Berechiah, the son of Shimea, the son of Michael, the son of Baaseiah, the son of Malchijah, the son of Ethni, the son of Zerah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Ethan, the son of Zimmah, the son of Shimei, the son of Jahath, the son of Gershom, the son of Levi.
On the left were their kinsmen, the sons of Merari:
Ethan the son of Kishi, the son of Abdi, the son of Malluch, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Amaziah, the son of Hilkiah, the son of Amzi, the son of Bani, the son of Shemer, the son of Mahli, the son of Mushi, the son of Merari, the son of Levi.
Their fellow Levites were assigned to every kind of service of the tabernacle, the house of God. But Aaron and his sons did all the work of the Most Holy Place. They presented the offerings on the altar of burnt offering and on the altar of incense to make atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded.
These were the descendants of Aaron:
Eleazar his son, Phinehas his son, Abishua his son, Bukki his son, Uzzi his son, Zerahiah his son, Meraioth his son, Amariah his son, Ahitub his son, Zadok his son, and Ahimaaz his son.
Now these were the territories assigned to the descendants of Aaron from the Kohathite clan for their settlements, because the first lot fell to them:
They were given Hebron in the land of Judah and its surrounding pasturelands. But the fields and villages around the city were given to Caleb son of Jephunneh. So the descendants of Aaron were given Hebron (a city of refuge), Libnah, Jattir, Eshtemoa, Hilen, Debir, Ashan, Juttah, and Beth-shemesh, together with their pasturelands.
And from the tribe of Benjamin they were given Gibeon, Geba, Alemeth, and Anathoth, together with their pasturelands. So they had thirteen cities in all among their families.
To the rest of the Kohathites, ten cities were allotted from the half-tribe of Manasseh.
The Gershomites , according to their clans, were allotted thirteen cities from the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Manasseh in Bashan.
The Merarites, according to their clans, were allotted twelve cities from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun.
So the Israelites gave to the Levites these cities and their pasturelands. They assigned by lot the cities named above from the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin.
And some of the clans of the Kohathites were given cities from the tribe of Ephraim for their territory:
They were given Shechem (a city of refuge) with its pasturelands in the hill country of Ephraim, and Gezer, Jokmeam, Beth-horon, Aijalon, and Gath-rimmon, together with their pasturelands.
And from the half-tribe of Manasseh the rest of the clans of the Kohathites were given Aner and Bileam, together with their pasturelands.
The Gershomites received the following:
From the clan of the half-tribe of Manasseh they were given Golan in Bashan and also Ashtaroth, together with their pasturelands.
From the tribe of Issachar they were given Kedesh, Daberath, Ramoth, and Anem, together with their pasturelands.
From the tribe of Asher they were given Mashal, Abdon, Hukok, and Rehob, together with their pasturelands.
And from the tribe of Naphtali they were given Kedesh in Galilee, Hammon, and Kiriathaim, together with their pasturelands.
The Merarites (the rest of the Levites) received the following:
From the tribe of Zebulun they were given Rimmono and Tabor, together with their pasturelands.

From the tribe of Reuben east of the Jordan opposite Jericho they were given Bezer in the wilderness, Jahzah, Kedemoth, and Mephaath, together with their pasturelands.
And from the tribe of Gad they were given Ramoth in Gilead, Mahanaim, Heshbon, and Jazer, together with their pasturelands.
The sons of Issachar:
Tola, Puah, Jashub, and Shimron— four in all.
The sons of Tola:
Uzzi, Rephaiah, Jeriel, Jahmai, Ibsam, and Shemuel, the heads of their families. In the days of David, 22,600 descendants of Tola were numbered in their genealogies as mighty men of valor.
The son of Uzzi:
Izrahiah.
The sons of Izrahiah:
Michael, Obadiah, Joel, and Isshiah. All five of them were chiefs. In addition to them, according to their genealogy, they had 36,000 troops for battle, for they had many wives and children.
Their kinsmen belonging to all the families of Issachar who were mighty men of valor totaled 87,000, as listed in their genealogies.
The three sons of Benjamin:
Bela, Becher, and Jediael.
The sons of Bela:
Ezbon, Uzzi, Uzziel, Jerimoth, and Iri, heads of their families— five in all. There were 22,034 mighty men of valor listed in their genealogies.
The sons of Becher:
Zemirah, Joash, Eliezer, Elioenai, Omri, Jeremoth, Abijah, Anathoth, and Alemeth; all these were Becher's sons. Their genealogies were recorded according to the heads of their families— 20,200 mighty men of valor.
The son of Jediael:
Bilhan.
The sons of Bilhan:
Jeush, Benjamin, Ehud, Chenaanah, Zethan, Tarshish, and Ahishahar. All these sons of Jediael were heads of their families, mighty men of valor; there were 17,200 fit for battle. The Shuppites and Huppites were descendants of Ir, and the Hushites were descendants of Aher.
The sons of Naphtali:
Jahziel, Guni, Jezer, and Shallum— the descendants of Bilhah.
The descendants of Manasseh: Asriel
through his Aramean concubine. She also gave birth to Machir the father of Gilead.
Machir took a wife from among the Huppites and Shuppites. The name of his sister was Maacah.
Another descendant was named Zelophehad, who had only daughters.
Machir's wife Maacah gave birth to a son, and she named him Peresh. His brother was named Sheresh, and his sons were Ulam and Rekem.
The son of Ulam:
Bedan.
These were the sons of Gilead son of Machir, the son of Manasseh. His sister Hammolecheth gave birth to Ishhod, Abiezer, and Mahlah.
And these were the sons of Shemida:
Ahian, Shechem, Likhi, and Aniam.
The descendants of Ephraim:
Shuthelah, Bered his son, Tahath his son, Eleadah his son, Tahath his son, Zabad his son, and Shuthelah his son.
Ezer and Elead were killed by the natives of Gath, because they went down to steal their livestock.
Their father Ephraim mourned for many days, and his relatives came to comfort him. And again he slept with his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. So he named him Beriah, because tragedy had come upon his house. His daughter was Sheerah, who built Lower and Upper Beth-horon, as well as Uzzen-sheerah.
Additionally, Rephah was his son, Resheph his son, Telah his son, Tahan his son, Ladan his son, Ammihud his son, Elishama his son, Nun his son, and Joshua his son.
Their holdings and settlements included Bethel and its villages, Naaran to the east, Gezer and its villages to the west, and Shechem and its villages as far as Ayyah and its villages. And along the borders of Manasseh were Beth-shean, Taanach, Megiddo, and Dor, together with their villages. The descendants of Joseph son of Israel lived in these towns.
The children of Asher:
Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, and their sister Serah.
The sons of Beriah:
Heber, as well as Malchiel, who was the father of Birzaith.
Heber was the father of Japhlet, Shomer, and Hotham, and of their sister Shua.
The sons of Japhlet:
Pasach, Bimhal, and Ashvath. These were Japhlet's sons.
The sons of Shemer:
Ahi, Rohgah, Hubbah, and Aram.
The sons of his brother Helem:
Zophah, Imna, Shelesh, and Amal.
The sons of Zophah:
Suah, Harnepher, Shual, Beri, Imrah, Bezer, Hod, Shamma, Shilshah, Ithran, and Beera.
The sons of Jether:
Jephunneh, Pispa, and Ara.
The sons of Ulla:
Arah, Hanniel, and Rizia.
All these were the descendants of Asher — heads of their families, choice and mighty men of valor, and chiefs among the leaders. The number of men fit for battle, recorded in their genealogies, was 26,000.
Benjamin was the father of Bela his firstborn, Ashbel the second, Aharah the third, Nohah the fourth, and Rapha the fifth.
The sons of Bela:
Addar, Gera, Abihud, Abishua, Naaman, Ahoah, Gera, Shephuphan, and Huram.
These were the descendants of Ehud who were the heads of the families living in Geba and were exiled to Manahath:

Naaman, Ahijah, and Gera, who carried them into exile and who was the father of Uzza and Ahihud.

Shaharaim had sons in the country of Moab after he had divorced his wives Hushim and Baara. His sons by his wife Hodesh:

Jobab, Zibia, Mesha, Malcam, Jeuz, Sachia, and Mirmah. These were his sons, heads of families.

He also had sons by Hushim:

Abitub and Elpaal.

The sons of Elpaal:

Eber, Misham, Shemed (who built Ono and Lod with its villages), and Beriah and Shema (who were the heads of families living in Aijalon and who drove out the inhabitants of Gath).

Ahio, Shashak, Jeremoth, Zebadiah, Arad, Eder, Michael, Ishpah, and Joha were the sons of Beriah.

Zebadiah, Meshullam, Hizki, Heber, Ishmerai, Izliah, and Jobab were the sons of Elpaal.

Jakim, Zichri, Zabdi, Elienai, Zillethai, Eliel, Adaiah, Beraiah, and Shimrath were the sons of Shimei.

Ishpan, Eber, Eliel, Abdon, Zichri, Hanan, Hananiah, Elam, Anthothijah, Iphdeiah, and Penuel were the sons of Shashak.

Shamsherai, Shehariah, Athaliah, Jaareshiah, Elijah, and Zichri were the sons of Jeroham.

All these were heads of families, the chiefs according to their genealogies, and they lived in Jerusalem.

Jeiel the father of Gibeon lived in Gibeon. His wife's name was Maacah, and Abdon was his firstborn son, then Zur, Kish, Baal, Nadab, Gedor, Ahio, Zecher, and Mikloth, who was the father of Shimeah. They too lived alongside their relatives in Jerusalem.

Ner was the father of Kish, Kish was the father of Saul, and Saul was the father of Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab, and Esh-baal.

The son of Jonathan:

Merib-baal, and Merib-baal was the father of Micah.

The sons of Micah:

Pithon, Melech, Tarea, and Ahaz.

Ahaz was the father of Jehoaddah, Jehoaddah was the father of Alemeth, Azmaveth, and Zimri, and Zimri was the father of Moza.

Moza was the father of Binea. Raphah was his son, Eleasah his son, and Azel his son.

Azel had six sons, and these were their names:

Azrikam, Bocheru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan. All these were the sons of Azel.

The sons of his brother Eshek:

Ulam was his firstborn, Jeush second, and Eliphelet third. The sons of Ulam were mighty men of valor, archers, and they had many sons and grandsons— 150 in all.

All these were the descendants of Benjamin.

So all Israel was recorded in the genealogies written in the Book of the Kings of Israel. But Judah was exiled to Babylon because of their unfaithfulness.

Now the first to resettle their own property in their cities were Israelites, priests, Levites, and temple servants.

Some of the descendants of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh lived in Jerusalem:

Uthai son of Ammihud, the son of Omri, the son of Imri, the son of Bani, a descendant of Perez son of Judah.

From the Shilonites:

Asaiah the firstborn and his sons.

From the Zerahites:

Jeuel and 690 relatives.

From the Benjamites:

Sallu son of Meshullam, the son of Hodaviah, the son of Hassenuah;

Ibneiah son of Jeroham;

Elah son of Uzzi, the son of Michri;

Meshullam son of Shephatiah, the son of Reuel, the son of Ibnijah;

and 956 of their relatives according to their genealogy. All these men were heads of their families.

From the priests:

Jedaiah, Jehoiarib, and Jachin;

Azariah son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the chief official of God's temple;

Adaiah son of Jeroham, the son of Pashhur, the son of Malchijah;

Maasai son of Adiel, the son of Jahzerah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Meshillemith, the son of Immer;

and 1,760 of their relatives, the heads of their families, able men for the work of the service of the house of God.

From the Levites:

Shemaiah son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, a descendant of Merari;

Bakbakkar, Heresh, Galal, and Mattaniah son of Mica, the son of Zichri, the son of Asaph;

Obadiah son of Shemaiah, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun;

and Berechiah son of Asa, the son of Elkanah, who lived in the villages of the Netophathites.

These were the gatekeepers:

Shallum, Akkub, Talmon, Ahiman, and their relatives.

Shallum was their chief; he was previously stationed at the King's Gate on the east side. These were the gatekeepers from the camp of the Levites. Shallum son of Kore, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, and his relatives from the Korahites were assigned to guard the thresholds of the Tent, just as their fathers had been assigned to guard the entrance to the dwelling of the LORD.

In earlier times Phinehas son of Eleazar had been in charge of the gatekeepers, and the LORD was with him.

Zechariah son of Meshelemiah was the gatekeeper at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

The number of those chosen to be gatekeepers at the thresholds was 212. They were regis-

tered by genealogy in their villages. David and Samuel the seer had appointed them to their positions of trust.

So they and their descendants were assigned to guard the gates of the house of the LORD — the house called the Tent. The gatekeepers were stationed on the four sides: east, west, north, and south. Their relatives came from their villages at fixed times to serve with them for seven-day periods. But the four chief gatekeepers, who were Levites, were entrusted with the rooms and the treasuries of the house of God. They would spend the night stationed around the house of God, because they were responsible for guarding it and opening it every morning.

Some of them were in charge of the articles used in worship, to count them whenever they were brought in or taken out. Others were put in charge of the furnishings and other articles of the sanctuary, as well as the fine flour, wine, oil, frankincense, and spices. And some of the sons of the priests mixed the spices.

A Levite named Mattithiah, the firstborn son of Shallum the Korahite, was entrusted with baking the bread. Some of their Kohathite relatives were responsible for preparing the rows of the showbread every Sabbath.

Those who were musicians, the heads of Levite families, stayed in the temple chambers and were exempt from other duties because they were on duty day and night. All these were heads of Levite families, chiefs according to their genealogies, and they lived in Jerusalem.

Jeiel the father of Gibeon lived in Gibeon. His wife's name was Maacah.

Abdon was his firstborn son, then Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab, Gedor, Ahio, Zechariah, and Mikloth.

Mikloth was the father of Shimeam. They too lived alongside their relatives in Jerusalem.

Ner was the father of Kish, Kish was the father of Saul, and Saul was the father of Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab, and Esh-baal.

The son of Jonathan:

Merib-baal, who was the father of Micah.

The sons of Micah:

Pithon, Melech, Tahrea, and Ahaz.

Ahaz was the father of Jarah; Jarah was the father of Alemeth, Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri was the father of Moza. Moza was the father of Binea. Rephaiah was his son, Elasah his son, and Azel his son.

And Azel had six sons, and these were their names:

Azrikam, Bocheru, Ishmael, Shearіah, Obadiah, and Hanan. These were the sons of Azel.

Now the Philistines fought against Israel, and the men of Israel fled before them, and many fell slain on Mount Gilboa.

The Philistines followed hard after Saul and his sons, and they killed Saul's sons Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua. When the battle intensified against Saul, the archers overtook him and wounded him.

Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through with it, or these uncircumcised men will come and torture me!"

But his armor-bearer was terrified and refused to do it. So Saul took his own sword and fell on it.

When his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his own sword and died. So Saul died together with his three sons and all his house.

When all the Israelites in the valley saw that the army had fled and that Saul and his sons had died, they abandoned their cities and ran away. So the Philistines came and occupied their cities.

The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. They stripped Saul, cut off his head, took his armor, and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to proclaim the news in the temple of their idols and among their people. They put his armor in the temple of their gods and hung his head in the temple of Dagon.

When all the people of Jabesh-gilead heard about everything the Philistines had done to Saul, all their men of valor set out and retrieved the bodies of Saul and his sons and brought them to Jabesh. And they buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh and fasted seven days.

So Saul died for his unfaithfulness to the LORD, because he did not keep the word of the LORD and even consulted a medium for guidance, and he failed to inquire of the LORD. So the LORD put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse.

Then all Israel came together to David at Hebron and said, "Here we are, your own flesh and blood. Even in times past, while Saul was king, you were the one who led Israel out and brought them back. And the LORD your God said, 'You will shepherd My people Israel, and you will be ruler over them.'"

So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, where David made a covenant with them before the LORD. And they anointed him king over Israel, according to the word of the LORD through Samuel.

Then David and all the Israelites marched to Jerusalem (that is, Jebus), where the Jebusites inhabited the land.

The people of Jebus said to David, "You will never get in here."

Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion (that is, the City of David).

Now David had said, "Whoever is the first to strike down a Jebusite will become chief commander."

And Joab son of Zeruiah went up first, and he became the chief.

So David took up residence in the fortress; that is why it was called the City of David. He built up the city around it, from the supporting terraces to the surrounding wall, while Joab restored the rest of the city.

And David became greater and greater, for the LORD of Hosts was with him.

Now these were the chiefs of David's mighty men, who, together with all Israel, bolstered and strengthened his kingdom, according to the word of the LORD concerning Israel. This is the list of David's mighty men:

Jashobeam son of Hachmoni was chief of the officers; he wielded his spear against three hundred men, whom he killed at one time.

Next in command was Eleazar son of Dodo the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men. He was with

David at Pas-dammim when the Philistines gathered there for battle. At a place with a field full of barley, the troops fled from the Philistines. But Eleazar and David stationed themselves in the middle of the field and defended it. They struck down the Philistines, and the LORD brought about a great victory.

Three of the thirty chief men went down to David, to the rock at the cave of Adullam, while a company of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. At that time David was in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was at Bethlehem. David longed for water and said, "Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!"

So the Three broke through the Philistine camp, drew water from the well at the gate of Bethlehem, and brought it back to David. But he refused to drink it; instead, he poured it out to the LORD, saying, "Far be it from me, my God, to do this! How can I drink the blood of these men who risked their lives?" Because they had brought it at the risk of their lives, David refused to drink it.

Such were the exploits of the three mighty men.

Now Abishai, the brother of Joab, was chief of the Three, and he wielded his spear against three hundred men, killed them, and won a name along with the Three. He was doubly honored above the Three, and he became their commander, even though he was not included among the Three.

And Benaiah son of Jehoiada was a man of valor from Kabzeel, a man of many exploits. He struck down two champions of Moab, and on a snowy day he went down into a pit and killed a lion. He also struck down an Egyptian, a huge man five cubits tall. Although the Egyptian had a spear like a weaver's beam in his hand, Benaiah went against him with a club, snatched the spear from his hand, and killed the Egyptian with his own spear. These were the exploits of Benaiah son of Jehoiada, who won a name along with the three mighty men. He was most honored among the Thirty, but he did not become one of the Three. And David appointed him over his guard.

Now these were the mighty men:
Asahel the brother of Joab,
Elhanan son of Dodo of Bethlehem,
Shammoth the Harorite,
Helez the Pelonite,
Ira son of Ikkesh the Tekoite,
Abiezer the Anathothite,
Sibbecai the Hushathite,
Ilai the Ahohite,
Maharai the Netophathite,
Heled son of Baanah the Netophathite,
Ithai son of Ribai from Gibeah of the Benjamites,
Benaiah the Pirathonite,
Hurai from the brooks of Gaash,
Abiel the Arbathite,
Azmaveth the Baharumite,
Eliahba the Shaalbonite,
the sons of Hashem the Gizonite,
Jonathan son of Shagee the Hararite,
Ahiam son of Sachar the Hararite,
Eliphal son of Ur,
Hepher the Mecherathite,
Ahijah the Pelonite,
Hezro the Carmelite,
Naarai son of Ezbai,
Joel the brother of Nathan,
Mibhar son of Hagri,
Zelek the Ammonite,
Naharai the Beerothite, the armor-bearer of Joab son of Zeruiah,
Ira the Ithrite,
Gareb the Ithrite,
Uriah the Hittite,
Zabad son of Ahlai,
Adina son of Shiza the Reubenite, chief of the Reubenites, and the thirty with him,
Hanan son of Maacah,
Joshaphat the Mithnite,
Uzzia the Ashterathite,
Shama and Jeiel the sons of Hotham the Aroerite,
Jediael son of Shimri and his brother Joha the Tizite,
Eliel the Mahavite,
Jeribai and Joshaviah, the sons of Elnaam,
Ithmah the Moabite,
Eliel, Obed, and Jaasiel the Mezobaite.

Now these were the men who came to David at Ziklag, while he was still banished from the presence of Saul son of Kish (they were among the mighty men who helped him in battle; they were archers using both the right and left hands to sling stones and shoot arrows; and they were Saul's kinsmen from Benjamin):
Ahiezer their chief and Joash, who were the sons of Shemaah the Gibeathite;
Jeziel and Pelet, the sons of Azmaveth;
Beracah;
Jehu the Anathothite;
Ishmaiah the Gibeonite, a mighty man among the Thirty and a leader over the Thirty;
Jeremiah, Jahaziel, Johanan, and Jozabad the Gederathite;
Eluzai, Jerimoth, Bealiah, Shemariah, and Shephatiah the Haruphite;
Elkanah, Isshiah, Azarel, Joezer, and Jashobeam, who were Korahites;
and Joelah and Zebadiah, the sons of Jeroham from Gedor.

Some Gadites defected to David at his stronghold in the wilderness. They were mighty men of valor, trained for battle, experts with the shield and spear, whose faces were like the faces of lions and who were as swift as gazelles on the mountains:
Ezer the chief, Obadiah the second in command, Eliab the third, Mishmannah the fourth, Jeremiah the fifth, Attai the sixth, Eliel the seventh, Johanan the eighth, Elzabad the ninth, Jeremiah the tenth, and Machbanai the eleventh.

These Gadites were army commanders, the least of whom was a match for a hundred, and the greatest for a thousand.

These are the ones who crossed the Jordan in the first month when it was overflowing all its banks, and they put to flight all those in the valleys, both to the east and to the west.

Other Benjamites and some men from Judah also came to David in his stronghold. And David went out to meet them, saying, "If you have come to me in peace to help me, my heart will be united with you; but if you have come to betray me to my enemies when my hands

are free of violence, may the God of our fathers see it and judge you."

Then the Spirit came upon Amasai, the chief of the Thirty, and he said:

> "We are yours, O David! We are with you, O son of Jesse! Peace, peace to you, and peace to your helpers, for your God helps you."

So David received them and made them leaders of his troops.

Some from Manasseh defected to David when he went with the Philistines to fight against Saul. (They did not help the Philistines because the Philistine rulers consulted and sent David away, saying, "It will cost us our heads if he defects to his master Saul.") When David went to Ziklag, these men of Manasseh defected to him:

> Adnah, Jozabad, Jediael, Michael, Jozabad, Elihu, and Zillethai, chiefs of thousands in Manasseh.

They helped David against the raiders, for they were all mighty men of valor and commanders in the army.

For at that time men came to David day after day to help him, until he had a great army, like the army of God.

Now these are the numbers of men armed for battle who came to David at Hebron to turn Saul's kingdom over to him, in accordance with the word of the LORD:
From Judah: 6,800 armed troops bearing shields and spears.
From Simeon: 7,100 mighty men of valor, ready for battle.
From Levi: 4,600, including Jehoiada, leader of the house of Aaron, with 3,700 men, and Zadok, a mighty young man of valor, with 22 commanders from his own family.
From Benjamin, the kinsmen of Saul: 3,000, most of whom had remained loyal to the house of Saul up to that time.
From Ephraim: 20,800 mighty men of valor, famous among their own clans.
From the half-tribe of Manasseh: 18,000 designated by name to come and make David king.
From Issachar, men who understood the times and knew what Israel should do: 200 chiefs with all their kinsmen at their command.
From Zebulun: 50,000 fit for service, trained for battle with all kinds of weapons of war, who with one purpose were devoted to David.
From Naphtali: 1,000 commanders, accompanied by 37,000 men with shield and spear.
From Dan: 28,600 prepared for battle.
From Asher: 40,000 fit for service, prepared for battle.
And from east of the Jordan, from Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh there: 120,000 armed with every kind of weapon of war.

All these men of war, arrayed for battle, came to Hebron fully determined to make David king over all Israel. And all the rest of the Israelites were of one mind to make David king.

They spent three days there eating and drinking with David, for their relatives had provided for them. And their neighbors from as far away as Issachar, Zebulun, and Naphtali came bringing food on donkeys, camels, mules, and oxen— abundant supplies of flour, fig cakes and raisin cakes, wine and oil, oxen and sheep. Indeed, there was joy in Israel.

Then David conferred with all his leaders, the commanders of thousands and of hundreds. And he said to the whole assembly of Israel, "If it seems good to you, and if this is of the LORD our God, let us send word far and wide to the rest of our brothers in all the land of Israel, and also to the priests and Levites in their cities and pasturelands, so that they may join us. Then let us bring back the ark of our God, for we did not inquire of Him in the days of Saul."

And because this proposal seemed right to all the people, the whole assembly agreed to it. So David assembled all Israel, from the River Shihor in Egypt to Lebo-hamath, to bring the ark of God from Kiriath-jearim.

David and all Israel went up to Baalah of Judah (that is, Kiriath-jearim) to bring up from there the ark of God the LORD, who is enthroned between the cherubim — the ark that is called by the Name. So they carried the ark of God from the house of Abinadab on a new cart, with Uzzah and Ahio guiding the cart.

David and all the Israelites were celebrating before God with all their might, with songs and on harps and lyres, with tambourines, cymbals, and trumpets.

When they came to the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark, because the oxen had stumbled. And the anger of the LORD burned against Uzzah, and He struck him down because he had put his hand on the ark. So he died there before God.

Then David became angry because the LORD had burst forth against Uzzah. So he named that place Perez-uzzah, as it is called to this day.

That day David feared God and asked, "How can I ever bring the ark of God to me?" So he did not move the ark with him to the City of David; instead, he took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. Thus the ark of God remained with the family of Obed-edom in his house for three months, and the LORD blessed his household and everything he owned.

Now Hiram king of Tyre sent envoys to David, along with cedar logs, stonemasons, and carpenters, to build a palace for him. And David realized that the LORD had established him as king over Israel and had highly exalted his kingdom for the sake of His people Israel.

And David took more wives in Jerusalem and became the father of more sons and daughters. These are the names of the children born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, Ibhar, Elishua, Elpelet, Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Beeliada, and Eliphelet.

When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over all Israel, they all went in search of him; but David learned of this and went out to face them.

Now the Philistines had come and raided the Valley of Rephaim. So David inquired of God, "Should I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand?"

"Go," replied the LORD, "for I will deliver them into your hand."

So David and his men went up to Baal-perazim, where he defeated the Philistines and said, "Like a

bursting flood, God has burst out against my enemies by my hand." So they called that place Baal-perazim. There the Philistines abandoned their gods, and David ordered that they be burned in the fire.

Once again the Philistines raided the valley. So David again inquired of God, who answered him, "Do not march up after them, but circle around them and attack them in front of the balsam trees. As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, move out to battle, because this will mean that God has gone out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines."

So David did as God had commanded him, and they struck down the army of the Philistines all the way from Gibeon to Gezer. And David's fame went out into every land, and the LORD caused all nations to fear him.

David constructed buildings for himself in the City of David, and he prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it. Then David said, "No one but the Levites may carry the ark of God, because the LORD has chosen them to carry the ark of the LORD and to minister before Him forever."

And David assembled all Israel in Jerusalem to bring up the ark of the LORD to the place he had prepared for it. Then he gathered together the descendants of Aaron and the Levites:

From the Kohathites, Uriel the chief and 120 of his relatives;
from the Merarites, Asaiah the chief and 220 of his relatives;
from the Gershomites, Joel the chief and 130 of his relatives;
from the Elizaphanites, Shemaiah the chief and 200 of his relatives;
from the Hebronites, Eliel the chief and 80 of his relatives;
and from the Uzzielites, Amminadab the chief and 112 of his relatives.

David summoned the priests Zadok and Abiathar and the Levites Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Amminadab. And he said to them, "You are the heads of the Levitical families. You and your relatives must consecrate yourselves so that you may bring the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to the place I have prepared for it. It was because you Levites were not with us the first time that the LORD our God burst forth in anger against us. For we did not consult Him about the proper order."

So the priests and Levites consecrated themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel. And the Levites carried the ark of God on their shoulders with the poles, as Moses had commanded in accordance with the word of the LORD.

David also told the leaders of the Levites to appoint their relatives as singers to lift up their voices with joy, accompanied by musical instruments— harps, lyres, and cymbals. So the Levites appointed Heman son of Joel; from his brothers, Asaph son of Berechiah; from their brothers the Merarites, Ethan son of Kushaiah; and with them their brothers next in rank: Zechariah, Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, and the gatekeepers Obed-edom and Jeiel.

The musicians Heman, Asaph, and Ethan were to sound the bronze cymbals. Zechariah, Aziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah, and Benaiah were to play the harps according to Alamoth. And Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-edom, Jeiel, and Azaziah were to lead the music with lyres according to Sheminith. Chenaniah the head Levite was the director of the music because he was highly skilled.

Berechiah and Elkanah were to be guardians of the ark. Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethanel, Amasai, Zechariah, Benaiah, and Eliezer — the priests — were to blow the trumpets before the ark of God. Obed-edom and Jehiah were also to be guardians of the ark.

So David, the elders of Israel, and the commanders of thousands went with rejoicing to bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the house of Obed-edom. And because God helped the Levites who were carrying the ark of the covenant of the LORD, they sacrificed seven bulls and seven rams.

Now David was dressed in a robe of fine linen, as were all the Levites who were carrying the ark, as well as the singers and Chenaniah, the director of music for the singers. David also wore a linen ephod. So all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, with the sounding of rams' horns and trumpets, and with cymbals and the music of harps and lyres.

As the ark of the covenant of the LORD was entering the City of David, Saul's daughter Michal looked down from a window and saw King David dancing and celebrating, and she despised him in her heart.

So they brought the ark of God and placed it inside the tent that David had pitched for it. And they presented burnt offerings and peace offerings before God. When David had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD. Then he distributed to every man and woman of Israel a loaf of bread, a date cake, and a raisin cake.

David appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, to celebrate, to give thanks, and to praise the LORD, the God of Israel. Asaph was the chief, Zechariah was second, then Jeiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-edom, and Jeiel. They were to play the harps and lyres, while Asaph sounded the cymbals and the priests Benaiah and Jahaziel blew the trumpets regularly before the ark of the covenant of God.

On that day David first committed to Asaph and his associates this song of thanksgiving to the LORD:

> "Give thanks to the LORD; call upon His name; make known His deeds among the nations. Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; tell of all His wonders. Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. Seek out the LORD and His strength; seek His face always. Remember the wonders He has done, His marvels, and the judgments He has pronounced, O offspring of His servant Israel, O sons of Jacob, His chosen ones. He is the LORD our God; His judgments carry throughout the earth. Remember His covenant forever, the word He ordained for a thousand genera-

tions— the covenant He made with Abraham,
and the oath He swore to Isaac. He confirmed it
to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting
covenant: 'I will give you the land of Canaan
as the portion of your inheritance.' When they
were few in number, few indeed, and strangers
in the land, they wandered from nation to
nation, from one kingdom to another. He let no
man oppress them; He rebuked kings on their
behalf: 'Do not touch My anointed ones! Do no
harm to My prophets!'
Sing to the LORD, all the earth. Proclaim
His salvation day after day. Declare His glory
among the nations, His wonders among all
peoples. For great is the LORD, and greatly to
be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.
For all the gods of the nations are idols, but it
is the LORD who made the heavens. Splendor
and majesty are before Him; strength and joy
fill His dwelling. Ascribe to the LORD, O fami-
lies of the nations, ascribe to the LORD glory
and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory
due His name; bring an offering and come be-
fore Him. Worship the LORD in the splendor of
His holiness; tremble before Him, all the earth.
The world is firmly established; it cannot be
moved. Let the heavens be glad, and the earth
rejoice. Let them say among the nations, 'The
LORD reigns!' Let the sea resound, and all that
fills it; let the fields exult, and all that is in them.
Then the trees of the forest will sing for joy
before the LORD, for He is coming to judge the
earth. Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;
His loving devotion endures forever. Then cry
out: 'Save us, O God of our salvation; gather
and deliver us from the nations, that we may
give thanks to Your holy name, that we may
glory in Your praise.' Blessed be the LORD, the
God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting."

Then all the people said, "Amen!" and "Praise the LORD!"

So David left Asaph and his associates there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to minister there regularly according to the daily requirements, along with Obed-edom and his sixty-eight relatives. Obed-edom son of Jeduthun, and also Hosah, were to be gatekeepers.

And David left Zadok the priest and his fellow priests before the tabernacle of the LORD at the high place in Gibeon to regularly present burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of burnt offerings, morning and evening, according to all that was written in the Law of the LORD, which He had commanded Israel to keep. With them were Heman, Jeduthun, and the rest of those chosen and designated by name to give thanks to the LORD, for "His loving devotion endures forever."

Heman and Jeduthun had with them trumpets and cymbals for the music and instruments for the songs of God. And the sons of Jeduthun were stationed at the gate.

Then all the people departed for their homes, and David returned home to bless his household.

After David had settled into his palace, he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of the covenant of the LORD is under a tent."

And Nathan replied to David, "Do all that is in your heart, for God is with you."

But that night the word of God came to Nathan, saying, "Go and tell My servant David that this is what the LORD says: You are not the one to build Me a house in which to dwell. For I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought Israel up out of Egypt until this day, but I have moved from tent to tent and dwelling to dwelling. In all My journeys with all the Israelites, have I ever asked any of the leaders I appointed to shepherd My people, 'Why haven't you built Me a house of cedar?'

Now then, you are to tell My servant David that this is what the LORD of Hosts says: I took you from the pasture, from following the flock, to be the ruler over My people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make for you a name like that of the greatest in the land.

And I will provide a place for My people Israel and will plant them so that they may dwell in a place of their own and be disturbed no more. No longer will the sons of wickedness oppress them as they did at the beginning and have done since the day I appointed judges over My people Israel. And I will subdue all your enemies.

Moreover, I declare to you that the LORD will build a house for you. And when your days are fulfilled and you go to be with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He will build a house for Me, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his Father, and he will be My son. And I will never remove My loving devotion from him as I removed it from your predecessor. But I will set him over My house and My kingdom forever, and his throne will be established forever."

So Nathan relayed to David all the words of this entire revelation.

Then King David went in, sat before the LORD, and said, "Who am I, O LORD God, and what is my house, that You have brought me this far? And as if this was a small thing in Your eyes, O God, You have spoken about the future of the house of Your servant and have regarded me as a man of great distinction, O LORD God. What more can David say to You for honoring Your servant? For You know Your servant, O LORD. For the sake of Your servant and according to Your own heart, You have accomplished this great thing and made known all these great promises.

O LORD, there is none like You, and there is no God but You, according to everything we have heard with our own ears. And who is like Your people Israel — the one nation on earth whom God went out to redeem as a people for Himself? You made a name for Yourself through great and awesome wonders by driving out nations from before Your people, whom You redeemed from Egypt. For You have made Your people Israel Your very own forever, and You, O LORD, have become their God.

And now, O LORD, let the word You have spoken concerning Your servant and his house be established forever. Do as You have promised, so that Your name will be established and magnified forever when it is said, 'The LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, is God over Israel.' And may the house of Your servant David be established before You. For You, my God, have revealed to Your servant that You will build a house for him. Therefore Your servant has found the courage to pray before You.

And now, O LORD, You are God! And You have promised this goodness to Your servant. So now You have been pleased to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue forever before You. For You, O LORD, have blessed it, and it will be blessed forever."

Some time later, David defeated the Philistines, subdued them, and took Gath and its villages from the hand of the Philistines.

David also defeated the Moabites, and they became subject to David and brought him tribute.

As far as Hamath, David also defeated King Hadadezer of Zobah, who had marched out to establish his dominion along the Euphrates River. David captured from him a thousand chariots, seven thousand charioteers, and twenty thousand foot soldiers, and he hamstrung all the horses except a hundred he kept for the chariots.

When the Arameans of Damascus came to help King Hadadezer of Zobah, David struck down twenty-two thousand of their men. Then he placed garrisons in Aram of Damascus, and the Arameans became subject to David and brought him tribute. So the LORD made David victorious wherever he went.

And David took the gold shields that belonged to the officers of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem. And from Tibhath and Cun, cities of Hadadezer, David took a large amount of bronze, with which Solomon made the bronze Sea, the pillars, and various bronze articles.

When King Tou of Hamath heard that David had defeated the entire army of Hadadezer king of Zobah, he sent his son Hadoram to greet King David and bless him for fighting and defeating Hadadezer, who had been at war with Tou. Hadoram brought all kinds of articles of gold and silver and bronze, and King David dedicated these to the LORD, along with the silver and gold he had carried off from all these nations — from Edom and Moab, and from the Ammonites, Philistines, and Amalekites.

Moreover, Abishai son of Zeruiah struck down eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt. He placed garrisons in Edom, and all the Edomites were subject to David. So the LORD made David victorious wherever he went.

Thus David reigned over all Israel and administered justice and righteousness for all his people:

Joab son of Zeruiah was over the army;
Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the recorder;
Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were priests;
Shavsha was the scribe;
Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and Pelethites;
and David's sons were chief officials at the king's side.

Some time later, Nahash king of the Ammonites died and was succeeded by his son. And David said, "I will show kindness to Hanun son of Nahash, because his father showed kindness to me."

So David sent messengers to console Hanun concerning his father. But when David's servants arrived in the land of the Ammonites to console him, the princes of the Ammonites said to Hanun, "Just because David has sent you comforters, do you really believe he is showing respect for your father? Have not his servants come to you to explore the land, spy it out, and overthrow it?"

So Hanun took David's servants, shaved their beards, cut off their garments at the hips, and sent them away.

When someone came and told David about his men, he sent messengers to meet them, since the men had been thoroughly humiliated. The king told them, "Stay in Jericho until your beards have grown back, and then return."

When the Ammonites realized that they had become a stench to David, Hanun and the Ammonites sent a thousand talents of silver to hire for themselves chariots and horsemen from Aram-naharaim, Aram-maacah, and Zobah. So they hired for themselves thirty-two thousand chariots, as well as the king of Maacah with his troops, who came and camped near Medeba while the Ammonites were mustered from their cities and marched out for battle.

On hearing this, David sent Joab and the entire army of mighty men. The Ammonites marched out and arrayed themselves for battle at the entrance to the city, while the kings who had come stayed by themselves in the open country.

When Joab saw the battle lines before him and behind him, he selected some of the best men of Israel and arrayed them against the Arameans. And he placed the rest of the troops under the command of his brother Abishai, who arrayed them against the Ammonites.

"If the Arameans are too strong for me," said Joab, "then you will come to my rescue. And if the Ammonites are too strong for you, then I will come to your rescue. Be strong and let us fight bravely for our people and for the cities of our God. May the LORD do what is good in His sight."

So Joab and his troops advanced to fight the Arameans, who fled before him. When the Ammonites saw that the Arameans had fled, they too fled before Joab's brother Abishai, and they entered the city. So Joab went back to Jerusalem.

When the Arameans saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they sent messengers to bring more Arameans from beyond the Euphrates, with Shophach the commander of Hadadezer's army leading them.

When this was reported to David, he gathered all Israel, crossed the Jordan, advanced toward the Arameans, and arrayed for battle against them. When David lined up to engage them in battle, they fought against him. But the Arameans fled before Israel, and David killed seven thousand of their charioteers and

forty thousand foot soldiers. He also killed Shophach the commander of their army.

When Hadadezer's subjects saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with David and became subject to him. So the Arameans were unwilling to help the Ammonites anymore.

In the spring, at the time when kings march out to war, Joab led out the army and ravaged the land of the Ammonites. He came to Rabbah and besieged it, but David remained in Jerusalem. And Joab attacked Rabbah and demolished it.

Then David took the crown from the head of their king. It was found to weigh a talent of gold and was set with precious stones, and it was placed on David's head. And David took a great amount of plunder from the city.

David brought out the people who were there and put them to work with saws, iron picks, and axes. And he did the same to all the Ammonite cities. Then David and all his troops returned to Jerusalem.

Some time later, war broke out with the Philistines at Gezer. At that time Sibbecai the Hushathite killed Sippai, a descendant of the Rephaim, and the Philistines were subdued.

Once again there was a battle with the Philistines, and Elhanan son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

And there was also a battle at Gath, where there was a man of great stature with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot— twenty-four in all. He too was descended from Rapha, and when he taunted Israel, Jonathan the son of David's brother Shimei killed him.

So these descendants of Rapha in Gath fell at the hands of David and his servants.

Then Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel. So David said to Joab and the commanders of the troops, "Go and count the Israelites from Beersheba to Dan and bring me a report, so that I may know their number."

But Joab replied, "May the LORD multiply His troops a hundred times over. My lord the king, are they not all servants of my lord? Why does my lord want to do this? Why should he bring guilt on Israel?"

Nevertheless, the king's word prevailed against Joab. So Joab departed and traveled throughout Israel, and then he returned to Jerusalem. And Joab reported to David the total number of the troops. In all Israel there were 1,100,000 men who drew the sword, including 470,000 in Judah. But Joab did not include Levi and Benjamin in the count, because the king's command was detestable to him.

This command was also evil in the sight of God; so He struck Israel.

Then David said to God, "I have sinned greatly because I have done this thing. Now I beg You to take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have acted very foolishly."

And the LORD instructed Gad, David's seer, "Go and tell David that this is what the LORD says: 'I am offering you three options. Choose one of them, and I will carry it out against you.'"

So Gad went and said to David, "This is what the LORD says: 'You must choose between three years of famine, three months of being swept away before your enemies and overtaken by their swords, or three days of the sword of the LORD— days of plague upon the land, with the angel of the LORD ravaging every part of Israel.' Now then, decide how I should reply to Him who sent me."

David answered Gad, "I am deeply distressed. Please, let me fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are very great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men."

So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel fell dead.

Then God sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem, but as the angel was doing so, the LORD saw it and relented from the calamity, and He said to the angel who was destroying the people, "Enough! Withdraw your hand now!"

At that time the angel of the LORD was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

When David lifted up his eyes and saw the angel of the LORD standing between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem, David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell facedown. And David said to God, "Was it not I who gave the order to count the people? I am the one who has sinned and acted wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? O LORD my God, please let Your hand fall upon me and my father's house, but do not let this plague remain upon Your people."

Then the angel of the LORD ordered Gad to tell David to go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. So David went up at the word that Gad had spoken in the name of the LORD.

Now Ornan was threshing wheat when he turned and saw the angel; and his four sons who were with him hid themselves. David came to Ornan, and when Ornan looked out and saw David, he left the threshing floor and bowed facedown before David.

Then David said to Ornan, "Grant me the site of this threshing floor, that I may build an altar to the LORD. Sell it to me for the full price, so that the plague upon the people may be halted."

Ornan said to David, "Take it! May my lord the king do whatever seems good to him. Look, I will give the oxen for the burnt offerings, the threshing sledges for the wood, and the wheat for the grain offering— I will give it all."

"No," replied King David, "I insist on paying the full price, for I will not take for the LORD what belongs to you, nor will I offer burnt offerings that cost me nothing."

So David paid Ornan six hundred shekels of gold for the site. And there he built an altar to the LORD and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. He called upon the LORD, who answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering.

Then the LORD spoke to the angel, who put his sword back into its sheath.

At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he offered sacrifices there. For the tabernacle of the LORD that Moses had made in the wilderness and the altar of burnt offering were presently at the high

place in Gibeon, but David could not go before it to inquire of God, because he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the LORD.

Then David said, “Here shall be the house of the LORD God, as well as the altar of burnt offering for Israel.”

So David gave orders to gather the foreigners in the land of Israel, from whom he appointed stonecutters to prepare finished stones for building the house of God.

David provided a large quantity of iron to make the nails for the doors of the gateways and for the fittings, together with more bronze than could be weighed and more cedar logs than could be counted; for the Sidonians and Tyrians had brought a large quantity of cedar logs to David.

And David said, “My son Solomon is young and inexperienced, and the house to be built for the LORD must be exceedingly magnificent — famous and glorious throughout all lands. Therefore I must make preparations for it.” So David made lavish preparations before his death.

Then David called for his son Solomon and instructed him to build a house for the LORD, the God of Israel.

“My son,” said David to Solomon, “it was in my heart to build a house for the Name of the LORD my God, but this word of the LORD came to me: ‘You have shed much blood and waged great wars. You are not to build a house for My Name because you have shed so much blood on the ground before Me. But a son will be born to you who will be a man of rest. I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side; for his name will be Solomon, and I will grant to Israel peace and quiet during his reign. He is the one who will build a house for My Name. He will be My son, and I will be his Father. And I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.’

Now, my son, may the LORD be with you, and may you succeed in building the house of the LORD your God, as He said you would. Above all, may the LORD give you insight and understanding when He puts you in command over Israel, so that you may keep the Law of the LORD your God. Then you will succeed, if you carefully follow the statutes and ordinances that the LORD commanded Moses for Israel. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged.

Now behold, I have taken great pains to provide for the house of the LORD— 100,000 talents of gold, 1,000,000 talents of silver, and bronze and iron too great to be weighed. I have also provided timber and stone, and you may add to them.

You also have many workers: stonecutters, masons, carpenters, and men skilled in every kind of work — in gold and silver, bronze and iron— craftsmen beyond number. Now begin the work, and may the LORD be with you.”

Then David ordered all the leaders of Israel to help his son Solomon: “Is not the LORD your God with you, and has He not granted you rest on every side? For He has given the inhabitants of the land into my hand, and the land has been subdued before the LORD and His people. Now set your heart and soul to seek the LORD your God. Begin building the sanctuary of the LORD God, so that you may bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD and the holy articles of God into the temple that will be built for the Name of the LORD.”

When David was old and full of years, he installed his son Solomon as king over Israel. Then he gathered all the leaders of Israel, as well as the priests and Levites.

The Levites thirty years of age or older were counted, and the total number of men was 38,000 . “Of these,” said David, “24,000 are to oversee the work of the house of the LORD, 6,000 are to be officers and judges, 4,000 are to be gatekeepers, and 4,000 are to praise the LORD with the instruments I have made for giving praise.”

Then David divided the Levites into divisions according to the sons of Levi:

Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

The Gershonites: Ladan and Shimei.

The sons of Ladan: Jehiel the first, Zetham, and Joel — three in all.

The sons of Shimei: Shelomoth, Haziel, and Haran — three in all. These were the heads of the families of Ladan.

And the sons of Shimei: Jahath, Zina, Jeush, and Beriah. These were the sons of Shimei— four in all. Jahath was the first and Zizah was the second; but Jeush and Beriah did not have many sons, so they were counted as one family and received a single assignment.

The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel— four in all.

The sons of Amram: Aaron and Moses. Aaron and his descendants were set apart forever to consecrate the most holy things, to burn incense before the LORD, to minister before Him, and to pronounce blessings in His name forever. As for Moses the man of God, his sons were named among the tribe of Levi.

The sons of Moses: Gershom and Eliezer.

The descendants of Gershom: Shebuel was the first.

The descendants of Eliezer: Rehabiah was the first. Eliezer did not have any other sons, but the sons of Rehabiah were very numerous.

The sons of Izhar: Shelomith was the first.

The sons of Hebron: Jeriah was the first, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, and Jekameam the fourth.

The sons of Uzziel: Micah was the first and Isshiah the second.

The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi.

The sons of Mahli: Eleazar and Kish. Eleazar died without having any sons; he had only daughters. Their cousins, the sons of Kish, married them.

The sons of Mushi: Mahli, Eder, and Jeremoth— three in all.

These were the descendants of Levi by their families— the heads of families, registered individually by name— those twenty years of age or older who worked in the service of the house of the LORD.

For David had said, “The LORD, the God of Israel, has given rest to His people and has come to dwell in Jerusalem forever. So now the Levites no longer need to carry the tabernacle or any of the articles for its service.”

For according to the final instructions of David, the Levites twenty years of age or older were counted, but their duty was to assist the descendants of Aaron with the service of the house of the LORD, being responsible for the courts and chambers, the purification of all the holy things, and the work of the service of the house of God, as well as for the rows of the showbread, the fine flour for the grain offering, the wafers of unleavened bread, the baking, the mixing, and all measurements of quantity and size.

They were also to stand every morning to give thanks and praise to the LORD, and likewise in the evening. Whenever burnt offerings were presented to the LORD on the Sabbaths, New Moons, and appointed feasts, they were to serve regularly before the LORD in the numbers prescribed for them. So the Levites were to carry out the responsibilities for the Tent of Meeting and the Holy Place, and, under their brothers the descendants of Aaron, the service of the house of the LORD.

These were the divisions of the descendants of Aaron. The sons of Aaron were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. But Nadab and Abihu died before their father did, and they had no sons; so Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests.

With the help of Eleazar's descendant Zadok and Ithamar's descendant Ahimelech, David divided them according to the offices of their service. Since more leaders were found among Eleazar's descendants than those of Ithamar, they were divided accordingly. There were sixteen heads of families from the descendants of Eleazar and eight from the descendants of Ithamar.

Thus they were divided by lot, for there were officers of the sanctuary and officers of God among both Eleazar's and Ithamar's descendants.

The scribe, Shemaiah son of Nethanel, a Levite, recorded their names in the presence of the king and of the officers: Zadok the priest, Ahimelech son of Abiathar, and the heads of families of the priests and the Levites — one family being taken from Eleazar, and then one from Ithamar.

The first lot fell to Jehoiarib,
the second to Jedaiah,
the third to Harim,
the fourth to Seorim,
the fifth to Malchijah,
the sixth to Mijamin,
the seventh to Hakkoz,
the eighth to Abijah,
the ninth to Jeshua,
the tenth to Shecaniah,
the eleventh to Eliashib,
the twelfth to Jakim,
the thirteenth to Huppah,
the fourteenth to Jeshebeab,
the fifteenth to Bilgah,
the sixteenth to Immer,
the seventeenth to Hezir,
the eighteenth to Happizzez,
the nineteenth to Pethahiah,
the twentieth to Jehezkel,
the twenty-first to Jachin,
the twenty-second to Gamul,
the twenty-third to Delaiah,
and the twenty-fourth to Maaziah.

This was their appointed order for service when they entered the house of the LORD, according to the regulations prescribed for them by their forefather Aaron, as the LORD, the God of Israel, had commanded him.

Now these were the rest of the descendants of Levi:
From the sons of Amram: Shubael;
from the sons of Shubael: Jehdeiah.
As for Rehabiah, from his sons: The first was Isshiah.
From the Izharites: Shelomoth;
from the sons of Shelomoth: Jahath.
From the sons of Hebron: Jeriah was the first, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, and Jekameam the fourth.
From the sons of Uzziel: Micah;
from the sons of Micah: Shamir.
The brother of Micah: Isshiah;
from the sons of Isshiah: Zechariah.
The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi.
The son of Jaaziah: Beno.
The descendants of Merari from Jaaziah: Beno, Shoham, Zaccur, and Ibri.
From Mahli: Eleazar, who had no sons.
From Kish: Jerahmeel the son of Kish.
And the sons of Mushi: Mahli, Eder, and Jerimoth.

These were the sons of the Levites, according to their families. As their brothers the descendants of Aaron did, they also cast lots in the presence of King David and of Zadok, Ahimelech, and the heads of the families of the priests and Levites— the family heads and their younger brothers alike.

Additionally, David and the commanders of the army set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun to prophesy with the accompaniment of lyres, harps, and cymbals. The following is the list of the men who performed this service:

From the sons of Asaph: Zaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah, and Asarelah. These sons of Asaph were under the direction of Asaph, who prophesied under the direction of the king.
From the sons of Jeduthun: Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiah , Shimei, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah — six in all — under the direction of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with the harp, giving thanks and praise to the LORD.
From the sons of Heman: Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel, Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, Romamti-ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, and Mahazioth. All these sons of Heman the king's seer were given him through the promises of God to exalt him, for God had given Heman fourteen sons and three daughters.

All these were under the direction of their fathers for the music of the house of the LORD with cymbals, harps, and lyres, for the service of the house of God.

Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman were under the direction of the king. Together with their relatives, who were all trained and skillful in the songs of the LORD, they numbered 288. They cast lots for their duties, young and old alike, teacher as well as pupil.

The first lot, which was for Asaph, fell to Joseph, his sons, and his brothers—12 in all;
the second to Gedaliah, his sons, and his brothers — 12 in all;

the third to Zaccur, his sons, and his brothers— 12 in all;
the fourth to Izri, his sons, and his brothers— 12 in all;
the fifth to Nethaniah, his sons, and his brothers— 12 in all;
the sixth to Bukkiah, his sons, and his brothers— 12 in all;
the seventh to Jesarelah, his sons, and his brothers — 12 in all;
the eighth to Jeshaiah, his sons, and his brothers— 12 in all;
the ninth to Mattaniah, his sons, and his brothers — 12 in all;
the tenth to Shimei, his sons, and his brothers— 12 in all;
the eleventh to Azarel, his sons, and his brothers— 12 in all;
the twelfth to Hashabiah, his sons, and his brothers — 12 in all;
the thirteenth to Shubael, his sons, and his brothers — 12 in all;
the fourteenth to Mattithiah, his sons, and his brothers— 12 in all;
the fifteenth to Jeremoth, his sons, and his brothers — 12 in all;
the sixteenth to Hananiah, his sons, and his brothers— 12 in all;
the seventeenth to Joshbekashah, his sons, and his brothers— 12 in all;
the eighteenth to Hanani, his sons, and his brothers — 12 in all;
the nineteenth to Mallothi, his sons, and his brothers— 12 in all;
the twentieth to Eliathah, his sons, and his brothers — 12 in all;
the twenty-first to Hothir, his sons, and his brothers — 12 in all;
the twenty-second to Giddalti, his sons, and his brothers— 12 in all;
the twenty-third to Mahazioth, his sons, and his brothers— 12 in all;
and the twenty-fourth to Romamti-ezer, his sons, and his brothers— 12 in all.

These were the divisions of the gatekeepers:

From the Korahites: Meshelemiah son of Kore, one of the sons of Asaph.

Meshelemiah had sons: Zechariah the firstborn, Jediael the second, Zebadiah the third, Jathniel the fourth, Elam the fifth, Jehohanan the sixth, and Eliehoenai the seventh.

And Obed-edom also had sons: Shemaiah the firstborn, Jehozabad the second, Joah the third, Sachar the fourth, Nethanel the fifth, Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh, and Peullethai the eighth. For God had blessed Obed-edom.

Also to his son Shemaiah were born sons who ruled over their families because they were strong, capable men. Shemaiah's sons were Othni, Rephael, Obed, and Elzabad; his brothers were Elihu and Semachiah, also capable men. All these were descendants of Obed-edom; they and their sons and brothers were capable men with strength to do the work— 62 in all from Obed-edom.

Meshelemiah also had sons and brothers who were capable men— 18 in all.

Hosah the Merarite also had sons: Shimri the first (although he was not the firstborn, his father had appointed him as the first), Hilkiah the second, Tebaliah the third, and Zechariah the fourth. The sons and brothers of Hosah numbered 13 in all.

These divisions of the gatekeepers, through their chief men, had duties for ministering in the house of the LORD, just as their relatives did. They cast lots for each gate, according to their families, young and old alike.

The lot for the East Gate fell to Shelemiah.

Then lots were cast for his son Zechariah, a wise counselor, and the lot for the North Gate fell to him.

The lot for the South Gate fell to Obed-edom, and the lot for the storehouses to his sons.

The lots for the West Gate and the Shallecheth Gate on the ascending highway fell to Shuppim and Hosah.

There were guards stationed at every watch. Each day there were six Levites on the east, four on the north, four on the south, and two pairs at the storehouse. As for the court on the west, there were four at the highway and two at the court.

These were the divisions of the gatekeepers who were descendants of Korah and Merari.

Now their fellow Levites were in charge of the treasuries of the house of God and the treasuries of the dedicated things. From the descendants of Ladan, who were Gershonites through Ladan and heads of the families of Ladan the Gershonite, were Jehieli, the sons of Jehieli, Zetham, and his brother Joel. They were in charge of the treasuries of the house of the LORD.

From the Amramites, the Izharites, the Hebronites, and the Uzzielites:

Shebuel, a descendant of Gershom son of Moses, was the officer in charge of the treasuries. His relatives through Eliezer included Rehabiah his son, Jeshaiah his son, Joram his son, Zichri his son, and Shelomith his son. This Shelomith and his brothers were in charge of all the treasuries for the things dedicated by King David, by the heads of families who were the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and by the army commanders. They had dedicated some of the plunder from their battles to the repair of the house of the LORD. Everything that had been dedicated by Samuel the seer, Saul son of Kish, Abner son of Ner, and Joab son of Zeruiah, along with everything else that was dedicated, was under the care of Shelomith and his brothers.

From the Izharites, Chenaniah and his sons had the outside duties as officers and judges over Israel.

From the Hebronites, Hashabiah and his relatives, 1,700 capable men, had charge of the affairs of Israel west of the Jordan for all the work of the LORD and for the service of the king. As for the Hebronites, Jerijah was the chief of the Hebronites, according to the genealogies of his ancestors. In the fortieth year of David's reign the records were searched, and strong, capable men were found among the Hebronites at Jazer in Gilead. Among Jerijah's relatives there were

2,700 capable men who were heads of families. King David appointed them over the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh for every matter pertaining to God and for the affairs of the king.

This is the list of the Israelites— the heads of families, the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and their officers who served the king in every matter concerning the divisions on rotating military duty each month throughout the year. There were 24,000 men in each division:

Jashobeam son of Zabdiel was in charge of the first division, which was assigned the first month. There were 24,000 men in his division. He was a descendant of Perez and chief of all the army commanders for the first month.

Dodai the Ahohite was in charge of the division for the second month, and Mikloth was the leader. There were 24,000 men in his division.

The third army commander, as chief for the third month, was Benaiah son of Jehoiada the priest. There were 24,000 men in his division. This Benaiah was mighty among the Thirty and was over the Thirty, and his son Ammizabad was in charge of his division.

The fourth, for the fourth month, was Joab's brother Asahel, and his son Zebadiah was commander after him. There were 24,000 men in his division.

The fifth, for the fifth month, was the commander Shamhuth the Izrahite. There were 24,000 men in his division.

The sixth, for the sixth month, was Ira son of Ikkesh the Tekoite. There were 24,000 men in his division.

The seventh, for the seventh month, was Helez the Pelonite, an Ephraimite. There were 24,000 men in his division.

The eighth, for the eighth month, was Sibbecai the Hushathite, a Zerahite. There were 24,000 men in his division.

The ninth, for the ninth month, was Abiezer the Anathothite, a Benjamite. There were 24,000 men in his division.

The tenth, for the tenth month, was Maharai the Netophathite, a Zerahite. There were 24,000 men in his division.

The eleventh, for the eleventh month, was Benaiah the Pirathonite, an Ephraimite. There were 24,000 men in his division.

The twelfth, for the twelfth month, was Heldai the Netophathite, from the family of Othniel. There were 24,000 men in his division.

These officers were in charge of the tribes of Israel:
Over the Reubenites was Eliezer son of Zichri;
over the Simeonites was Shephatiah son of Maacah;
over Levi was Hashabiah son of Kemuel;
over Aaron was Zadok;
over Judah was Elihu, one of David's brothers;
over Issachar was Omri son of Michael;
over Zebulun was Ishmaiah son of Obadiah;
over Naphtali was Jerimoth son of Azriel;
over the Ephraimites was Hoshea son of Azaziah;
over one of the half-tribes of Manasseh was Joel son of Pedaiah;
over the half-tribe of Manasseh in Gilead was Iddo son of Zechariah;
over Benjamin was Jaasiel son of Abner;
and over Dan was Azarel son of Jeroham.
These were the leaders of the tribes of Israel.

David did not count the men aged twenty or under, because the LORD had said that He would make Israel as numerous as the stars of the sky. Joab son of Zeruiah began to count the men but did not finish. For because of this census wrath came upon Israel, and the number was not entered in the Book of the Chronicles of King David.

Azmaveth son of Adiel was in charge of the royal storehouses.

Jonathan son of Uzziah was in charge of the storehouses in the country, in the cities, in the villages, and in the fortresses.

Ezri son of Chelub was in charge of the workers in the fields who tilled the soil.

Shimei the Ramathite was in charge of the vineyards.

Zabdi the Shiphmite was in charge of the produce of the vineyards for the wine vats.

Baal-hanan the Gederite was in charge of the olive and sycamore trees in the foothills.

Joash was in charge of the stores of olive oil.

Shitrai the Sharonite was in charge of the herds grazing in Sharon.

Shaphat son of Adlai was in charge of the herds in the valleys.

Obil the Ishmaelite was in charge of the camels.

Jehdeiah the Meronothite was in charge of the donkeys.

Jaziz the Hagrite was in charge of the flocks.

All these officials were in charge of King David's property.

David's uncle Jonathan was a counselor; he was a man of insight and a scribe.

Jehiel son of Hachmoni attended to the sons of the king.

Ahithophel was the king's counselor.

Hushai the Archite was the king's friend.

Ahithophel was succeeded by Jehoiada son of Benaiah, then by Abiathar.

Joab was the commander of the king's army.

Now David summoned all the leaders of Israel to Jerusalem: the leaders of the tribes, the leaders of the divisions in the king's service, the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and the officials in charge of all the property and cattle of the king and his sons, along with the court officials and mighty men— every mighty man of valor.

Then King David rose to his feet and said, "Listen to me, my brothers and my people. It was in my heart to build a house as a resting place for the ark of the covenant of the LORD and as a footstool for our God. I had made preparations to build it, but God said to me, 'You are not to build a house for My Name, because you are a man of war who has shed blood.'

Yet the LORD, the God of Israel, chose me out of all my father's house to be king over Israel forever. For He chose Judah as leader, and from the house of Judah He chose my father's household, and from my father's sons

He was pleased to make me king over all Israel. And of all my sons— for the LORD has given me many sons — He has chosen Solomon my son to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel. And He said to me, 'Solomon your son is the one who will build My house and My courts, for I have chosen him as My son, and I will be his Father. I will establish his kingdom forever, if he resolutely carries out My commandments and ordinances, as is being done this day.'

So now in the sight of all Israel, the assembly of the LORD, and in the hearing of our God, keep and seek out all the commandments of the LORD your God, so that you may possess this good land and leave it as an inheritance to your descendants forever. As for you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve Him wholeheartedly and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands the intent of every thought. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever. Consider now that the LORD has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary. Be strong and do it."

Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the portico of the temple, its buildings, storehouses, upper rooms, inner rooms, and the room for the mercy seat. The plans contained everything David had in mind for the courts of the house of the LORD, for all the surrounding rooms, for the treasuries of the house of God and of the dedicated things, for the divisions of the priests and Levites, for all the work of service in the house of the LORD, and for all the articles of service in the house of the LORD:

the weight of all the gold articles for every kind of service;
the weight of all the silver articles for every kind of service;
the weight of the gold lampstands and their lamps, including the weight of each lampstand and its lamps;
the weight of each silver lampstand and its lamps, according to the use of each lampstand;
the weight of gold for each table of showbread, and of silver for the silver tables;
the weight of the pure gold for the forks, sprinkling bowls, and pitchers;
the weight of each gold dish;
the weight of each silver bowl;
the weight of the refined gold for the altar of incense;
and the plans for the chariot of the gold cherubim that spread their wings and overshadowed the ark of the covenant of the LORD.

"All this," said David, "all the details of this plan, the LORD has made clear to me in writing by His hand upon me."

David also said to Solomon his son, "Be strong and courageous, and do it. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will neither fail you nor forsake you before all the work for the service of the house of the LORD is finished. The divisions of the priests and Levites are ready for all the service of the house of God, and every willing man of every skill will be at your disposal for the work. The officials and all the people are fully at your command."

Then King David said to the whole assembly, "My son Solomon, the one whom God has chosen, is young and inexperienced. The task is great because this palace is not for man, but for the LORD God. Now with all my ability I have made provision for the house of my God — gold for the gold articles, silver for the silver, bronze for the bronze, iron for the iron, and wood for the wood, as well as onyx for the settings, turquoise, stones of various colors, all kinds of precious stones, and slabs of marble — all in abundance.

Moreover, because of my delight in the house of my God, I now give for it my personal treasures of gold and silver, over and above all that I have provided for this holy temple: three thousand talents of gold (the gold of Ophir) and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the buildings, for the gold work and the silver work, and for all the work to be done by the craftsmen. Now who is willing to consecrate himself to the LORD today?"

Then the leaders of the families, the officers of the tribes of Israel, the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and the officials in charge of the king's work gave willingly. Toward the service of God's house they gave 5,000 talents and 10,000 darics of gold, 10,000 talents of silver, 18,000 talents of bronze, and 100,000 talents of iron. Whoever had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the LORD, under the care of Jehiel the Gershonite. And the people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given to the LORD freely and wholeheartedly. And King David also rejoiced greatly.

Then David blessed the LORD in the sight of all the assembly and said:

"May You be blessed, O LORD, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting.
Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the splendor and the majesty, for everything in heaven and on earth belongs to You.
Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom, and You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You are the ruler over all. In Your hands are power and might to exalt and give strength to all.
Now therefore, our God, we give You thanks, and we praise Your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? For everything comes from You, and from Your own hand we have given to You. For we are foreigners and strangers in Your presence, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope.
O LORD our God, from Your hand comes all this abundance that we have provided to build You a house for Your holy Name, and all of it belongs to You. I know, my God, that You test the heart and delight in uprightness. All these things I have given willingly and with an upright heart, and now I have seen Your people who are present here giving joyfully and willingly to You.
O LORD, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, keep this desire forever in the intentions of the hearts of Your people, and direct their hearts toward You. And give my son Solomon a whole heart to keep and carry out all Your commandments, decrees, and statutes, and to build Your palace for which I have made provision."

Then David said to the whole assembly, “Bless the LORD your God.”

So the whole assembly blessed the LORD, the God of their fathers. They bowed down and paid homage to the LORD and to the king.

The next day they offered sacrifices and presented burnt offerings to the LORD: a thousand bulls, a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, along with their drink offerings, and other sacrifices in abundance for all Israel. That day they ate and drank with great joy in the presence of the LORD.

Then, for a second time, they designated David’s son Solomon as king, anointing him before the LORD as ruler, and Zadok as the priest.

So Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king in place of his father David. He prospered, and all Israel obeyed him. All the officials and mighty men, as well as all of King David’s sons, pledged their allegiance to King Solomon.

The LORD highly exalted Solomon in the sight of all Israel and bestowed on him royal majesty such as had not been bestowed on any king in Israel before him.

David son of Jesse was king over all Israel. The length of David’s reign over Israel was forty years — seven years in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. He died at a ripe old age, full of years, riches, and honor, and his son Solomon reigned in his place.

Now the acts of King David, from first to last, are indeed written in the Chronicles of Samuel the Seer, the Chronicles of Nathan the Prophet, and the Chronicles of Gad the Seer, together with all the details of his reign, his might, and the circumstances that came upon him and Israel and all the kingdoms of the lands.

2 Chronicles

Second Book of Chronicles

Now Solomon son of David established himself securely over his kingdom, and the LORD his God was with him and highly exalted him.

Then Solomon spoke to all Israel, to the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, to the judges, and to every leader in all Israel— the heads of the families. And Solomon and the whole assembly went to the high place at Gibeon because it was the location of God's Tent of Meeting, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness.

Now David had brought the ark of God from Kiriath-jearim to the place he had prepared for it, because he had pitched a tent for it in Jerusalem. But the bronze altar made by Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, was in Gibeon before the tabernacle of the LORD. So Solomon and the assembly inquired of Him there.

Solomon offered sacrifices there before the LORD on the bronze altar at the Tent of Meeting, where he offered a thousand burnt offerings.

That night God appeared to Solomon and said, "Ask, and I will give it to you!"

Solomon replied to God: "You have shown much loving devotion to my father David, and You have made me king in his place. Now, O LORD God, let Your promise to my father David be fulfilled. For You have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. Now grant me wisdom and knowledge, so that I may lead this people. For who is able to govern this great people of Yours?"

God said to Solomon, "Since this was in your heart instead of requesting riches or wealth or honor for yourself or death for your enemies — and since you have not even requested long life but have asked for wisdom and knowledge to govern My people over whom I have made you king — therefore wisdom and knowledge have been granted to you. And I will also give you riches and wealth and honor unlike anything given to the kings before you or after you."

So Solomon went to Jerusalem from the high place in Gibeon, from before the Tent of Meeting, and he reigned over Israel.

Solomon accumulated 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horses, which he stationed in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem. The king made silver and gold as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as abundant as sycamore in the foothills.

Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and Kue; the royal merchants purchased them from Kue. A chariot could be imported from Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty. Likewise, they exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and to the kings of Aram.

Now Solomon purposed to build a house for the Name of the LORD and a royal palace for himself. So he conscripted 70,000 porters, 80,000 stonecutters in the mountains, and 3,600 supervisors.

Then Solomon sent word to Hiram king of Tyre:
"Do for me as you did for my father David when you sent him cedars to build himself a house to live in. Behold, I am about to build a house for the Name of the LORD my God to dedicate to Him for burning fragrant incense before Him, for displaying the showbread continuously, and for making burnt offerings every morning and evening as well as on the Sabbaths, New Moons, and appointed feasts of the LORD our God. This is ordained for Israel forever.
The house that I am building will be great, for our God is greater than all gods. But who is able to build a house for Him, since the heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain Him? Who then am I, that I should build a house for Him, except as a place to burn sacrifices before Him?
Send me, therefore, a craftsman skilled in engraving to work with gold and silver, with bronze and iron, and with purple, crimson, and blue yarn. He will work with my craftsmen in Judah and Jerusalem, whom my father David provided.
Send me also cedar, cypress, and algum logs from Lebanon, for I know that your servants have skill to cut timber there. And indeed, my servants will work with yours to prepare for me timber in abundance, because the temple I am building will be great and wonderful. I will pay your servants, the woodcutters, 20,000 cors of ground wheat, 20,000 cors of barley, 20,000 baths of wine, and 20,000 baths of olive oil."

Then Hiram king of Tyre wrote a letter in reply to Solomon:
"Because the LORD loves His people, He has set you over them as king."
And Hiram added:
"Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who made the heavens and the earth! He has given King David a wise son with insight and understanding, who will build a temple for the LORD and a royal palace for himself.
So now I am sending you Huram-abi, a skillful man endowed with creativity. He is the son of a woman from the daughters of Dan, and his father is a man of Tyre. He is skilled in work with gold and silver, bronze and iron, stone and wood, purple, blue, and crimson yarn, and fine linen. He is experienced in every kind of engraving and can execute any design that is given him. He will work with your craftsmen and with those of my lord, your father David.
Now let my lord send to his servants the wheat, barley, olive oil, and wine he promised. We will cut logs from Lebanon, as many as you need, and we will float them to you as rafts by sea down to Joppa. Then you can take them up to Jerusalem."

Solomon numbered all the foreign men in the land of Israel following the census his father David had conducted, and there were found to be 153,600 in all. Solomon made 70,000 of them porters, 80,000 stonecutters in the mountains, and 3,600 supervisors.

Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David. This was the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. Solomon began construction on the second day of the second month in the fourth year of his reign.

The foundation that Solomon laid for the house of God was sixty cubits long and twenty cubits wide, according to the old standard. The portico at the front, extending across the width of the temple, was twenty cubits long and twenty cubits high. He overlaid the inside with pure gold.

He paneled the main room with cypress, which he overlaid with fine gold and decorated with palm trees and chains. He adorned the temple with precious stones for beauty, and its gold was from Parvaim. He overlaid its beams, thresholds, walls, and doors with gold, and he carved cherubim on the walls.

Then he made the Most Holy Place; its length corresponded to the width of the temple— twenty cubits long and twenty cubits wide. And he overlaid the inside with six hundred talents of fine gold. The weight of the nails was fifty shekels of gold. He also overlaid the upper rooms with gold.

In the Most Holy Place he made two cherubim of sculptured work, and he overlaid them with gold. The total wingspan of the cherubim was twenty cubits. One wing of the first cherub was five cubits long and touched the wall of the temple, and its other wing was five cubits long and touched the wing of the other cherub. The wing of the second cherub also measured five cubits and touched the wall of the temple, while its other wing measured five cubits and touched the wing of the first cherub. So the total wingspan of these cherubim was twenty cubits. They stood on their feet, facing the main room.

He made the veil of blue, purple, and crimson yarn and fine linen, with cherubim woven into it.

In front of the temple he made two pillars, which together were thirty-five cubits high, each with a capital on top measuring five cubits.

He made interwoven chains and put them on top of the pillars. He made a hundred pomegranates and fastened them into the chainwork. Then he set up the pillars in front of the temple, one on the south and one on the north. The pillar on the south he named Jachin, and the pillar on the north he named Boaz.

He made a bronze altar twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and ten cubits high.

He also made the Sea of cast metal. It was circular in shape, measuring ten cubits from rim to rim, five cubits in height, and thirty cubits in circumference. Below the rim, figures of oxen encircled it, ten per cubit all the way around the Sea, cast in two rows as a part of the Sea.

The Sea stood on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east. The Sea rested on them, with all their hindquarters toward the center. It was a handbreadth thick, and its rim was fashioned like the brim of a cup, like a lily blossom. It could hold three thousand baths.

He also made ten basins for washing and placed five on the south side and five on the north. The parts of the burnt offering were rinsed in them, but the priests used the Sea for washing.

He made ten gold lampstands according to their specifications and placed them in the temple, five on the south side and five on the north.

Additionally, he made ten tables and placed them in the temple, five on the south side and five on the north. He also made a hundred gold bowls.

He made the courtyard of the priests and the large court with its doors, and he overlaid the doors with bronze.

He put the Sea on the south side, at the southeast corner.

Additionally, Huram made the pots, shovels, and sprinkling bowls.

So Huram finished the work that he had undertaken for King Solomon in the house of God:

- the two pillars;
- the two bowl-shaped capitals atop the pillars;
- the two sets of network covering both bowls of the capitals atop the pillars;
- the four hundred pomegranates for the two sets of network (two rows of pomegranates for each network covering both the bowl-shaped capitals atop the pillars);
- the stands;
- the basins on the stands;
- the Sea;
- the twelve oxen underneath the Sea;
- and the pots, shovels, meat forks, and all the other articles.

All these objects that Huram-abi made for King Solomon for the house of the LORD were of polished bronze. The king had them cast in clay molds in the plain of the Jordan between Succoth and Zeredah. Solomon made all these articles in such great abundance that the weight of the bronze could not be determined.

Solomon also made all the furnishings for the house of God:

- the golden altar;
- the tables on which was placed the Bread of the Presence;
- the lampstands of pure gold and their lamps, to burn in front of the inner sanctuary as prescribed;
- the flowers, lamps, and tongs of gold— of purest gold;
- the wick trimmers, sprinkling bowls, ladles, and censers of pure gold;
- and the gold doors of the temple: the inner doors to the Most Holy Place as well as the doors of the main hall.

So all the work that Solomon had performed for the house of the LORD was completed.

Then Solomon brought in the items his father David had dedicated— the silver, the gold, and all the furnishings— and he placed them in the treasuries of the house of God.

At that time Solomon assembled in Jerusalem the elders of Israel— all the tribal heads and family leaders of the Israelites — to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from Zion, the City of David. So all the men of Israel came together to the king at the feast in the seventh month.

When all the elders of Israel had arrived, the Levites took up the ark, and they brought up the ark and the Tent of Meeting with all its sacred furnishings. The Levitical priests carried them up.

There, before the ark, King Solomon and the whole congregation of Israel who had assembled with him sacrificed so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered.

Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place in the inner sanctuary of the temple, the Most Holy Place, beneath the wings of the cherubim. For the cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark and overshadowed the ark and its poles.

The poles of the ark extended far enough that their ends were visible from in front of the inner sanctuary, but not from outside the Holy Place; and they are there to this day.

There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the LORD had made a covenant with the Israelites after they had come out of Egypt.

Now all the priests who were present had consecrated themselves regardless of their divisions. And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, all the Levitical singers — Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and their sons and relatives — stood on the east side of the altar, dressed in fine linen and playing cymbals, harps, and lyres, accompanied by 120 priests sounding trumpets. The trumpeters and singers joined together to praise and thank the LORD with one voice. They lifted up their voices, accompanied by trumpets, cymbals, and musical instruments, in praise to the LORD:

> "For He is good; His loving devotion endures forever."

And the temple, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud so that the priests could not stand there to minister because of the cloud. For the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.

Then Solomon declared:

> "The LORD has said that He would dwell in the thick cloud. But I have built You an exalted house, a place for You to dwell forever."

And as the whole assembly of Israel stood there, the king turned around and blessed them all and said:

"Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who has fulfilled with His own hand what He spoke with His mouth to my father David, saying, 'Since the day I brought My people out of the land of Egypt, I have not chosen a city from any tribe of Israel in which to build a house so that My Name would be there, nor have I chosen anyone to be ruler over My people Israel. But now I have chosen Jerusalem for My Name to be there, and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel.'

Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a house for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel. But the LORD said to my father David, 'Since it was in your heart to build a house for My Name, you have done well to have this in your heart. Nevertheless, you are not the one to build it; but your son, your own offspring, will build the house for My Name.'

Now the LORD has fulfilled the word that He spoke. I have succeeded my father David, and I sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised. I have built the house for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel. And there I have placed the ark, which contains the covenant of the LORD that He made with the children of Israel."

Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in front of the whole assembly of Israel and spread out his hands. Now Solomon had made a bronze platform five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high and had placed it in the middle of the courtyard. He stood on it, knelt down before the whole assembly of Israel, spread out his hands toward heaven, and said:

"O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like You in heaven or on earth, keeping Your covenant of loving devotion with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts. You have kept Your promise to Your servant, my father David. What You spoke with Your mouth You have fulfilled with Your hand this day.

Therefore now, O LORD, God of Israel, keep for Your servant, my father David, what You promised when You said: 'You will never fail to have a man to sit before Me on the throne of Israel, if only your descendants guard their way to walk in My law as you have walked before Me.' And now, O LORD, God of Israel, please confirm what You promised to Your servant David.

But will God indeed dwell with man upon the earth? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain You, much less this temple I have built. Yet regard the prayer and plea of Your servant, O LORD my God, so that You may hear the cry and the prayer that Your servant is praying before You.

May Your eyes be open toward this temple day and night, toward the place where You said You would put Your Name, so that You may hear the prayer that Your servant prays toward this place. Hear the plea of Your servant and of Your people Israel when they pray toward this place. May You hear from heaven, Your dwelling place. May You hear and forgive.

When a man sins against his neighbor and is required to take an oath, and he comes to take an oath before Your altar in this temple, then may You hear from heaven and act. May You judge Your servants, condemning the wicked man by bringing down on his own head what he has done, and justifying the righteous man by rewarding him according to his righteousness.

When Your people Israel are defeated before an enemy because they have sinned against You, and they return to You and confess Your name, praying and pleading before You in this temple, then may You hear from heaven and forgive the sin of Your people Israel. May You restore them to the land You gave to them and their fathers.

When the skies are shut and there is no rain because Your people have sinned against You, and they pray toward this place and confess Your name, and they turn from their sins because You have afflicted them, then may You hear from heaven and forgive the sin of Your servants, Your people Israel, so that You may teach them the good way in which they should walk. May You send rain on the land that You gave Your people as an inheritance.

When famine or plague comes upon the land, or blight or mildew or locusts or grasshoppers, or when their enemies besiege them in their cities, whatever plague or sickness may come, then may whatever prayer or plea Your people Israel make— each knowing his own afflictions and spreading out his hands toward this temple — be heard by You from heaven, Your dwelling place.

And may You forgive and repay each man according to all his ways, since You know his heart — for You alone know the hearts of men — so that they may fear You and walk in Your ways all the days they live in the land that You gave to our fathers.
And as for the foreigner who is not of Your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of Your great name and Your mighty hand and outstretched arm — when he comes and prays toward this temple, then may You hear from heaven, Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You. Then all the peoples of the earth will know Your name and fear You, as do Your people Israel, and they will know that this house I have built is called by Your Name.
When Your people go to war against their enemies, wherever You send them, and when they pray to You in the direction of this city You have chosen and the house I have built for Your Name, then may You hear from heaven their prayer and their plea, and may You uphold their cause.
When they sin against You— for there is no one who does not sin— and You become angry with them and deliver them to an enemy who takes them as captives to a land far or near, and when they come to their senses in the land to which they were taken, and they repent and plead with You in the land of their captors, saying, 'We have sinned and done wrong; we have acted wickedly,' and when they return to You with all their heart and soul in the land of the enemies who took them captive, and when they pray in the direction of the land that You gave to their fathers, the city You have chosen, and the house I have built for Your Name, then may You hear from heaven, Your dwelling place, their prayer and pleas, and may You uphold their cause. May You forgive Your people who sinned against You.
Now, my God, may Your eyes be open and Your ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place.

> Now therefore, arise, O LORD God, and enter Your resting place, You and the ark of Your might. May Your priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and may Your godly ones rejoice in goodness. O LORD God, do not reject Your anointed one. Remember Your loving devotion to Your servant David."

When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. The priests were unable to enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled it.

When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD:

> "For He is good; His loving devotion endures forever."

Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD. And King Solomon offered a sacrifice of 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. So the king and all the people dedicated the house of God.

The priests stood at their posts, as did the Levites with the musical instruments of the LORD, which King David had made for giving thanks to the LORD and with which David had offered praise, saying, "For His loving devotion endures forever." Across from the Levites, the priests sounded trumpets, and all the Israelites were standing.

Then Solomon consecrated the middle of the courtyard in front of the house of the LORD, and there he offered the burnt offerings and the fat of the peace offerings, since the bronze altar he had made could not hold all these offerings.

So at that time Solomon and all Israel with him— a very great assembly of people from Lebo-hamath to the Brook of Egypt— kept the feast for seven days. On the eighth day they held a solemn assembly, for the dedication of the altar had lasted seven days, and the feast seven days more.

On the twenty-third day of the seventh month, Solomon sent the people away to their homes, joyful and glad of heart for the good things that the LORD had done for David, for Solomon, and for His people Israel.

When Solomon had finished the house of the LORD and the royal palace, successfully carrying out all that was in his heart to do for the house of the LORD and for his own palace, the LORD appeared to him at night and said to him:
"I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. If I close the sky so there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send a plague among My people, and if My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land.
Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. For I have now chosen and consecrated this temple so that My Name may be there forever. My eyes and My heart will be there for all time.
And as for you, if you walk before Me as your father David walked, doing all I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and ordinances, then I will establish your royal throne, as I covenanted with your father David when I said, 'You will never fail to have a man to rule over Israel.'
But if you turn away and forsake the statutes and commandments I have set before you, and if you go off to serve and worship other gods, then I will uproot Israel from the soil I have given them, and I will banish from My presence this temple I have sanctified for My Name. I will make it an object of scorn and ridicule among all the peoples.
And when this temple has become a heap of rubble, all who pass by it will be appalled and say, 'Why has the LORD done such a thing to this land and to this temple?' And others will answer, 'Because they have forsaken the LORD, the God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, worshiping and serving them— because of this, He has brought all this disaster upon them.'"

Now at the end of the twenty years during which Solomon had built the house of the LORD and his own palace, Solomon rebuilt the cities Hiram had given him and settled Israelites there.

Then Solomon went to Hamath-zobah and captured it. He built Tadmor in the wilderness, in addition

to all the store cities that he had built in Hamath. He rebuilt Upper and Lower Beth-horon as fortified cities with walls, gates, and bars, as well as Baalath, all the store cities that belonged to Solomon, and all the cities for his chariots and horses — whatever he desired to build in Jerusalem, Lebanon, and throughout the land of his dominion.

As for all the people who remained of the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites (these people were not Israelites) — their descendants who remained in the land, those whom the Israelites had not destroyed — Solomon conscripted these people to be forced laborers, as they are to this day.

But Solomon did not consign any of the Israelites to slave labor, because they were his men of war, the leaders of his captains, and the commanders of his chariots and cavalry. They were also the chief officers for King Solomon: 250 supervisors.

Solomon brought the daughter of Pharaoh up from the City of David to the palace he had built for her. For he said, "My wife must not live in the house of David king of Israel, because the places the ark of the LORD has entered are holy."

At that time Solomon offered burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of the LORD he had built in front of the portico. He observed the daily requirement for offerings according to the commandment of Moses for Sabbaths, New Moons, and the three annual appointed feasts — the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

In keeping with the ordinances of his father David, Solomon appointed the divisions of the priests over their service, and the Levites for their duties to offer praise and to minister before the priests according to the daily requirement. He also appointed gatekeepers by their divisions at each gate, for this had been the command of David, the man of God. They did not turn aside from the king's command regarding the priests or the Levites in any matter, including that of the treasuries.

Thus all the work of Solomon was carried out, from the day the foundation was laid for the house of the LORD until it was finished. So the house of the LORD was completed.

Then Solomon went to Ezion-geber and to Eloth on the coast of Edom. So Hiram sent him ships captained by his servants, along with crews of experienced sailors. They went with Solomon's servants to Ophir and acquired from there 450 talents of gold, which they delivered to King Solomon.

Now when the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon, she came to test him with difficult questions. She arrived in Jerusalem with a very large caravan— with camels bearing spices, gold in abundance, and precious stones.

And she came to Solomon and spoke with him about all that was on her mind. And Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was too difficult for him to explain.

When the queen of Sheba saw the wisdom of Solomon, the palace he had built, the food at his table, the seating of his servants, the service and attire of his attendants, the attire of his cupbearers, and the burnt offerings he presented at the house of the LORD, it took her breath away.

She said to the king, "The report I heard in my own country about your words and wisdom is true. But I did not believe the reports until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not half of the greatness of your wisdom was told to me. You have far exceeded the report I heard. How blessed are your men! How blessed are these servants of yours who stand continually before you and hear your wisdom! Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you to set you on His throne to be king for the LORD your God. Because your God loved Israel enough to establish them forever, He has made you king over them to carry out justice and righteousness."

Then she gave the king 120 talents of gold, a great quantity of spices, and precious stones. There had never been such spices as those the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

(The servants of Hiram and of Solomon who brought gold from Ophir also brought algum wood and precious stones. The king made the algum wood into steps for the house of the LORD and for the king's palace, and into lyres and harps for the singers. Never before had anything like them been seen in the land of Judah.)

King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all she desired — whatever she asked — far more than she had brought the king. Then she left and returned to her own country, along with her servants.

The weight of gold that came to Solomon each year was 666 talents, not including the revenue from the merchants and traders. And all the Arabian kings and governors of the land also brought gold and silver to Solomon.

King Solomon made two hundred large shields of hammered gold; six hundred shekels of hammered gold went into each shield. He also made three hundred small shields of hammered gold; three hundred shekels of gold went into each shield. And the king put them in the House of the Forest of Lebanon.

Additionally, the king made a great throne of ivory and overlaid it with pure gold. The throne had six steps, and a footstool of gold was attached to it. There were armrests on both sides of the seat, with a lion standing beside each armrest. Twelve lions stood on the six steps, one at either end of each step. Nothing like this had ever been made for any kingdom.

All King Solomon's drinking cups were gold, and all the utensils of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. There was no silver, because it was accounted as nothing in the days of Solomon. For the king had the ships of Tarshish that went with Hiram's servants, and once every three years the ships of Tarshish would arrive bearing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.

So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. All the kings of the earth sought an audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom that God had put in his heart. Year after year, each visitor would bring his tribute: articles of silver and gold, clothing, weapons, spices, horses, and mules.

Solomon had 4,000 stalls for horses and chariots, and 12,000 horses, which he stationed in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem. He reigned over all the kings from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as abundant as sycamore in the foothills. Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and from all the lands.

As for the rest of the acts of Solomon, from beginning to end, are they not written in the Records of Nathan the Prophet, in the Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the Visions of Iddo the Seer concerning Jeroboam son of Nebat? Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. And Solomon rested with his fathers and was buried in the city of his father David. And his son Rehoboam reigned in his place.

Then Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone there to make him king. When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard about this, he returned from Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon. So they sent for Jeroboam, and he and all Israel came to Rehoboam and said, "Your father put a heavy yoke on us. But now you must lighten the burden of your father's service and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you."

Rehoboam answered, "Come back to me in three days." So the people departed.

Then King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon during his lifetime. "How do you advise me to respond to these people?" he asked.

They replied, "If you will be kind to these people and please them by speaking kind words to them, they will be your servants forever."

But Rehoboam rejected the advice of the elders; instead, he consulted the young men who had grown up with him and served him. He asked them, "What message do you advise that we send back to these people who have spoken to me, saying, 'Lighten the yoke your father put on us'?"

The young men who had grown up with him replied, "This is how you should answer these people who said to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you must make it lighter.' This is what you should tell them: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist! Whereas my father burdened you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. Whereas my father scourged you with whips, I will scourge you with scorpions.'"

After three days, Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam, since the king had said, "Come back to me on the third day." And the king answered them harshly. King Rehoboam rejected the advice of the elders and spoke to them as the young men had advised, saying, "Whereas my father made your yoke heavy, I will add to your yoke. Whereas my father scourged you with whips, I will scourge you with scorpions."

So the king did not listen to the people, and indeed this turn of events was from God, in order that the LORD might fulfill the word that He had spoken through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam son of Nebat.

When all Israel saw that the king had refused to listen to them, they answered the king:

> "What portion do we have in David, and what inheritance in the son of Jesse? To your tents, O Israel! Look now to your own house, O David!"

So all the Israelites went home, but Rehoboam still reigned over the Israelites living in the cities of Judah.

Then King Rehoboam sent out Hadoram, who was in charge of the forced labor, but the Israelites stoned him to death. And King Rehoboam mounted his chariot in haste and escaped to Jerusalem. So to this day Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David.

When Rehoboam arrived in Jerusalem, he mobilized the house of Judah and Benjamin — 180,000 chosen warriors — to fight against Israel and restore the kingdom to Rehoboam. But the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah the man of God: "Tell Rehoboam son of Solomon king of Judah and all the Israelites in Judah and Benjamin that this is what the LORD says: 'You are not to go up and fight against your brothers. Each of you must return home, for this is My doing.'"

So they listened to the words of the LORD and turned back from going against Jeroboam.

Rehoboam lived in Jerusalem, and he built up cities for defense in Judah. He built up Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, Beth-zur, Soco, Adullam, Gath, Mareshah, Ziph, Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, Zorah, Aijalon, and Hebron, the fortified cities in Judah and Benjamin. He strengthened their fortifications and put officers in them, with supplies of food, oil, and wine. He also put shields and spears in all the cities and strengthened them greatly. So Judah and Benjamin belonged to him.

Moreover, the priests and Levites from all their districts throughout Israel stood with Rehoboam. For the Levites left their pasturelands and their possessions and went to Judah and Jerusalem, because Jeroboam and his sons had rejected them as priests of the LORD. And Jeroboam appointed his own priests for the high places and for the goat demons and calf idols he had made.

Those from every tribe of Israel who had set their hearts to seek the LORD their God followed the Levites to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the LORD, the God of their fathers. So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah and supported Rehoboam son of Solomon for three years, because they walked for three years in the way of David and Solomon.

And Rehoboam married Mahalath, who was the daughter of David's son Jerimoth and of Abihail, the daughter of Jesse's son Eliab. She bore sons to him: Jeush, Shemariah, and Zaham.

After her, he married Maacah daughter of Absalom, and she bore to him Abijah, Attai, Ziza, and Shelomith. Rehoboam loved Maacah daughter of Absalom more than all his wives and concubines. In all, he had eighteen wives and sixty concubines, and he was the father of twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters.

Rehoboam appointed Abijah son of Maacah as chief prince among his brothers, intending to make him king. Rehoboam also acted wisely by dispersing some of his sons throughout the districts of Judah and Benjamin, and to all the fortified cities. He gave them abundant provisions and sought many wives for them.

After Rehoboam had established his sovereignty and royal power, he and all Israel with him forsook the

Law of the LORD. In the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign, because they had been unfaithful to the LORD, Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem with 1,200 chariots, 60,000 horsemen, and countless troops who came with him out of Egypt— Libyans, Sukkites, and Cushites. He captured the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem.

Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and the leaders of Judah who had gathered at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and he said to them, "This is what the LORD says: 'You have forsaken Me; therefore, I have forsaken you into the hand of Shishak.'"

So the leaders of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, "The LORD is righteous."

When the LORD saw that they had humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, "They have humbled themselves; I will not destroy them, but will soon grant them deliverance. My wrath will not be poured out on Jerusalem through Shishak. Nevertheless, they will become his servants, so that they may learn the difference between serving Me and serving the kings of other lands."

So King Shishak of Egypt attacked Jerusalem and seized the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the royal palace. He took everything, including the gold shields that Solomon had made.

Then King Rehoboam made bronze shields in their place and committed them to the care of the captains of the guard on duty at the entrance to the royal palace. And whenever the king entered the house of the LORD, the guards would go with him, bearing the shields, and later they would return them to the guardroom.

Because Rehoboam humbled himself, the anger of the LORD turned away from him, and He did not destroy him completely. Indeed, conditions were good in Judah.

Thus King Rehoboam established himself in Jerusalem and reigned. He was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city the LORD had chosen from all the tribes of Israel in which to put His Name. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonite. And Rehoboam did evil because he did not set his heart to seek the LORD.

Now the acts of Rehoboam, from first to last, are they not written in the records of Shemaiah the Prophet and of Iddo the Seer concerning the genealogies? There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam throughout their days. And Rehoboam rested with his fathers and was buried in the City of David. And his son Abijah reigned in his place.

In the eighteenth year of Jeroboam's reign, Abijah became king of Judah, and he reigned in Jerusalem three years. His mother's name was Micaiah daughter of Uriel; she was from Gibeah.

And there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. Abijah went into battle with an army of 400,000 chosen men, while Jeroboam drew up in formation against him with 800,000 chosen and mighty men of valor.

Then Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim in the hill country of Ephraim and said, "Hear me, O Jeroboam and all Israel! Do you not know that the LORD, the God of Israel, has given the kingship of Israel to David and his descendants forever by a covenant of salt? Yet Jeroboam son of Nebat, a servant of Solomon son of David, rose up and rebelled against his master. Then worthless and wicked men gathered around him to resist Rehoboam son of Solomon when he was young, inexperienced, and unable to resist them.

And now you think you can resist the kingdom of the LORD, which is in the hands of David's descendants. You are indeed a vast army, and you have with you the golden calves that Jeroboam made for you as gods. But did you not drive out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites? And did you not make priests for yourselves as do the peoples of other lands? Now whoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and seven rams can become a priest of things that are not gods.

But as for us, the LORD is our God. We have not forsaken Him; the priests who minister to the LORD are sons of Aaron, and the Levites attend to their duties. Every morning and every evening they present burnt offerings and fragrant incense to the LORD. They set out the rows of showbread on the ceremonially clean table, and every evening they light the lamps of the gold lampstand. We are carrying out the requirements of the LORD our God, while you have forsaken Him.

Now behold, God Himself is with us as our head, and His priests with their trumpets sound the battle call against you. O children of Israel, do not fight against the LORD, the God of your fathers, for you will not succeed."

Now Jeroboam had sent troops around to ambush from the rear, so that while he was in front of Judah, the ambush was behind them. When Judah turned and discovered that the battle was both before and behind them, they cried out to the LORD. Then the priests blew the trumpets, and the men of Judah raised the battle cry. And when they raised the cry, God routed Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah.

So the Israelites fled before Judah, and God delivered them into their hands. Then Abijah and his people struck them with a mighty blow, and 500,000 chosen men of Israel fell slain. Thus the Israelites were subdued at that time, and the men of Judah prevailed because they relied on the LORD, the God of their fathers.

Abijah pursued Jeroboam and captured some cities from him: Bethel, Jeshanah, and Ephron, along with their villages.

Jeroboam did not again recover his power during the days of Abijah, and the LORD struck him down and he died.

But Abijah grew strong, married fourteen wives, and became the father of twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters. Now the rest of the acts of Abijah, along with his ways and his words, are written in the Treatise of the Prophet Iddo.

Then Abijah rested with his fathers and was buried in the City of David. And his son Asa reigned in his place, and in his days the land was at peace for ten years.

And Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God. He removed the foreign altars and high places, shattered the sacred pillars, and chopped

down the Asherah poles. He commanded the people of Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, and to observe the law and the commandments. He also removed the high places and incense altars from all the cities of Judah, and under him the kingdom was at peace.

Because the land was at peace, Asa built fortified cities in Judah. In those days no one made war with him, because the LORD had given him rest. So he said to the people of Judah, "Let us build these cities and surround them with walls and towers, with doors and bars. The land is still ours because we have sought the LORD our God. We have sought Him, and He has given us rest on every side." So they built and prospered.

Asa had an army of 300,000 men from Judah bearing large shields and spears, and 280,000 men from Benjamin bearing small shields and drawing the bow. All these were mighty men of valor.

Then Zerah the Cushite came against them with an army of 1,000,000 men and 300 chariots, and they advanced as far as Mareshah. So Asa marched out against him and lined up in battle formation in the Valley of Zephathah near Mareshah.

Then Asa cried out to the LORD his God: "O LORD, there is no one besides You to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on You, and in Your name we have come against this multitude. O LORD, You are our God. Do not let a mere mortal prevail against You."

So the LORD struck down the Cushites before Asa and Judah, and the Cushites fled. Then Asa and his army pursued them as far as Gerar. The Cushites fell and could not recover, for they were crushed before the LORD and His army. So the people of Judah carried off a great amount of plunder and attacked all the cities around Gerar, because the terror of the LORD had fallen upon them. They plundered all the cities, since there was much plunder there. They also attacked the tents of the herdsmen and carried off many sheep and camels. Then they returned to Jerusalem.

Now the Spirit of God came upon Azariah son of Oded. So he went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Listen to me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD is with you when you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you, but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you. For many years Israel has been without the true God, without a priest to instruct them, and without the law. But in their distress they turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought Him, and He was found by them. In those days there was no safety for travelers, because the residents of the lands had many conflicts. Nation was crushed by nation, and city by city, for God afflicted them with all kinds of adversity. But as for you, be strong; do not be discouraged, for your work will be rewarded."

When Asa heard these words and the prophecy of Azariah son of Oded the prophet, he took courage and removed the detestable idols from the whole land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities he had captured in the hill country of Ephraim. He then restored the altar of the LORD that was in front of the portico of the LORD's temple. And he assembled all Judah and Benjamin, along with those from the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who had settled among them, for great numbers had come over to him from Israel when they saw that the LORD his God was with him.

So they gathered together in Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa's reign. At that time they sacrificed to the LORD seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep from all the plunder they had brought back. Then they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and soul. And whoever would not seek the LORD, the God of Israel, would be put to death, whether young or old, man or woman. They took an oath to the LORD with a loud voice, with shouting, trumpets, and rams' horns. And all Judah rejoiced over the oath, for they had sworn it with all their heart. They had sought Him earnestly, and He was found by them. So the LORD gave them rest on every side.

King Asa also removed his grandmother Maacah from her position as queen mother because she had made a detestable Asherah pole. Asa chopped down the pole, crushed it, and burned it in the Kidron Valley. The high places were not removed from Israel, but Asa's heart was fully devoted all his days. And he brought into the house of God the silver and gold and the articles that he and his father had dedicated.

And there was no war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign.

In the thirty-sixth year of Asa's reign, Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and fortified Ramah to prevent anyone from leaving or entering the territory of Asa king of Judah. So Asa withdrew the silver and gold from the treasuries of the house of the LORD and the royal palace, and he sent it with this message to Ben-hadad king of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus: "Let there be a treaty between me and you as there was between my father and your father. See, I have sent you silver and gold. Now go and break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel, so that he will withdraw from me."

And Ben-hadad listened to King Asa and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel, conquering Ijon, Dan, Abel-maim, and all the store cities of Naphtali.

When Baasha learned of this, he stopped fortifying Ramah and abandoned his work. Then King Asa brought all the men of Judah, and they carried away the stones of Ramah and the timbers Baasha had used for building. And with these materials he built up Geba and Mizpah.

At that time Hanani the seer came to King Asa of Judah and told him, "Because you have relied on the king of Aram and not on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand. Were not the Cushites and Libyans a vast army with many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on the LORD, He delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of the LORD roam to and fro over all the earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are fully devoted to Him. You have acted foolishly in this matter. From now on, therefore, you will be at war."

Asa was angry with the seer and became so enraged over this matter that he put the man in prison. And at the same time Asa oppressed some of the people.

Now the acts of Asa, from beginning to end, are indeed written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa became diseased in his feet, and his disease became increasingly severe. Yet even in his illness he did not seek the LORD, but only the physicians.

So in the forty-first year of his reign, Asa died and rested with his fathers. And he was buried in the tomb that he had cut out for himself in the City of David. They laid him on a bier that was full of spices and various blended perfumes; then they made a great fire in his honor.

Asa's son Jehoshaphat reigned in his place, and he strengthened himself against Israel. He stationed troops in every fortified city of Judah and put garrisons in the land of Judah and in the cities of Ephraim that his father Asa had captured.

Now the LORD was with Jehoshaphat because he walked in the earlier ways of his father David. He did not seek the Baals, but he sought the God of his father and walked by His commandments rather than the practices of Israel. So the LORD established the kingdom in his hand, and all Judah brought him tribute, so that he had an abundance of riches and honor. And his heart took delight in the ways of the LORD; furthermore, he removed the high places and Asherah poles from Judah.

In the third year of his reign, Jehoshaphat sent his officials Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah to teach in the cities of Judah, accompanied by certain Levites — Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tob-adonijah — along with the priests Elishama and Jehoram. They taught throughout Judah, taking with them the Book of the Law of the LORD. They went throughout the towns of Judah and taught the people.

And the dread of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that surrounded Judah, so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat. Some Philistines also brought gifts and silver as tribute to Jehoshaphat, and the Arabs brought him 7,700 rams and 7,700 goats from their flocks.

Jehoshaphat grew stronger and stronger, and he built fortresses and store cities in Judah and kept vast supplies in the cities of Judah. He also had warriors in Jerusalem who were mighty men of valor. These are their numbers according to the houses of their fathers:

From Judah, the commanders of thousands:

Adnah the commander, and with him 300,000 mighty men of valor;

next to him, Jehohanan the commander, and with him 280,000;

and next to him, Amasiah son of Zichri, the volunteer for the LORD, and with him 200,000 mighty men of valor.

From Benjamin:

Eliada, a mighty man of valor, and with him 200,000 armed with bows and shields;

and next to him, Jehozabad, and with him 180,000 armed for battle.

These were the men who served the king, besides those he stationed in the fortified cities throughout Judah.

Now Jehoshaphat had an abundance of riches and honor, and he allied himself with Ahab by marriage. And some years later he went down to visit Ahab in Samaria, where Ahab sacrificed many sheep and cattle for him and the people with him and urged him to march up to Ramoth-gilead.

Ahab king of Israel asked Jehoshaphat king of Judah, "Will you go with me against Ramoth-gilead?"

And Jehoshaphat replied, "I am as you are, and my people are your people; we will join you in the war."

But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, "Please inquire first for the word of the LORD."

So the king of Israel assembled the prophets, four hundred men, and asked them, "Should we go to war against Ramoth-gilead, or should we refrain?"

"Go up," they replied, "and God will deliver it into the hand of the king."

But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there not still a prophet of the LORD here of whom we can inquire? "

The king of Israel answered, "There is still one man through whom we can inquire of the LORD, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good for me, but only bad. He is Micaiah son of Imlah."

"The king should not say that!" Jehoshaphat replied.

So the king of Israel called one of his officials and said, "Bring Micaiah son of Imlah at once."

Dressed in royal attire, the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting on their thrones at the threshing floor by the entrance of the gate of Samaria, with all the prophets prophesying before them.

Now Zedekiah son of Chenaanah had made for himself iron horns and declared, "This is what the LORD says: 'With these you shall gore the Arameans until they are finished off.'"

And all the prophets were prophesying the same, saying, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead and triumph, for the LORD will deliver it into the hand of the king."

Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah instructed him, "Behold, with one accord the words of the prophets are favorable to the king. So please let your words be like theirs, and speak favorably."

But Micaiah said, "As surely as the LORD lives, I will speak whatever my God tells me."

When Micaiah arrived, the king asked him, "Micaiah, should we go to war against Ramoth-gilead, or should we refrain?"

"Go up and triumph," Micaiah replied, "for they will be delivered into your hand."

But the king said to him, "How many times must I make you swear not to tell me anything but the truth in the name of the LORD?"

So Micaiah declared:

> "I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd. And the LORD said, 'These people have no master; let each one return home in peace.'"

Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you that he never prophesies good for me, but only bad?"

Micaiah continued, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing on His right and on His left.

And the LORD said, ‘Who will entice Ahab king of Israel to march up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?’

And one suggested this, and another that.

Then a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD, and said, ‘I will entice him.’

‘By what means?’ asked the LORD.

And he replied, ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets.’

‘You will surely entice him and prevail,’ said the LORD. ‘Go and do it.’

So you see, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of these prophets of yours, and the LORD has pronounced disaster against you.”

Then Zedekiah son of Chenaanah went up, struck Micaiah in the face, and demanded, “Which way did the Spirit of the LORD go when He departed from me to speak with you?”

Micaiah replied, “You will soon see, on that day when you go and hide in an inner room.”

And the king of Israel declared, “Take Micaiah and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king’s son, and tell them that this is what the king says: ‘Put this man in prison and feed him only bread and water until I return safely.’”

But Micaiah replied, “If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me.” Then he added, “Take heed, all you people!”

So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead. And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “I will disguise myself and go into battle, but you wear your royal robes.” So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle.

Now the king of Aram had ordered his chariot commanders, “Do not fight with anyone, small or great, except the king of Israel.”

When the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they said, “This is the king of Israel!” So they turned to fight against him, but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him. God drew them away from him. And when the chariot commanders saw that he was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him.

However, a certain man drew his bow without taking special aim, and he struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor. So the king said to his charioteer, “Turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am badly wounded!”

The battle raged throughout that day, and the king of Israel propped himself up in his chariot facing the Arameans until evening. And at sunset he died.

When Jehoshaphat king of Judah had returned safely to his home in Jerusalem, Jehu son of Hanani the seer went out to confront him and said to King Jehoshaphat, “Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, the wrath of the LORD is upon you. However, some good is found in you, for you have removed the Asherah poles from the land and have set your heart on seeking God.”

Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem, and once again he went out among the people from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim and turned them back to the LORD, the God of their fathers. He appointed judges in the land, in each of the fortified cities of Judah. Then he said to the judges, “Consider carefully what you do, for you are not judging for man, but for the LORD, who is with you when you render judgment. And now, may the fear of the LORD be upon you. Be careful what you do, for with the LORD our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery.”

Moreover, Jehoshaphat appointed in Jerusalem some of the Levites, priests, and heads of the Israelite families to judge on behalf of the LORD and to settle disputes. And they lived in Jerusalem. He commanded them, saying, “You must serve faithfully and wholeheartedly in the fear of the LORD. For every dispute that comes before you from your brothers who dwell in their cities— whether it regards bloodshed or some other violation of law, commandments, statutes, or ordinances— you are to warn them, so that they will not incur guilt before the LORD and wrath will not come upon you and your brothers. Do this, and you will not incur guilt.

Note that Amariah, the chief priest, will be over you in all that pertains to the LORD, and Zebadiah son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, in all that pertains to the king. And the Levites will serve as officers before you. Act resolutely; may the LORD be with the upright!”

After this, the Moabites and Ammonites, together with some of the Meunites, came to make war against Jehoshaphat. Then some men came and told Jehoshaphat, “A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from beyond the Sea; they are already in Hazazon-tamar” (that is, En-gedi).

Jehoshaphat was alarmed and set his face to seek the LORD. And he proclaimed a fast throughout Judah. So the people of Judah gathered to seek the LORD, and indeed, they came from all the cities of Judah to seek Him.

Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem in the house of the LORD in front of the new courtyard and said, “O LORD, God of our fathers, are You not the God who is in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Your hand, and no one can stand against You.

Our God, did You not drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham Your friend? They have lived in the land and have built in it a sanctuary for Your Name, saying, ‘If disaster comes upon us— whether sword or judgment, plague or famine— we will stand before this temple and before You, for Your Name is in this temple. We will cry out to You in our distress, and You will hear us and save us.’

And now, here are the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, whom You did not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt. So Israel turned away from them and did not destroy them. See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession that You gave us as an inheritance.

Our God, will You not judge them? For we are powerless before this vast army that comes against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon You.”

Meanwhile all the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, were standing before the LORD.

Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite from Asaph's descendants, as he stood in the midst of the assembly. And he said, "Listen, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem! Listen, King Jehoshaphat! This is what the LORD says: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army, for the battle does not belong to you, but to God. Tomorrow you are to march down against them. You will see them coming up the Ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the valley facing the Wilderness of Jeruel. You need not fight this battle. Take up your positions, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid or discouraged. Go out and face them tomorrow, for the LORD is with you.'"

Then Jehoshaphat bowed facedown, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down before the LORD to worship Him. And the Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites stood up to praise the LORD, the God of Israel, shouting in a very loud voice.

Early in the morning they got up and left for the Wilderness of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood up and said, "Hear me, O people of Judah and Jerusalem. Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be upheld; believe in His prophets, and you will succeed."

Then Jehoshaphat consulted with the people and appointed those who would sing to the LORD and praise the splendor of His holiness. As they went out before the army, they were singing:

> "Give thanks to the LORD, for His loving devotion endures forever."

The moment they began their shouts and praises, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir who had come against Judah, and they were defeated. The Ammonites and Moabites rose up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, devoting them to destruction. And when they had finished off the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another.

When the men of Judah came to a place overlooking the wilderness, they looked for the vast army, but there were only corpses lying on the ground; no one had escaped. Then Jehoshaphat and his people went to carry off the plunder, and they found on the bodies an abundance of goods and valuables — more than they could carry away. They were gathering the plunder for three days because there was so much.

On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Beracah, where they blessed the LORD. Therefore that place is called the Valley of Beracah to this day.

Then all the men of Judah and Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat at their head, returned joyfully to Jerusalem, for the LORD had made them rejoice over their enemies. So they entered Jerusalem and went into the house of the LORD with harps, lyres, and trumpets.

And the fear of God came upon all the kingdoms of the lands when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. Then Jehoshaphat's kingdom was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side.

So Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-five years. His mother's name was Azubah daughter of Shilhi.

And Jehoshaphat walked in the way of his father Asa and did not turn away from it; he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD.

The high places, however, were not removed; the people had not yet set their hearts on the God of their fathers.

As for the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, from beginning to end, they are indeed written in the Chronicles of Jehu son of Hanani, which are recorded in the Book of the Kings of Israel.

Later, Jehoshaphat king of Judah made an alliance with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted wickedly. They agreed to make ships to go to Tarshish, and these were built in Ezion-geber.

Then Eliezer son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because you have allied yourself with Ahaziah, the LORD has destroyed your works."

So the ships were wrecked and were unable to sail to Tarshish.

And Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the City of David. And his son Jehoram reigned in his place.

Jehoram's brothers, the sons of Jehoshaphat, were Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah, Michael, and Shephatiah; these were all sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel. Their father had given them many gifts of silver and gold and precious things, as well as the fortified cities in Judah; but he gave the kingdom to Jehoram because he was the firstborn.

When Jehoram had established himself over his father's kingdom, he strengthened himself by putting to the sword all his brothers along with some of the princes of Israel. Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years.

And Jehoram walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done. For he married a daughter of Ahab and did evil in the sight of the LORD. Yet the LORD was unwilling to destroy the house of David, because of the covenant He had made with David, and since He had promised to maintain a lamp for David and his descendants forever.

In the days of Jehoram, Edom rebelled against the hand of Judah and appointed their own king. So Jehoram crossed into Edom with his officers and all his chariots. When the Edomites surrounded him and his chariot commanders, he rose up and attacked by night.

So to this day Edom has been in rebellion against the hand of Judah. Likewise, Libnah rebelled against his hand at the same time, because Jehoram had forsaken the LORD, the God of his fathers.

Jehoram had also built high places on the hills of Judah; he had caused the people of Jerusalem to prostitute themselves and had led Judah astray.

Then a letter came to Jehoram from Elijah the prophet, which stated:

"This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says:

'You have not walked in the ways of your father Jehoshaphat or of Asa king of Judah, but you have walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and have caused Judah

and the people of Jerusalem to prostitute themselves, just as the house of Ahab prostituted itself. You have also killed your brothers, your father's family, who were better than you.
So behold, the LORD is about to strike your people, your sons, your wives, and all your possessions with a serious blow. And day after day you yourself will suffer from a severe illness, a disease of your bowels, until it causes your bowels to come out.'"

Then the LORD stirred against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines and Arabs who lived near the Cushites. So they went to war against Judah, invaded it, and carried off all the possessions found in the king's palace, along with his sons and wives; not a son was left to him except Jehoahaz, his youngest.

After all this, the LORD afflicted Jehoram with an incurable disease of the bowels. This continued day after day until two full years had passed. Finally, his intestines came out because of his disease, and he died in severe pain. And his people did not make a fire in his honor as they had done for his fathers.

Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years. He died, to no one's regret, and was buried in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings.

Then the people of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, the youngest son of Jehoram, king in his place, since the raiders who had come into the camp with the Arabs had killed all the older sons. So Ahaziah son of Jehoram became king of Judah. Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem one year. His mother's name was Athaliah, the granddaughter of Omri.

Ahaziah also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his counselor in wickedness. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, as the house of Ahab had done, for to his destruction they were his counselors after the death of his father.

Ahaziah also followed their counsel and went with Joram son of Ahab king of Israel to fight against Hazael king of Aram at Ramoth-gilead. But the Arameans wounded Joram. So he returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds they had inflicted on him at Ramah when he fought against Hazael king of Aram. Then Ahaziah son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to Jezreel to visit Joram son of Ahab, because Joram had been wounded.

Ahaziah's downfall came from God when he went to visit Joram. When Ahaziah arrived, he went out with Joram to meet Jehu son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to destroy the house of Ahab.

So while Jehu was executing judgment on the house of Ahab, he found the rulers of Judah and the sons of Ahaziah's brothers who were serving Ahaziah, and he killed them.

Then Jehu looked for Ahaziah, and Jehu's soldiers captured him while he was hiding in Samaria. So Ahaziah was brought to Jehu and put to death. They buried him, for they said, "He is the grandson of Jehoshaphat, who sought the LORD with all his heart."

So no one was left from the house of Ahaziah with the strength to rule the kingdom.

When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she proceeded to annihilate all the royal heirs of the house of Judah. But Jehoshabeath daughter of King Jehoram took Joash son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the sons of the king who were being murdered, and she put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Because Jehoshabeath, the daughter of King Jehoram and the wife of Jehoiada the priest, was Ahaziah's sister, she hid Joash from Athaliah so that she could not kill him.

And Joash remained hidden with them in the house of God for six years while Athaliah ruled the land.

Then in the seventh year, Jehoiada strengthened himself and made a covenant with the commanders of hundreds — with Azariah son of Jeroham, Ishmael son of Jehohanan, Azariah son of Obed, Maaseiah son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat son of Zichri. So they went throughout Judah and gathered the Levites from all the cities of Judah and the heads of the families of Israel. And when they came to Jerusalem, the whole assembly made a covenant with the king in the house of God.

"Behold, the king's son!" said Jehoiada. "He must reign, just as the LORD promised concerning the descendants of David. This is what you are to do: A third of you priests and Levites who come on duty on the Sabbath shall keep watch at the doors, a third shall be at the royal palace, and a third at the Foundation Gate, while all the others are to be in the courtyards of the house of the LORD. No one is to enter the house of the LORD except the priests and those Levites who serve; they may enter because they are consecrated, but all the people are to obey the requirement of the LORD. The Levites must surround the king with weapons in hand, and anyone who enters the temple must be put to death. You must stay close to the king wherever he goes."

So the Levites and all Judah did everything that Jehoiada the priest had ordered. Each of them took his men— those coming on duty on the Sabbath and those going off duty— for Jehoiada the priest had not released any of the divisions. Then Jehoiada the priest gave to the commanders of hundreds the spears and the large and small shields of King David that were in the house of God. He stationed all the troops, with their weapons in hand, surrounding the king by the altar and the temple, from the south side to the north side of the temple.

Then Jehoiada and his sons brought out the king's son, put the crown on him, presented him with the Testimony, and proclaimed him king. They anointed him and shouted, "Long live the king!"

When Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and cheering the king, she went out to them in the house of the LORD. And she looked and saw the king standing by his pillar at the entrance. The officers and trumpeters were beside the king, and all the people of the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets, while the singers with musical instruments were leading the praises.

Then Athaliah tore her clothes and screamed, "Treason, treason!"

And Jehoiada the priest sent out the commanders of hundreds in charge of the army, saying, "Bring her

out between the ranks, and put to the sword anyone who follows her." For the priest had said, "She must not be put to death in the house of the LORD."

So they seized Athaliah as she reached the entrance of the Horse Gate on the palace grounds, and there they put her to death.

Then Jehoiada made a covenant between himself and the king and the people that they would be the LORD's people. So all the people went to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They smashed the altars and idols to pieces and killed Mattan the priest of Baal in front of the altars.

Moreover, Jehoiada put the oversight of the house of the LORD into the hands of the Levitical priests, whom David had appointed over the house of the LORD, to offer burnt offerings to the LORD as written in the Law of Moses, with rejoicing and song, as ordained by David. He stationed gatekeepers at the gates of the house of the LORD, so that no one who was in any way unclean could enter.

And he took with him the commanders of hundreds, the nobles, the rulers of the people, and all the people of the land, and they brought the king down from the house of the LORD and entered the royal palace through the Upper Gate. They seated King Joash on the royal throne, and all the people of the land rejoiced. And the city was quiet, because Athaliah had been put to the sword.

Joash was seven years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem forty years. His mother's name was Zibiah; she was from Beersheba. And Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest. Jehoiada took for him two wives, and he had sons and daughters.

Some time later, Joash set his heart on repairing the house of the LORD. So he gathered the priests and Levites and said, "Go out to the cities of Judah and collect the money due annually from all Israel, to repair the house of your God. Do it quickly."

The Levites, however, did not make haste. So the king called Jehoiada the high priest and said, "Why have you not required the Levites to bring from Judah and Jerusalem the tax imposed by Moses the servant of the LORD and by the assembly of Israel for the Tent of the Testimony?"

For the sons of that wicked woman Athaliah had broken into the house of God and had even used the sacred objects of the house of the LORD for the Baals.

At the king's command a chest was made and placed outside, at the gate of the house of the LORD. And a proclamation was issued in Judah and Jerusalem that they were to bring to the LORD the tax imposed by Moses the servant of God on Israel in the wilderness. All the officers and all the people rejoiced and brought their contributions, and they dropped them in the chest until it was full.

Whenever the chest was brought by the Levites to the king's overseers and they saw that there was a large amount of money, the royal scribe and the officer of the high priest would come and empty the chest and carry it back to its place. They did this daily and gathered the money in abundance. Then the king and Jehoiada would give the money to those who supervised the labor on the house of the LORD to hire stonecutters and carpenters to restore the house of the LORD, as well as workers in iron and bronze to repair the house of the LORD.

So the workmen labored, and in their hands the repair work progressed. They restored the house of God according to its specifications, and they reinforced it. When they were finished, they brought the rest of the money to the king and Jehoiada, and with it were made articles for the house of the LORD — utensils for the service and for the burnt offerings, dishes, and other objects of gold and silver.

Throughout the days of Jehoiada, burnt offerings were presented regularly in the house of the LORD.

When Jehoiada was old and full of years, he died at the age of 130.

And Jehoiada was buried with the kings in the City of David, because he had done what was good in Israel for God and His temple.

After the death of Jehoiada, however, the officials of Judah came and paid homage to the king, and he listened to them. They abandoned the house of the LORD, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherah poles and idols. So wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this guilt of theirs. Nevertheless, the LORD sent prophets to bring the people back to Him and to testify against them, but they would not listen.

Then the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest, who stood up before the people and said to them, "This is what God says: 'Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, He has forsaken you.'"

But they conspired against Zechariah, and by order of the king, they stoned him in the courtyard of the house of the LORD.

Thus King Joash failed to remember the kindness that Zechariah's father Jehoiada had extended to him. Instead, Joash killed Jehoiada's son. As he lay dying, Zechariah said, "May the LORD see this and call you to account."

In the spring, the army of Aram went to war against Joash. They entered Judah and Jerusalem and destroyed all the leaders of the people, and they sent all the plunder to their king in Damascus. Although the Aramean army had come with only a few men, the LORD delivered into their hand a very great army. Because Judah had forsaken the LORD, the God of their fathers, judgment was executed on Joash.

And when the Arameans had withdrawn, they left Joash severely wounded. His own servants conspired against him for shedding the blood of the son of Jehoiada the priest, and they killed him on his bed. So he died and was buried in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings. Those who conspired against Joash were Zabad son of Shimeath the Ammonitess and Jehozabad son of Shimrith the Moabitess.

The accounts of the sons of Joash and the many pronouncements about him, and of the restoration of the house of God, are indeed written in the Treatise of the Book of the Kings. And his son Amaziah reigned in his place.

Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother's name was Jehoaddan; she was from Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not wholeheartedly.

As soon as the kingdom was firmly in his grasp, Amaziah executed the servants who had murdered his father the king. Yet he did not put their sons to death, but acted according to what is written in the Law, in the Book of Moses, where the LORD commanded: "Fathers must not be put to death for their children, and children must not be put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin."

Then Amaziah gathered the people of Judah and assigned them according to their families to commanders of thousands and of hundreds. And he numbered those twenty years of age or older throughout Judah and Benjamin and found 300,000 chosen men able to serve in the army, bearing the spear and shield.

He also hired 100,000 mighty men of valor from Israel for a hundred talents of silver. But a man of God came to him and said, "O king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the LORD is not with Israel — not with any of the Ephraimites. Even if you go and fight bravely in battle, God will overthrow you before the enemy, for God has power to help and power to overthrow."

Amaziah asked the man of God, "What should I do about the hundred talents I have given to the troops of Israel?"

And the man of God replied, "The LORD is able to give you much more than this."

So Amaziah dismissed the troops who had come to him from Ephraim and sent them home. And they were furious with Judah and returned home in great anger.

Amaziah, however, summoned his strength and led his troops to the Valley of Salt, where he struck down 10,000 men of Seir, and the army of Judah also captured 10,000 men alive. They took them to the top of a cliff and threw them down so that all were dashed to pieces.

Meanwhile the troops that Amaziah had dismissed from battle raided the cities of Judah, from Samaria to Beth-horon. They struck down 3,000 people and carried off a great deal of plunder.

When Amaziah returned from the slaughter of the Edomites, he brought back the gods of the Seirites, set them up as his own gods, bowed before them, and burned sacrifices to them. Therefore the anger of the LORD burned against Amaziah, and He sent him a prophet, who said, "Why have you sought this people's gods, which could not deliver them from your hand?"

While he was still speaking, the king asked, "Have we made you the counselor to the king? Stop! Why be struck down?"

So the prophet stopped, but he said, "I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this and have not heeded my advice."

Then Amaziah king of Judah took counsel and sent word to the king of Israel Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu. "Come, let us meet face to face," he said.

But Jehoash king of Israel replied to Amaziah king of Judah: "A thistle in Lebanon sent a message to a cedar in Lebanon, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son in marriage.' Then a wild beast in Lebanon came along and trampled the thistle. You have said, 'Look, I have defeated Edom,' and your heart has become proud and boastful. Now stay at home. Why should you stir up trouble so that you fall — you and Judah with you?"

But Amaziah would not listen, for this had come from God in order to deliver them into the hand of Jehoash, because they had sought the gods of Edom. So Jehoash king of Israel advanced, and he and Amaziah king of Judah faced each other at Beth-shemesh in Judah. And Judah was routed before Israel, and every man fled to his own home.

There at Beth-shemesh, Jehoash king of Israel captured Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash, the son of Jehoahaz.

Then Jehoash brought him to Jerusalem and broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate — a section of four hundred cubits. He took all the gold and silver and all the articles found in the house of God with Obed-edom and in the treasuries of the royal palace, as well as some hostages. Then he returned to Samaria.

Amaziah son of Joash king of Judah lived for fifteen years after the death of Jehoash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel. As for the rest of the acts of Amaziah, from beginning to end, are they not written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel?

From the time that Amaziah turned from following the LORD, a conspiracy was formed against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish. But men were sent after him to Lachish, and they killed him there. They carried him back on horses and buried him with his fathers in the City of Judah.

All the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in place of his father Amaziah. Uzziah was the one who rebuilt Eloth and restored it to Judah after King Amaziah rested with his fathers.

Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-two years. His mother's name was Jecoliah; she was from Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Amaziah had done. He sought God throughout the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God. And as long as he sought the LORD, God gave him success.

Uzziah went out to wage war against the Philistines, and he tore down the walls of Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod. Then he built cities near Ashdod and among the Philistines. God helped him against the Philistines, against the Arabs living in Gur-baal, and against the Meunites. The Ammonites brought tribute to Uzziah, and his fame spread as far as the border of Egypt, for he had become exceedingly powerful.

Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, the Valley Gate, and the angle in the wall, and he fortified them. Since he had much livestock in the foothills and in the plain, he built towers in the desert and dug many cisterns. And since he was a lover of the soil, he had farmers and vinedressers in the hill country and in the fertile fields.

Uzziah had an army ready for battle that went out to war by assigned divisions, as recorded by Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the officer under the direction of

Hananiah, one of the royal officers. The total number of family leaders of the mighty men of valor was 2,600. Under their authority was an army of 307,500 trained for war, a powerful force to support the king against his enemies.

Uzziah supplied the entire army with shields, spears, helmets, armor, bows, and slingstones. And in Jerusalem he made skillfully designed devices to shoot arrows and catapult large stones from the towers and corners. So his fame spread far and wide, for he was helped tremendously until he became powerful.

But when Uzziah became powerful, his arrogance led to his own destruction. He was unfaithful to the LORD his God, for he entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense.

Then Azariah the priest, along with eighty brave priests of the LORD, went in after him. They took their stand against King Uzziah and said, "Uzziah, you have no right to offer incense to the LORD. Only the priests, the descendants of Aaron, are consecrated to burn incense. Leave the sanctuary, for you have acted unfaithfully; you will not receive honor from the LORD God."

Uzziah, with a censer in his hand to offer incense, was enraged. But while he raged against the priests in their presence in the house of the LORD before the altar of incense, leprosy broke out on his forehead. When Azariah the chief priest and all the priests turned to him and saw his leprous forehead, they rushed him out. Indeed, he himself hurried to get out, because the LORD had afflicted him.

So King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death. He lived in isolation, leprous and cut off from the house of the LORD, while his son Jotham had charge of the royal palace and governed the people of the land.

As for the rest of the acts of Uzziah, from beginning to end, they are recorded by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. And Uzziah rested with his fathers and was buried near them in a field of burial that belonged to the kings, for the people said, "He was a leper." And his son Jotham reigned in his place.

Jotham was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. His mother's name was Jerushah daughter of Zadok. And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Uzziah had done. In addition, he did not enter the temple of the LORD. But the people still behaved corruptly.

Jotham rebuilt the Upper Gate of the house of the LORD, and he worked extensively on the wall at the hill of Ophel. He also built cities in the hill country of Judah and fortresses and towers in the forests.

Jotham waged war against the king of the Ammonites and defeated them, and that year they gave him a hundred talents of silver, ten thousand cors of wheat, and ten thousand cors of barley. They paid him the same in the second and third years. So Jotham grew powerful because he ordered his ways before the LORD his God.

As for the rest of the acts of Jotham, along with all his wars and his ways, they are indeed written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. And Jotham rested with his fathers and was buried in the City of David. And his son Ahaz reigned in his place.

Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. And unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD. Instead, he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and even made cast images of the Baals.

Moreover, Ahaz burned incense in the Valley of Ben-hinnom and sacrificed his sons in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations that the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.

So the LORD his God delivered Ahaz into the hand of the king of Aram, who attacked him and took many captives to Damascus.

Ahaz was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who struck him with great force. For in one day Pekah son of Remaliah killed 120,000 valiant men in Judah. This happened because they had forsaken the LORD, the God of their fathers. Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, killed Maaseiah the son of the king, Azrikam the governor of the palace, and Elkanah the second to the king. Then the Israelites took 200,000 captives from their kinsmen— women, sons, and daughters. They also carried off a great deal of plunder and brought it to Samaria.

But a prophet of the LORD named Oded was there, and he went out to meet the army that returned to Samaria. "Look," he said to them, "because of His wrath against Judah, the LORD, the God of your fathers, has delivered them into your hand. But you have slaughtered them in a rage that reaches up to heaven. And now you intend to reduce to slavery the men and women of Judah and Jerusalem. But are you not also guilty before the LORD your God? Now therefore, listen to me and return the captives you took from your kinsmen, for the fierce anger of the LORD is upon you."

Then some of the leaders of the Ephraimites— Azariah son of Jehohanan, Berechiah son of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah son of Shallum, and Amasa son of Hadlai— stood in opposition to those arriving from the war. "You must not bring the captives here," they said, "for you are proposing to bring guilt upon us from the LORD and to add to our sins and our guilt. For our guilt is great, and fierce anger is upon Israel."

So the armed men left the captives and the plunder before the leaders and all the assembly. Then the men who were designated by name arose, took charge of the captives, and provided from the plunder clothing for the naked. They clothed them, gave them sandals and food and drink, anointed their wounds, and put all the feeble on donkeys. So they brought them to Jericho, the City of Palms, to their brothers. Then they returned to Samaria.

At that time King Ahaz sent for help from the king of Assyria. The Edomites had again come and attacked Judah and carried away captives. The Philistines had also raided the cities of the foothills and the Negev of Judah, capturing and occupying Beth-shemesh, Aijalon, and Gederoth, as well as Soco, Timnah, and Gimzo with their villages. For the LORD humbled Judah because

Ahaz king of Israel had thrown off restraint in Judah and had been most unfaithful to the LORD.

Then Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came to Ahaz but afflicted him rather than strengthening him. Although Ahaz had taken a portion from the house of the LORD, from the royal palace, and from the princes and had presented it to the king of Assyria, it did not help him.

In the time of his distress, King Ahaz became even more unfaithful to the LORD. He sacrificed to the gods of Damascus, who had defeated him, and he said, "Because the gods of the kings of Aram have helped them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me." But these gods were the downfall of Ahaz and of all Israel.

Then Ahaz gathered up the articles of the house of God, cut them into pieces, shut the doors of the house of the LORD, and set up altars of his own on every street corner in Jerusalem. In every city of Judah he built high places to offer incense to other gods, and so he provoked the LORD, the God of his fathers.

As for the rest of the acts of Ahaz and all his ways, from beginning to end, they are indeed written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. And Ahaz rested with his fathers and was buried in the city of Jerusalem, but he was not placed in the tombs of the kings of Israel. And his son Hezekiah reigned in his place.

Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done.

In the first month of the first year of his reign, Hezekiah opened and repaired the doors of the house of the LORD. Then he brought in the priests and Levites and gathered them in the square on the east side.

"Listen to me, O Levites," he said. "Consecrate yourselves now and consecrate the house of the LORD, the God of your fathers. Remove from the Holy Place every impurity.

For our fathers were unfaithful and did evil in the sight of the LORD our God. They abandoned Him, turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the LORD, and turned their backs on Him. They also shut the doors of the portico and extinguished the lamps. They did not burn incense or present burnt offerings in the Holy Place of the God of Israel.

Therefore, the wrath of the LORD has fallen upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He has made them an object of terror, horror, and scorn, as you can see with your own eyes. For behold, this is why our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and daughters and wives are in captivity.

Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the LORD, the God of Israel, so that His fierce anger will turn away from us. Now, my sons, do not be negligent, for the LORD has chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him, to minister before Him, and to burn incense."

Then the Levites set to work:

Mahath son of Amasai and Joel son of Azariah from the Kohathites;
Kish son of Abdi and Azariah son of Jehallelel from the Merarites;
Joah son of Zimmah and Eden son of Joah from the Gershonites;
Shimri and Jeuel from the Elizaphanites;
Zechariah and Mattaniah from the Asaphites;
Jehiel and Shimei from the Hemanites;
and Shemaiah and Uzziel from the Jeduthunites.

When they had assembled their brothers and consecrated themselves, they went in to cleanse the house of the LORD, according to the command of the king by the words of the LORD.

So the priests went inside the house of the LORD to cleanse it, and they brought out to the courtyard all the unclean things that they found in the temple of the LORD. Then the Levites took these things and carried them out to the Kidron Valley. They began the consecration on the first day of the first month, and on the eighth day of the month they reached the portico of the LORD. For eight more days they consecrated the house of the LORD itself, finishing on the sixteenth day of the first month.

Then they went in to King Hezekiah and reported, "We have cleansed the entire house of the LORD, the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the table of the showbread with all its utensils. Moreover, we have prepared and consecrated all the articles that King Ahaz in his unfaithfulness cast aside during his reign. They are now in front of the altar of the LORD."

Early the next morning King Hezekiah gathered the city officials and went up to the house of the LORD. They brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats as a sin offering for the kingdom, for the sanctuary, and for Judah. And the king commanded the priests, the descendants of Aaron, to offer them on the altar of the LORD.

So they slaughtered the bulls, and the priests took the blood and splattered it on the altar. They slaughtered the rams and splattered the blood on the altar. And they slaughtered the lambs and splattered the blood on the altar.

Then they brought the goats for the sin offering before the king and the assembly, who laid their hands on them. And the priests slaughtered the goats and put their blood on the altar for a sin offering, to make atonement for all Israel, because the king had ordered the burnt offering and the sin offering for all Israel.

Hezekiah stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, harps, and lyres according to the command of David, of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet. For the command had come from the LORD through His prophets. The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets.

And Hezekiah ordered that the burnt offering be sacrificed on the altar. When the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD and the trumpets began as well, accompanied by the instruments of David king of Israel. The whole assembly was worshiping, the singers were singing, and the trumpeters were playing. All this continued until the burnt offering was completed.

When the offerings were completed, the king and all those present with him bowed down and worshiped. Then King Hezekiah and his officials ordered the Levites to sing praises to the LORD in the words of

David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with gladness and bowed down and worshiped.

Then Hezekiah said, “Now that you have consecrated yourselves to the LORD, come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the house of the LORD.”

So the assembly brought sacrifices and thank offerings, and all whose hearts were willing brought burnt offerings. The number of burnt offerings the assembly brought was seventy bulls, a hundred rams, and two hundred lambs; all these were for a burnt offering to the LORD. And the consecrated offerings were six hundred bulls and three thousand sheep.

However, since there were not enough priests to skin all the burnt offerings, their Levite brothers helped them until the work was finished and until the priests had consecrated themselves. For the Levites had been more diligent in consecrating themselves than the priests had been.

Furthermore, the burnt offerings were abundant, along with the fat of the peace offerings and the drink offerings for the burnt offerings. So the service of the house of the LORD was established. Then Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced at what God had prepared for the people, because everything had been accomplished so quickly.

Then Hezekiah sent word throughout all Israel and Judah, and he also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh inviting them to come to the house of the LORD in Jerusalem to keep the Passover of the LORD, the God of Israel. For the king and his officials and the whole assembly in Jerusalem had decided to keep the Passover in the second month, since they had been unable to keep it at the regular time, because not enough priests had consecrated themselves and the people had not been gathered in Jerusalem.

This plan pleased the king and the whole assembly. So they established a decree to circulate a proclamation throughout Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, that the people should come to keep the Passover of the LORD, the God of Israel, in Jerusalem. For they had not observed it in great numbers as prescribed.

At the command of the king, the couriers went throughout Israel and Judah with letters from the king and his officials, which read:

“Children of Israel, return to the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, so that He may return to those of you who remain, who have escaped the grasp of the kings of Assyria. Do not be like your fathers and brothers who were unfaithful to the LORD, the God of their fathers, so that He made them an object of horror, as you can see.

Now do not stiffen your necks as your fathers did. Submit to the LORD and come to His sanctuary, which He has consecrated forever. Serve the LORD your God, so that His fierce anger will turn away from you. For if you return to the LORD, your brothers and sons will receive mercy in the presence of their captors and will return to this land. For the LORD your God is gracious and merciful; He will not turn His face away from you if you return to Him.”

And the couriers traveled from city to city through the land of Ephraim and Manasseh as far as Zebulun, but the people scorned and mocked them. Nevertheless, some from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. Moreover, the power of God was on the people in Judah to give them one heart to obey the command of the king and his officials according to the word of the LORD.

In the second month, a very great assembly gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread. They proceeded to remove the altars in Jerusalem and to take away the incense altars and throw them into the Kidron Valley. And on the fourteenth day of the second month they slaughtered the Passover lamb. The priests and Levites were ashamed, and they consecrated themselves and brought burnt offerings to the house of the LORD.

They stood at their prescribed posts, according to the Law of Moses the man of God. The priests splattered the blood, which they received from the hand of the Levites. Since there were many in the assembly who had not consecrated themselves, the Levites were in charge of slaughtering the Passover lambs for every unclean person to consecrate the lambs to the LORD.

A large number of the people— many from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun— had not purified themselves, yet they ate the Passover, contrary to what was written. But Hezekiah interceded for them, saying, “May the LORD, who is good, provide atonement for everyone who sets his heart on seeking God — the LORD, the God of his fathers — even if he is not cleansed according to the purification rules of the sanctuary.”

And the LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people. The Israelites who were present in Jerusalem celebrated the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with great joy, and the Levites and priests praised the LORD day after day, accompanied by loud instruments of praise to the LORD. And Hezekiah encouraged all the Levites who performed skillfully before the LORD. For seven days they ate their assigned portion, sacrificing peace offerings and giving thanks to the LORD, the God of their fathers.

The whole assembly agreed to observe seven more days, so they observed seven days with joy. For Hezekiah king of Judah contributed a thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep for the assembly, and the officials contributed a thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep for the assembly, and a great number of priests consecrated themselves.

Then the whole assembly of Judah rejoiced along with the priests and Levites and the whole assembly that had come from Israel, including the foreigners who had come from Israel and those who lived in Judah. So there was great rejoicing in Jerusalem, for nothing like this had happened there since the days of Solomon son of David king of Israel.

Then the priests and the Levites stood to bless the people, and God heard their voice, and their prayer came into His holy dwelling place in heaven.

When all this had ended, the Israelites in attendance went out to the cities of Judah and broke up the sacred pillars, chopped down the Asherah poles, and tore down the high places and altars throughout Judah and Benjamin, as well as in Ephraim and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the

Israelites returned to their cities, each to his own property.

Hezekiah reestablished the divisions of the priests and Levites — each of them according to their duties as priests or Levites — for the burnt offerings and peace offerings, for ministry, for giving thanks, and for singing praises at the gates of the LORD's dwelling.

The king contributed from his own possessions for the regular morning and evening burnt offerings and for the burnt offerings on the Sabbaths, New Moons, and appointed feasts, as written in the Law of the LORD. Moreover, he commanded the people living in Jerusalem to make a contribution for the priests and Levites so that they could devote themselves to the Law of the LORD.

As soon as the order went out, the Israelites generously provided the firstfruits of the grain, new wine, oil, and honey, and of all the produce of the field, and they brought in an abundance — a tithe of everything. And the Israelites and Judahites who lived in the cities of Judah also brought a tithe of their herds and flocks and a tithe of the holy things consecrated to the LORD their God, and they laid them in large heaps.

In the third month they began building up the heaps, and they finished in the seventh month. When Hezekiah and his officials came and viewed the heaps, they blessed the LORD and His people Israel.

Then Hezekiah questioned the priests and Levites about the heaps, and Azariah, the chief priest of the household of Zadok, answered him, "Since the people began to bring their contributions into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat, and there is plenty left over, because the LORD has blessed His people; this great abundance is what is left over."

Then Hezekiah commanded them to prepare storerooms in the house of the LORD, and they did so. And they faithfully brought in the contributions, tithes, and dedicated gifts. Conaniah the Levite was the officer in charge of them, and his brother Shimei was second. Jehiel, Azaziah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismachiah, Mahath, and Benaiah were overseers under the authority of Conaniah and his brother Shimei, by appointment of King Hezekiah and of Azariah the chief official of the house of God.

Kore son of Imnah the Levite, the keeper of the East Gate, was in charge of the freewill offerings given to God, distributing the contributions to the LORD and the consecrated gifts. Under his authority, Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah faithfully distributed portions to their fellow priests in their cities, according to their divisions, old and young alike.

In addition, they distributed portions to the males registered by genealogy who were three years of age or older — to all who would enter the house of the LORD for their daily duties for service in the responsibilities of their divisions — and to the priests enrolled according to their families in the genealogy, as well as to the Levites twenty years of age or older, according to their responsibilities and divisions. The genealogy included all the little ones, wives, sons, and daughters of the whole assembly. For they had faithfully consecrated themselves as holy.

As for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who lived on the farmlands around each of their cities or in any other city, men were designated by name to distribute a portion to every male among the priests and to every Levite listed by the genealogies.

So this is what Hezekiah did throughout Judah. He did what was good and upright and true before the LORD his God. He acted with all his heart in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law and the commandments, in order to seek his God. And so he prospered.

After all these acts of faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah. He laid siege to the fortified cities, intending to conquer them for himself.

When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come to make war against Jerusalem, he consulted with his leaders and mighty men about stopping up the waters of the springs outside the city, and they helped him carry it out. Many people assembled and stopped up all the springs and the stream that flowed through the land. "Why should the kings of Assyria come and find plenty of water?" they said.

Then Hezekiah worked resolutely to rebuild all the broken sections of the wall and to raise up towers on it. He also built an outer wall and reinforced the supporting terraces of the City of David, and he produced an abundance of weapons and shields.

Hezekiah appointed military commanders over the people and gathered the people in the square of the city gate. Then he encouraged them, saying, "Be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged before the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater One with us than with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles."

So the people were strengthened by the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

Later, as Sennacherib king of Assyria and all his forces besieged Lachish, he sent his servants to Jerusalem with a message for King Hezekiah of Judah and all the people of Judah who were in Jerusalem: "This is what Sennacherib king of Assyria says: What is the basis of your confidence, that you remain in Jerusalem under siege? Is not Hezekiah misleading you to give you over to death by famine and thirst when he says, 'The LORD our God will deliver us from the hand of the king of Assyria?' Did not Hezekiah himself remove His high places and His altars and say to Judah and Jerusalem, 'You must worship before one altar, and on it you shall burn sacrifices'?

Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of the lands? Have the gods of these nations ever been able to deliver their land from my hand? Who among all the gods of these nations that my fathers devoted to destruction has been able to deliver his people from my hand? How then can your God deliver you from my hand?

So now, do not let Hezekiah deceive you, and do not let him mislead you like this. Do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to deliver his people from my hand or from the hand of

my fathers. How much less will your God deliver you from my hand!"

And the servants of Sennacherib spoke further against the LORD God and against His servant Hezekiah. He also wrote letters mocking the LORD, the God of Israel, and saying against Him: "Just as the gods of the nations did not deliver their people from my hand, so the God of Hezekiah will not deliver His people from my hand."

Then the Assyrians called out loudly in Hebrew to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall, to frighten and terrify them in order to capture the city. They spoke against the God of Jerusalem as they had spoken against the gods of the peoples of the earth — the work of human hands.

In response, King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz cried out to heaven in prayer, and the LORD sent an angel who annihilated every mighty man of valor and every leader and commander in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he withdrew to his own land in disgrace. And when he entered the temple of his god, some of his own sons struck him down with the sword.

So the LORD saved Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem from the hands of King Sennacherib of Assyria and all others, and He gave them rest on every side. Many brought offerings to Jerusalem for the LORD and valuable gifts for Hezekiah king of Judah, and from then on he was exalted in the eyes of all nations.

In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. So he prayed to the LORD, who spoke to him and gave him a sign. But because his heart was proud, Hezekiah did not repay the favor shown to him. Therefore wrath came upon him and upon Judah and Jerusalem.

Then Hezekiah humbled the pride of his heart— he and the people of Jerusalem— so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them during the days of Hezekiah.

Hezekiah had very great riches and honor, and he made treasuries for his silver, gold, precious stones, spices, shields, and all kinds of valuable articles. He also made storehouses for the harvest of grain and new wine and oil, stalls for all kinds of livestock, and pens for the flocks. He made cities for himself, and he acquired herds of sheep and cattle in abundance, for God gave him very great wealth.

It was Hezekiah who blocked the upper outlet of the Spring of Gihon and channeled it down to the west side of the City of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all that he did. And so when ambassadors of the rulers of Babylon were sent to him to inquire about the wonder that had happened in the land, God left him alone to test him, that He might know all that was in Hezekiah's heart.

As for the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and his deeds of loving devotion, they are indeed written in the vision of the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. And Hezekiah rested with his fathers and was buried in the upper tombs of David's descendants. All Judah and the people of Jerusalem paid him honor at his death. And his son Manasseh reigned in his place.

Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD by following the abominations of the nations that the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had torn down, and he raised up altars for the Baals and made Asherah poles. And he worshiped and served all the host of heaven.

Manasseh also built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "My Name will remain in Jerusalem forever." In both courtyards of the house of the LORD, he built altars to all the host of heaven. He sacrificed his sons in the fire in the Valley of Ben-hinnom. He practiced sorcery, divination, and witchcraft, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did great evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger.

Manasseh even took the carved image he had made and set it up in the house of God, of which God had said to David and his son Solomon, "In this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will establish My Name forever. I will never again cause the feet of the Israelites to leave the land that I assigned to your fathers, if only they are careful to do all that I have commanded them through Moses — all the laws, statutes, and judgments."

So Manasseh led the people of Judah and Jerusalem astray, so that they did greater evil than the nations that the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites.

And the LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they did not listen. So the LORD brought against them the military commanders of the king of Assyria, who captured Manasseh, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles, and took him to Babylon. And in his distress, Manasseh sought the favor of the LORD his God and earnestly humbled himself before the God of his fathers. And when he prayed to Him, the LORD received his plea and heard his petition. So He brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God.

After this, Manasseh rebuilt the outer wall of the City of David from west of Gihon in the valley to the entrance of the Fish Gate, and he brought it around the hill of Ophel and heightened it considerably. He also stationed military commanders in all the fortified cities of Judah.

He removed the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the LORD, along with all the altars he had built on the temple mount and in Jerusalem, and he dumped them outside the city. Then he restored the altar of the LORD and sacrificed peace offerings and thank offerings on it, and he told Judah to serve the LORD, the God of Israel. Nevertheless, the people still sacrificed at the high places, but only to the LORD their God.

As for the rest of the acts of Manasseh, along with his prayer to his God and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, they are indeed written in the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. His prayer and how God received his plea, as well as all his sin and unfaithfulness, and the sites where he built high places and set up Asherah poles and idols before he humbled himself, they are indeed written in the Records of the Seers. And Manasseh rested with his fathers and was buried at his palace. And his son Amon reigned in his place.

Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem two years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done.

Amon served and sacrificed to all the idols that his father Manasseh had made, but he did not humble himself before the LORD as his father Manasseh had done; instead, Amon increased his guilt.

Then the servants of Amon conspired against him and killed him in his palace. But the people of the land killed all those who had conspired against King Amon, and they made his son Josiah king in his place.

Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right or to the left.

In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, Josiah began to seek the God of his father David, and in the twelfth year he began to cleanse Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherah poles, the carved idols, and the cast images. Then in his presence the altars of the Baals were torn down, and he cut to pieces the incense altars that were above them. He shattered the Asherah poles, the carved idols, and the cast images, crushed them to dust, and scattered them over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. Then he burned the bones of the priests on their altars. So he cleansed Judah and Jerusalem.

Josiah did the same in the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, as far as Naphtali, and in the ruins around them. He tore down the altars and Asherah poles, crushed the idols to powder, and cut to pieces all the incense altars throughout the land of Israel. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, in order to cleanse the land and the temple, Josiah sent Shaphan son of Azaliah, Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah son of Joahaz, the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God.

So they went to Hilkiah the high priest and gave him the money that had been brought into the house of God, which the Levites who guarded the doors had collected from the people of Manasseh and Ephraim, from all the remnant of Israel, from all Judah and Benjamin, and from the people of Jerusalem. They put it into the hands of those supervising the work in the house of the LORD, who in turn gave it to the workmen restoring and repairing the house of the LORD. They also gave money to the carpenters and builders to buy dressed stone, as well as timbers for couplings and beams for the buildings that the kings of Judah had allowed to deteriorate.

And the men did the work faithfully. The Levites overseeing them were Jahath and Obadiah, descendants of Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam, descendants of Kohath. Other Levites, all skilled with musical instruments, were over the laborers and supervised all who did the work, task by task. Some of the Levites were secretaries, officers, and gatekeepers.

While they were bringing out the money that had been taken into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the LORD given by Moses. And Hilkiah said to Shaphan the scribe, “I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD!” And he gave it to Shaphan.

Then Shaphan brought the book to the king and reported, “Your servants are doing all that has been placed in their hands. They have paid out the money that was found in the house of the LORD and have put it into the hands of the supervisors and workers.”

Moreover, Shaphan the scribe told the king, “Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read it in the presence of the king.

When the king heard the words of the Law, he tore his clothes and commanded Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Abdon son of Micah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the servant of the king: “Go and inquire of the LORD for me and for those remaining in Israel and Judah concerning the words in the book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the LORD that has been poured out on us because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD by doing all that is written in this book.”

So Hilkiah and those the king had designated went and spoke to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah, the keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the Second District.

And Huldah said to them, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Tell the man who sent you that this is what the LORD says: I am about to bring calamity on this place and on its people, according to all the curses written in the book that has been read in the presence of the king of Judah, because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. My wrath will be poured out upon this place and will not be quenched.’

But as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, tell him that this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘As for the words that you heard, because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its people, and because you have humbled yourself before Me and have torn your clothes and wept before Me, I have heard you,’ declares the LORD.

‘Now I will indeed gather you to your fathers, and you will be gathered to your grave in peace. Your eyes will not see all the calamity that I will bring on this place and on its people.’”

So they brought her answer back to the king.

Then the king summoned all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And he went up to the house of the LORD with all the people of Judah and Jerusalem, as well as the priests and the Levites— all the people great and small— and in their hearing he read all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD.

So the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD to follow the LORD and to keep His commandments, decrees, and statutes with all his heart and all his soul, and to carry out the words of the covenant that were written in this book.

Then he had everyone in Jerusalem and Benjamin take a stand in agreement to it. So all the people of

Jerusalem carried out the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.

And Josiah removed all the abominations from all the lands belonging to the Israelites, and he required everyone in Israel to serve the LORD their God. Throughout his reign they did not turn aside from following the LORD, the God of their fathers.

Then Josiah kept the Passover to the LORD in Jerusalem, and the Passover lamb was slaughtered on the fourteenth day of the first month. He appointed the priests to their duties and encouraged them in the service of the house of the LORD.

To the Levites who taught all Israel and were holy to the LORD, Josiah said: "Put the holy ark in the temple built by Solomon son of David king of Israel. It is not to be carried around on your shoulders. Now serve the LORD your God and His people Israel. Prepare yourselves by families in your divisions, according to the instructions written by David king of Israel and Solomon his son.

Moreover, stand in the Holy Place by the divisions of the families of your kinsmen the lay people, and by the divisions of the families of the Levites. Slaughter the Passover lambs, consecrate yourselves, and make preparations for your fellow countrymen to carry out the word of the LORD given by Moses."

From his own flocks and herds Josiah contributed 30,000 lambs and goats plus 3,000 bulls for the Passover offerings for all the people who were present.

His officials also contributed willingly to the people and priests and Levites. Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, the chief officials of the house of God, gave the priests 2,600 Passover offerings and 300 bulls. Additionally, Conaniah and his brothers Shemaiah and Nethanel, as well as Hashabiah, Jeiel, and Jozabad, officers of the Levites, contributed to the Levites 5,000 Passover offerings and 500 bulls.

So the service was prepared; the priests stood in their places and the Levites in their divisions according to the king's command. And they slaughtered the Passover lambs, while the priests splattered the blood handed to them and the Levites skinned the animals. They set aside the burnt offerings to be given to the divisions of the families of the people to offer to the LORD, as it is written in the Book of Moses. And they did the same with the bulls.

They roasted the Passover animals on the fire according to the regulation, and they boiled the other holy offerings in pots, kettles, and bowls and quickly brought them to all the people. Afterward, they made preparations for themselves and for the priests, since the priests, the descendants of Aaron, were offering up burnt offerings and fat until nightfall. So the Levites made preparations for themselves and for the priests, the descendants of Aaron.

The singers, the descendants of Asaph, were at their stations according to the command of David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun the king's seer. And the gatekeepers at each gate did not need to leave their posts, because their fellow Levites made preparations for them.

So on that day the entire service of the LORD was carried out for celebrating the Passover and offering burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD, according to the command of King Josiah. The Israelites who were present also observed the Passover at that time, as well as the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days. No such Passover had been observed in Israel since the days of Samuel the prophet. None of the kings of Israel ever observed a Passover like the one that Josiah observed with the priests, the Levites, all Judah, the Israelites who were present, and the people of Jerusalem. In the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, this Passover was observed.

After all this, when Josiah had set the temple in order, Neco king of Egypt marched up to fight at Carchemish by the Euphrates, and Josiah went out to confront him. But Neco sent messengers to him, saying, "What is the issue between you and me, O king of Judah? I have not come against you today, but I am fighting another dynasty, and God has told me to hurry. So stop opposing God, who is with me, or He will destroy you!"

Josiah, however, did not turn away from him; instead, in order to engage him in battle, he disguised himself. He did not listen to Neco's words from the mouth of God, but went to fight him on the Plain of Megiddo. There the archers shot King Josiah, who said to his servants, "Take me away, for I am badly wounded!"

So his servants took him out of his chariot, put him in his second chariot, and brought him to Jerusalem, where he died. And Josiah was buried in the tomb of his fathers, and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him.

Then Jeremiah lamented over Josiah, and to this day all the male and female singers recite laments over Josiah. They established them as a statute for Israel, and indeed they are written in the Book of Laments.

As for the rest of the acts of Josiah and his deeds of loving devotion according to what is written in the Law of the LORD— his acts from beginning to end— they are indeed written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz son of Josiah and made him king in Jerusalem in place of his father.

Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. And the king of Egypt dethroned him in Jerusalem and imposed on Judah a levy of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold.

Then Neco king of Egypt made Eliakim brother of Jehoahaz king over Judah and Jerusalem, and he changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. But Neco took Eliakim's brother Jehoahaz and carried him off to Egypt.

Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD his God.

Then Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jehoiakim and bound him with bronze shackles to take him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also took to Babylon some of the articles from the house of the LORD, and he put them in his temple in Babylon.

As for the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, the abominations he committed, and all that was found against him, they are indeed written in the Book of the Kings

of Israel and Judah. And his son Jehoiachin reigned in his place.

Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months and ten days. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD.

In the spring, King Nebuchadnezzar summoned Jehoiachin and brought him to Babylon, along with the articles of value from the house of the LORD. And he made Jehoiachin's relative Zedekiah king over Judah and Jerusalem.

Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD his God and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke for the LORD.

He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God. But Zedekiah stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD, the God of Israel. Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and the people multiplied their unfaithful deeds, following all the abominations of the nations, and they defiled the house of the LORD, which He had consecrated in Jerusalem.

Again and again the LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to His people through His messengers because He had compassion on them and on His dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despising His words and scoffing at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD against His people was stirred up beyond remedy.

So He brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who put their young men to the sword in the sanctuary, sparing neither young men nor young women, neither elderly nor infirm. God gave them all into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, who carried off everything to Babylon— all the articles of the house of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the king and his officials. Then the Chaldeans set fire to the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem. They burned down all the palaces and destroyed every article of value.

Those who escaped the sword were carried by Nebuchadnezzar into exile in Babylon, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power.

So the land enjoyed its Sabbath rest all the days of the desolation, until seventy years were completed, in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken through Jeremiah.

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken through Jeremiah, the LORD stirred the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia to send a proclamation throughout his kingdom and to put it in writing as follows:

"This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:
'The LORD, the God of heaven, who has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, has appointed me to build a house for Him at Jerusalem in Judah.
Whoever among you belongs to His people, may the LORD his God be with him, and may he go up.'"

Ezra

Book of Ezra

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken through Jeremiah, the LORD stirred the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia to send a proclamation throughout his kingdom and to put it in writing as follows:
"This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:
'The LORD, the God of heaven, who has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, has appointed me to build a house for Him at Jerusalem in Judah.
Whoever among you belongs to His people, may his God be with him, and may he go to Jerusalem in Judah and build the house of the LORD, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem. And let every survivor, wherever he lives, be assisted by the men of that region with silver, gold, goods, and livestock, along with a freewill offering for the house of God in Jerusalem.'"

So the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, along with the priests and Levites— everyone whose spirit God had stirred— prepared to go up and rebuild the house of the LORD in Jerusalem.

And all their neighbors supported them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with valuables, in addition to all their freewill offerings.

King Cyrus also brought out the articles belonging to the house of the LORD that Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and placed in the temple of his gods. Cyrus king of Persia had them brought out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. This was the inventory:

30 gold dishes,
1,000 silver dishes,
29 silver utensils,
30 gold bowls,
410 matching silver bowls,
and 1,000 other articles.

In all, there were 5,400 gold and silver articles. Sheshbazzar brought all these along when the exiles went up from Babylon to Jerusalem.

Now these are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles carried away to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar its king. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town, accompanied by Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah.

This is the count of the men of Israel:
the descendants of Parosh, 2,172;
the descendants of Shephatiah, 372;
the descendants of Arah, 775;
the descendants of Pahath-moab (through the line of Jeshua and Joab), 2,812;
the descendants of Elam, 1,254;
the descendants of Zattu, 945;
the descendants of Zaccai, 760;
the descendants of Bani, 642;
the descendants of Bebai, 623;
the descendants of Azgad, 1,222;
the descendants of Adonikam, 666;
the descendants of Bigvai, 2,056;
the descendants of Adin, 454;
the descendants of Ater (through Hezekiah), 98;
the descendants of Bezai, 323;
the descendants of Jorah, 112;
the descendants of Hashum, 223;
the descendants of Gibbar, 95;
the men of Bethlehem, 123;
the men of Netophah, 56;
the men of Anathoth, 128;
the descendants of Azmaveth, 42;
the men of Kiriath-jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, 743;
the men of Ramah and Geba, 621;
the men of Michmash, 122;
the men of Bethel and Ai, 223;
the descendants of Nebo, 52;
the descendants of Magbish, 156;
the descendants of the other Elam, 1,254;
the descendants of Harim, 320;
the men of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, 725;
the men of Jericho, 345;
and the descendants of Senaah, 3,630.
The priests:
The descendants of Jedaiah (through the house of Jeshua), 973;
the descendants of Immer, 1,052;
the descendants of Pashhur, 1,247;
and the descendants of Harim, 1,017.
The Levites:
the descendants of Jeshua and Kadmiel (through the line of Hodaviah), 74.
The singers:
the descendants of Asaph, 128.
The gatekeepers:
the descendants of Shallum,
the descendants of Ater,
the descendants of Talmon,
the descendants of Akkub,
the descendants of Hatita,
and the descendants of Shobai,
139 in all.
The temple servants:
the descendants of Ziha,
the descendants of Hasupha,
the descendants of Tabbaoth,
the descendants of Keros,
the descendants of Siaha,
the descendants of Padon,
the descendants of Lebanah,
the descendants of Hagabah,
the descendants of Akkub,
the descendants of Hagab,
the descendants of Shalmai,
the descendants of Hanan,
the descendants of Giddel,
the descendants of Gahar,
the descendants of Reaiah,
the descendants of Rezin,
the descendants of Nekoda,
the descendants of Gazzam,
the descendants of Uzza,
the descendants of Paseah,
the descendants of Besai,
the descendants of Asnah,

the descendants of Meunim,
the descendants of Nephusim,
the descendants of Bakbuk,
the descendants of Hakupha,
the descendants of Harhur,
the descendants of Bazluth,
the descendants of Mehida,
the descendants of Harsha,
the descendants of Barkos,
the descendants of Sisera,
the descendants of Temah,
the descendants of Neziah,
and the descendants of Hatipha.
The descendants of the servants of Solomon:
the descendants of Sotai,
the descendants of Hassophereth,
the descendants of Peruda,
the descendants of Jaala,
the descendants of Darkon,
the descendants of Giddel,
the descendants of Shephatiah,
the descendants of Hattil,
the descendants of Pochereth-hazzebaim,
and the descendants of Ami.
The temple servants and descendants of the servants of Solomon numbered 392 in all.
The following came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan, and Immer, but they could not prove that their families were descended from Israel:
the descendants of Delaiah,
the descendants of Tobiah,
and the descendants of Nekoda,
652 in all.
And from among the priests: the descendants of Hobaiah,
the descendants of Hakkoz,
and the descendants of Barzillai (who had married a daughter of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by their name).
These men searched for their family records, but they could not find them and so were excluded from the priesthood as unclean. The governor ordered them not to eat the most holy things until there was a priest to consult the Urim and Thummim.
The whole assembly numbered 42,360, in addition to their 7,337 menservants and maidservants, as well as their 200 male and female singers. They had 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys.
When they arrived at the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, some of the heads of the families gave freewill offerings to rebuild the house of God on its original site. According to their ability, they gave to the treasury for this work 61,000 darics of gold, 5,000 minas of silver, and 100 priestly garments.
So the priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants, along with some of the people, settled in their own towns; and the rest of the Israelites settled in their towns.
By the seventh month, the Israelites had settled in their towns, and the people assembled as one man in Jerusalem.
Then Jeshua son of Jozadak and his fellow priests, along with Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his associates, began to build the altar of the God of Israel to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God. They set up the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the LORD — both the morning and evening burnt offerings — even though they feared the people of the land.
They also celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in accordance with what is written, and they offered burnt offerings daily based on the number prescribed for each day.
After that, they presented the regular burnt offerings and those for New Moons and for all the appointed sacred feasts of the LORD, as well as all the freewill offerings brought to the LORD.
On the first day of the seventh month, the Israelites began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, although the foundation of the temple of the LORD had not been laid. They gave money to the masons and carpenters, and food and drink and oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre to bring cedar logs from Lebanon to Joppa by sea, as authorized by Cyrus king of Persia.
In the second month of the second year after they had arrived at the house of God in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Jeshua son of Jozadak, and the rest of their associates including the priests, the Levites, and all who had returned to Jerusalem from the captivity, began the work. They appointed Levites twenty years of age or older to supervise the construction of the house of the LORD. So Jeshua and his sons and brothers, Kadmiel and his sons (descendants of Yehudah), and the sons of Henadad and their sons and brothers — all Levites — joined together to supervise those working on the house of God.
When the builders had laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their positions to praise the LORD, as David king of Israel had prescribed. And they sang responsively with praise and thanksgiving to the LORD:
"For He is good; for His loving devotion to Israel endures forever."
Then all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD had been laid.
But many of the older priests, Levites, and family heads who had seen the first temple wept loudly when they saw the foundation of this temple. Still, many others shouted joyfully. The people could not distinguish the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people were making so much noise. And the sound was heard from afar.
When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the LORD, the God of Israel, they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of the families, saying, "Let us build with you because, like you, we seek your God and have been sacrificing to Him since the time of King Esar-haddon of Assyria, who brought us here."
But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the other heads of the families of Israel replied, "You have no part with us in building a house for our God, since we alone must build it for the LORD, the God of Israel, as Cyrus king of Persia has commanded us."

Then the people of the land set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to build. They hired counselors against them to frustrate their plans throughout the reign of Cyrus king of Persia and down to the reign of Darius king of Persia.

At the beginning of the reign of Xerxes, an accusation was lodged against the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

And in the days of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of his associates wrote a letter to Artaxerxes. It was written in Aramaic and then translated.

Rehum the commander and Shimshai the scribe wrote the letter against Jerusalem to King Artaxerxes as follows:

From Rehum the commander, Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their associates— the judges and officials over Tripolis, Persia, Erech and Babylon, the Elamites of Susa, and the rest of the peoples whom the great and honorable Ashurbanipal deported and settled in the cities of Samaria and elsewhere west of the Euphrates.
(This is the text of the letter they sent to him.)

To King Artaxerxes,

From your servants, the men west of the Euphrates:

Let it be known to the king that the Jews who came from you to us have returned to Jerusalem and are rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city. They are restoring its walls and repairing its foundations.

Let it now be known to the king that if that city is rebuilt and its walls are restored, they will not pay tribute, duty, or toll, and the royal treasury will suffer.

Now because we are in the service of the palace and it is not fitting for us to allow the king to be dishonored, we have sent to inform the king that a search should be made of the record books of your fathers. In these books you will discover and verify that the city is a rebellious city, harmful to kings and provinces, inciting sedition from ancient times. That is why this city was destroyed.

We advise the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls are restored, you will have no dominion west of the Euphrates.

Then the king sent this reply:

To Rehum the commander, Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of your associates living in Samaria and elsewhere in the region west of the Euphrates:

Greetings.

The letter you sent us has been translated and read in my presence. I issued a decree, and a search was conducted. It was discovered that this city has revolted against kings from ancient times, engaging in rebellion and sedition. And mighty kings have ruled over Jerusalem and exercised authority over the whole region west of the Euphrates; and tribute, duty, and toll were paid to them.

Now, therefore, issue an order for these men to stop, so that this city will not be rebuilt until I so order. See that you do not neglect this matter. Why allow this threat to increase and the royal interests to suffer?

When the text of the letter from King Artaxerxes was read to Rehum, Shimshai the scribe, and their associates, they went immediately to the Jews in Jerusalem and forcibly stopped them.

Thus the construction of the house of God in Jerusalem ceased, and it remained at a standstill until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Later, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them. Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak rose up and began to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem. And the prophets of God were with them, helping them.

At that time Tattenai the governor of the region west of the Euphrates, Shethar-bozenai, and their associates went to the Jews and asked, “Who authorized you to rebuild this temple and restore this structure?”

They also asked, “What are the names of the men who are constructing this building?”

But the eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews, so that they were not stopped until a report was sent to Darius and written instructions about this matter were returned.

This is the text of the letter that Tattenai the governor of the region west of the Euphrates, Shethar-bozenai, and their associates, the officials in the region, sent to King Darius. The report they sent him read as follows:

To King Darius:

All peace.

Let it be known to the king that we went into the province of Judah, to the house of the great God. The people are rebuilding it with large stones and placing timbers in the walls. This work is being carried out diligently and is prospering in their hands.

So we questioned the elders and asked, “Who authorized you to rebuild this temple and restore this structure?”

We also asked for their names, so that we could write down the names of their leaders for your information.

And this is the answer they returned:

“We are servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the temple that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and completed. But since our fathers angered the God of heaven, He delivered them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean who destroyed this temple and carried away the people to Babylon.

In the first year of his reign, however, Cyrus king of Babylon issued a decree to rebuild this house of God. He also removed from the temple of Babylon the gold and silver articles belonging to the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken and carried there from the temple in Jerusalem. King Cyrus gave these articles to a man named Sheshbazzar, whom he appointed governor and instructed, ‘Take these articles, put them in the temple in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt on its original site.’

So this Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundation of the house of God in Jerusalem, and from that time until now it has been under construction, but it has not yet been completed.”

Now, therefore, if it pleases the king, let a search be made of the royal archives in Babylon to see if King Cyrus did indeed issue a decree to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem. Then let the king send us his decision in this matter.

Thus King Darius ordered a search of the archives stored in the treasury of Babylon. And a scroll was found in the fortress of Ecbatana, in the province of Media, with the following written on it:
Memorandum:
In the first year of King Cyrus, he issued a decree concerning the house of God in Jerusalem:
Let the house be rebuilt as a place for offering sacrifices, and let its foundations be firmly laid. It is to be sixty cubits high and sixty cubits wide, with three layers of cut stones and one of timbers. The costs are to be paid from the royal treasury.
Furthermore, the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and carried to Babylon, must also be returned to the temple in Jerusalem and deposited in the house of God.

Therefore Darius decreed:
To Tattenai governor of the region west of the Euphrates, Shethar-bozenai, and your associates and officials in the region:
You must stay away from that place! Leave this work on the house of God alone. Let the governor and elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its original site.
I hereby decree what you must do for these elders of the Jews who are rebuilding this house of God:
The cost is to be paid in full to these men from the royal treasury out of the taxes of the provinces west of the Euphrates, so that the work will not be hindered. Whatever is needed— young bulls, rams, and lambs for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, as well as wheat, salt, wine, and oil, as requested by the priests in Jerusalem — must be given to them daily without fail. Then they will be able to offer sacrifices of a sweet aroma to the God of heaven and to pray for the lives of the king and his sons.
I also decree that if any man interferes with this directive, a beam is to be torn from his house and raised up, and he is to be impaled on it. And his own house shall be made a pile of rubble for this offense. May God, who has caused His Name to dwell there, overthrow any king or people who lifts a hand to alter this decree or to destroy this house of God in Jerusalem.
I, Darius, have issued the decree. Let it be carried out with diligence.

In response, Tattenai the governor of the region west of the Euphrates, Shethar-bozenai, and their associates diligently carried out what King Darius had decreed. So the Jewish elders built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah son of Iddo.

They finished building according to the command of the God of Israel and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia. And this temple was completed on the third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

Then the people of Israel — the priests, the Levites, and the rest of the exiles — celebrated the dedication of the house of God with joy.

For the dedication of the house of God they offered a hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and a sin offering for all Israel of twelve male goats, one for each tribe of Israel.

They also appointed the priests by their divisions and the Levites by their groups to the service of God in Jerusalem, according to what is written in the Book of Moses.

On the fourteenth day of the first month, the exiles kept the Passover. All the priests and Levites had purified themselves and were ceremonially clean.

And the Levites slaughtered the Passover lamb for all the exiles, for their priestly brothers, and for themselves. The Israelites who had returned from exile ate it, together with all who had separated themselves from the uncleanness of the peoples of the land to seek the LORD, the God of Israel.

For seven days they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread with joy, because the LORD had made them joyful and turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them to strengthen their hands in the work on the house of the God of Israel.

Many years later, during the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah, the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth, the son of Zerahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest— this Ezra came up from Babylon. He was a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses, which the LORD, the God of Israel, had given.

The king had granted Ezra all his requests, for the hand of the LORD his God was upon him. So in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes, he went up to Jerusalem with some of the Israelites, including priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, and temple servants.

Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in the fifth month of the seventh year of the king. He had begun the journey from Babylon on the first day of the first month, and he arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month, for the gracious hand of his God was upon him. For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, to practice it, and to teach its statutes and ordinances in Israel.

This is the text of the letter King Artaxerxes had given to Ezra the priest and scribe, an expert in the commandments and statutes of the LORD to Israel:
Artaxerxes, king of kings.
To Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven:
Greetings.
I hereby decree that any volunteers among the Israelites in my kingdom, including the priests and Levites, may go up with you to Jerusalem. You are sent by the king and his seven counselors to evaluate Judah and Jerusalem according to the Law of your God, which is in your hand.
Moreover, you are to take with you the silver and gold that the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem, together with all the silver and gold you may find in all the province of Babylon, as well as the freewill offerings of the people and priests to the house of their God in Jerusalem. With this money, therefore, you are to buy as many bulls, rams, and lambs as needed, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings, and offer

them on the altar at the house of your God in Jerusalem.
You and your brothers may do whatever seems best with the rest of the silver and gold, according to the will of your God.
You must deliver to the God of Jerusalem all the articles given to you for the service of the house of your God.
And if anything else is needed for the house of your God that you may have occasion to supply, you may pay for it from the royal treasury.
I, King Artaxerxes, decree to all the treasurers west of the Euphrates: Whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, may require of you, it must be provided promptly, up to a hundred talents of silver, a hundred cors of wheat, a hundred baths of wine, a hundred baths of olive oil, and salt without limit. Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven must be done diligently for His house. For why should wrath fall on the realm of the king and his sons? And be advised that you have no authority to impose tribute, duty, or toll on any of the priests, Levites, singers, doorkeepers, temple servants, or other servants of this house of God.
And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God, which you possess, are to appoint magistrates and judges to judge all the people west of the Euphrates — all who know the laws of your God. And you are to teach these laws to anyone who does not know them. If anyone does not keep the law of your God and the law of the king, let a strict judgment be executed against him, whether death, banishment, confiscation of property, or imprisonment.

Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, who has put into the heart of the king to so honor the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, and who has shown me favor before the king, his counselors, and all his powerful officials.

And because the hand of the LORD my God was upon me, I took courage and gathered the leaders of Israel to return with me.

These are the family heads and genealogical records of those who returned with me from Babylon during the reign of King Artaxerxes:

from the descendants of Phinehas, Gershom;
from the descendants of Ithamar, Daniel;
from the descendants of David, Hattush of the descendants of Shecaniah;
from the descendants of Parosh, Zechariah, and with him were registered 150 men;
from the descendants of Pahath-Moab, Eliehoenai son of Zerahiah, and with him 200 men;
from the descendants of Zattu, Shecaniah son of Jahaziel, and with him 300 men;
from the descendants of Adin, Ebed son of Jonathan, and with him 50 men;
from the descendants of Elam, Jeshaiah son of Athaliah, and with him 70 men;
from the descendants of Shephatiah, Zebadiah son of Michael, and with him 80 men;
from the descendants of Joab, Obadiah son of Jehiel, and with him 218 men;
from the descendants of Bani, Shelomith son of Josiphiah, and with him 160 men;
from the descendants of Bebai, Zechariah son of Bebai, and with him 28 men;
from the descendants of Azgad, Johanan son of Hakkatan, and with him 110 men;
from the later descendants of Adonikam, these were their names: Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and with them 60 men;
and from the descendants of Bigvai, both Uthai and Zaccur, and with them 70 men.

Now I assembled these exiles at the canal that flows to Ahava, and we camped there three days. And when I searched among the people and priests, I found no Levites there.

Then I summoned the leaders: Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, as well as the teachers Joiarib and Elnathan. And I sent them to Iddo, the leader at Casiphia, with a message for him and his kinsmen, the temple servants at Casiphia, that they should bring to us ministers for the house of our God.

And since the gracious hand of our God was upon us, they brought us Sherebiah— a man of insight from the descendants of Mahli son of Levi, the son of Israel — along with his sons and brothers, 18 men; also Hashabiah, together with Jeshaiah, from the descendants of Merari, and his brothers and their sons, 20 men. They also brought 220 of the temple servants, all designated by name. David and the officials had appointed them to assist the Levites.

And there by the Ahava Canal I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask Him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions. For I was ashamed to ask the king for an escort of soldiers and horsemen to protect us from our enemies on the road, since we had told him, “The hand of our God is gracious to all who seek Him, but His great anger is against all who forsake Him.”

So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and He granted our request.

Then I set apart twelve of the leading priests, together with Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brothers, and I weighed out to them the contribution of silver and gold and the articles that the king, his counselors, his leaders, and all the Israelites there had offered for the house of our God.

I weighed out into their hands 650 talents of silver, articles of silver weighing 100 talents, 100 talents of gold, 20 gold bowls valued at 1,000 darics, and two articles of fine polished bronze, as precious as gold.

Then I told them, “You are holy to the LORD, and these articles are holy. The silver and gold are a freewill offering to the LORD, the God of your fathers. Guard them carefully until you weigh them out in the chambers of the house of the LORD in Jerusalem before the leading priests, Levites, and heads of the Israelite families.”

So the priests and Levites took charge of the silver and gold and sacred articles that had been weighed out to be taken to the house of our God in Jerusalem.

On the twelfth day of the first month we set out from the Ahava Canal to go to Jerusalem, and the hand of our God was upon us to protect us from the hands of the enemies and bandits along the way.

So we arrived at Jerusalem and rested there for three days.

On the fourth day, in the house of our God, we weighed out the silver and gold and sacred articles into the hand of Meremoth son of Uriah, the priest. Eleazar son of Phinehas was with him, along with the Levites Jozabad son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of Binnui. Everything was verified by number and weight, and the total weight was recorded at that time.

Then the exiles who had returned from captivity sacrificed burnt offerings to the God of Israel: 12 bulls for all Israel, 96 rams, 77 lambs, and a sin offering of 12 male goats. All this was a burnt offering to the LORD.

They also delivered the king's edicts to the royal satraps and governors of the region west of the Euphrates, who proceeded to assist the people and the house of God.

After these things had been accomplished, the leaders approached me and said, "The people of Israel, including the priests and Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the surrounding peoples whose abominations are like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Amorites. Indeed, the Israelites have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, so that the holy seed has been mixed with the people of the land. And the leaders and officials have taken the lead in this unfaithfulness!"

When I heard this report, I tore my tunic and cloak, pulled out some hair from my head and beard, and sat down in horror.

Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered around me because of the unfaithfulness of the exiles, while I sat there in horror until the evening offering.

At the evening offering, I got up from my humiliation with my tunic and cloak torn, and I fell on my knees, spread out my hands to the LORD my God, and said:

"O my God, I am ashamed and embarrassed to lift up my face to You, my God, because our iniquities are higher than our heads, and our guilt has reached the heavens. From the days of our fathers to this day, our guilt has been great. Because of our iniquities, we and our kings and priests have been delivered into the hands of the kings of the earth and subjected to the sword and to captivity, to pillage and humiliation, as we are this day. But now, for a brief moment, grace has come from the LORD our God to preserve for us a remnant and to give us a stake in His holy place. Even in our bondage, our God has given us new life and light to our eyes. Though we are slaves, our God has not forsaken us in our bondage, but He has extended to us grace in the sight of the kings of Persia, giving us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins, and giving us a wall of protection in Judah and Jerusalem.

And now, our God, what can we say after this? For we have forsaken the commandments that You gave through Your servants the prophets, saying: 'The land that you are entering to possess is a land polluted by the impurity of its peoples and the abominations with which they have filled it from end to end. Now, therefore, do not give your daughters in marriage to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. Never seek their peace or prosperity, so that you may be strong and may eat the good things of the land, leaving it as an inheritance to your sons forever.'

After all that has come upon us because of our evil deeds and our great guilt (though You, our God, have punished us less than our iniquities deserve and have given us such a remnant as this), shall we again break Your commandments and intermarry with the peoples who commit these abominations? Would You not become so angry with us as to wipe us out, leaving no remnant or survivor?

O LORD, God of Israel, You are righteous! For we remain this day as a remnant. Here we are before You in our guilt, though because of it no one can stand before You."

While Ezra prayed and made this confession, weeping and falling facedown before the house of God, a very large assembly of Israelites — men, women, and children — gathered around him, and the people wept bitterly as well.

Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, an Elamite, said to Ezra: "We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the people of the land, yet in spite of this, there is hope for Israel. So now let us make a covenant before our God to send away all the foreign wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the command of our God. Let it be done according to the Law. Get up, for this matter is your responsibility, and we will support you. Be strong and take action!"

So Ezra got up and made the leading priests, Levites, and all Israel take an oath to do what had been said. And they took the oath.

Then Ezra withdrew from before the house of God and walked to the chamber of Jehohanan son of Eliashib. And while he stayed there, he ate no food and drank no water, because he was mourning over the unfaithfulness of the exiles.

And a proclamation was issued throughout Judah and Jerusalem that all the exiles should gather at Jerusalem. Whoever failed to appear within three days would forfeit all his property, according to the counsel of the leaders and elders, and would himself be expelled from the assembly of the exiles.

So within the three days, all the men of Judah and Benjamin assembled in Jerusalem, and on the twentieth day of the ninth month, all the people sat in the square at the house of God, trembling regarding this matter and because of the heavy rain.

Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, "You have been unfaithful by marrying foreign women, adding to the guilt of Israel. Now, therefore, make a confession to the LORD, the God of your fathers, and do His will. Separate yourselves from the people of the land and from your foreign wives."

And the whole assembly responded in a loud voice: "Truly we must do as you say! But there are many people here, and it is the rainy season. We are not able to stay out in the open. Nor is this the work of one or two days, for we have transgressed greatly in this matter. Let our leaders represent the whole assembly. Then let everyone in our towns who has married a foreign woman come at an appointed time, together with the elders and judges of each town, until the fierce anger of our God in this matter is turned away from us."

(Only Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah, supported by Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite, opposed this plan.)

So the exiles did as proposed. Ezra the priest selected men who were family heads, each of them identified by name, to represent their families. On the first day of the tenth month they launched the investigation, and by the first day of the first month they had dealt with all the men who had married foreign women.

Among the descendants of the priests who had married foreign women were found these descendants of Jeshua son of Jozadak and his brothers:

Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah. They pledged to send their wives away, and for their guilt they presented a ram from the flock as a guilt offering.

From the descendants of Immer:
Hanani and Zebadiah.

From the descendants of Harim:
Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel, and Uzziah.

From the descendants of Pashhur:
Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasah.

Among the Levites:
Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (that is, Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer.

From the singers:
Eliashib.

From the gatekeepers:
Shallum, Telem, and Uri.

And among the other Israelites, from the descendants of Parosh:

Ramiah, Izziah, Malchijah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Malchijah, and Benaiah.

From the descendants of Elam:
Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth, and Elijah.

From the descendants of Zattu:
Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad, and Aziza.

From the descendants of Bebai:
Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai.

From the descendants of Bani:
Meshullam, Malluch, Adaiah, Jashub, Sheal, and Jeremoth.

From the descendants of Pahath-moab:
Adna, Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui, and Manasseh.

From the descendants of Harim:
Eliezer, Isshijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah.

From the descendants of Hashum:
Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei.

From the descendants of Bani:
Maadai, Amram, Uel, Benaiah, Bedeiah, Cheluhi, Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasu.

From the descendants of Binnui:
Shimei, Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiah, Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai, Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah, Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph.

And from the descendants of Nebo:
Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel, and Benaiah.

All these men had married foreign women, and some of them had children by these wives.

Nehemiah

Book of Nehemiah

These are the words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah:

In the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, Hanani, one of my brothers, arrived with men from Judah. So I questioned them about the remnant of the Jews who had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.

And they told me, "The remnant who survived the exile are there in the province, in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."

When I heard these words, I sat down and wept. I mourned for days, fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

Then I said:

"O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps His covenant of loving devotion with those who love Him and keep His commandments, let Your eyes be open and Your ears attentive to hear the prayer that I, Your servant, now pray before You day and night for Your servants, the Israelites.

I confess the sins that we Israelites have committed against You. Both I and my father's house have sinned. We have behaved corruptly against You and have not kept the commandments, statutes, and ordinances that You gave Your servant Moses.

Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses when You said, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to Me and keep and practice My commandments, then even if your exiles have been banished to the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for My Name.' They are Your servants and Your people. You redeemed them by Your great power and mighty hand. O Lord, may Your ear be attentive to my prayer and to the prayers of Your servants who delight to revere Your name. Give Your servant success this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."

(At that time I was the cupbearer to the king.)

Now in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was set before him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had never been sad in his presence, so the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, though you are not ill? This could only be sadness of the heart."

I was overwhelmed with fear and replied to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should I not be sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?"

"What is your request?" replied the king.

So I prayed to the God of heaven and answered the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city where my fathers are buried, so that I may rebuild it."

Then the king, with the queen seated beside him, asked me, "How long will your journey take, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me, and I set a time.

I also said to him, "If it pleases the king, may letters be given to me for the governors west of the Euphrates, so that they will grant me safe passage until I reach Judah. And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the king's forest, so that he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house I will occupy."

And because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests.

Then I went to the governors west of the Euphrates and gave them the king's letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me.

But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were deeply disturbed that someone had come to seek the well-being of the Israelites.

After I had arrived in Jerusalem and had been there three days, I set out at night with a few men. I did not tell anyone what my God had laid on my heart to do for Jerusalem. The only animal with me was the one on which I was riding.

So I went out at night through the Valley Gate toward the Well of the Serpent and the Dung Gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem that had been broken down and the gates that had been destroyed by fire.

Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal under me to get through; so I went up the valley by night and inspected the wall. Then I headed back and reentered through the Valley Gate.

The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, for I had not yet told the Jews or priests or nobles or officials or any other workers. Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in. Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned down. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, so that we will no longer be a disgrace."

I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me, and what the king had said to me.

"Let us start rebuilding," they replied, and they set their hands to this good work.

But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard about this, they mocked us and ridiculed us, saying, "What is this you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?"

So I answered them and said, "The God of heaven is the One who will grant us success. We, His servants, will start rebuilding, but you have no portion, right, or claim in Jerusalem."

At the Sheep Gate, Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests began rebuilding. They dedicated it and installed its doors. After building as far as the Tower of the Hundred and the Tower of Hananel, they dedicated the wall. The men of Jericho built next to Eliashib, and Zaccur son of Imri built next to them.

The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah. They laid its beams and installed its doors, bolts, and bars. Next to them, Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, made repairs. Next to him, Meshullam son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs; and

next to him, Zadok son of Baana made repairs as well. Next to him, the Tekoites made repairs, but their nobles did not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors.

The Jeshanah Gate was repaired by Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah. They laid its beams and installed its doors, bolts, and bars. Next to them, repairs were made by Melatiah the Gibeonite, Jadon the Meronothite, and the men of Gibeon and Mizpah, who were under the authority of the governor of the region west of the Euphrates. Next to them, Uzziel son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs. And next to him, Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs. They fortified Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.

Next to them, Rephaiah son of Hur, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, made repairs; next to him, Jedaiah son of Harumaph made repairs across from his house; and next to him, Hattush son of Hashabneiah made repairs. Malchijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of Pahath-moab repaired another section, as well as the Tower of the Ovens. And next to them, Shallum son of Hallohesh, ruler of the other half-district of Jerusalem, made repairs, with the help of his daughters.

The Valley Gate was repaired by Hanun and the residents of Zanoah. They rebuilt it, installed its doors, bolts, and bars, and repaired a thousand cubits of the wall as far as the Dung Gate.

The Dung Gate was repaired by Malchijah son of Rechab, ruler of the district of Beth-haccherem. He rebuilt it and installed its doors, bolts, and bars.

The Fountain Gate was repaired by Shallun son of Col-hozeh, ruler of the district of Mizpah. He rebuilt it, roofed it, and installed its doors, bolts, and bars. He also repaired the wall of the Pool of Shelah near the king's garden, as far as the stairs that descend from the City of David.

Beyond him, Nehemiah son of Azbuk, ruler of a half-district of Beth-zur, made repairs up to a point opposite the tombs of David, as far as the artificial pool and the House of the Mighty.

Next to him, the Levites made repairs under Rehum son of Bani, and next to him, Hashabiah, ruler of a half-district of Keilah, made repairs for his district. Next to him, their countrymen made repairs under Binnui son of Henadad, ruler of the other half-district of Keilah. And next to him, Ezer son of Jeshua, ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section opposite the ascent to the armory, near the angle in the wall.

Next to him, Baruch son of Zabbai diligently repaired another section, from the angle to the doorway of the house of Eliashib the high priest. Next to him, Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired another section, from the doorway of the house of Eliashib to the end of the house. And next to him, the priests from the surrounding area made repairs.

Beyond them, Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs in front of their house, and next to them, Azariah son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, made repairs beside his house. After him, Binnui son of Henadad repaired another section, from the house of Azariah to the angle and the corner, and Palal son of Uzai made repairs opposite the angle and the tower that juts out from the upper palace of the king near the courtyard of the guard. Next to him, Pedaiah son of Parosh and the temple servants living on the hill of Ophel made repairs opposite the Water Gate toward the east and the tower that juts out. And next to them, the Tekoites repaired another section, from a point opposite the great tower that juts out to the wall of Ophel.

Above the Horse Gate, each of the priests made repairs in front of his own house. Next to them, Zadok son of Immer made repairs opposite his house, and next to him, Shemaiah son of Shecaniah, the guard of the East Gate, made repairs.

Next to him, Hananiah son of Shelemiah, as well as Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. Next to them, Meshullam son of Berechiah made repairs opposite his own quarters. Next to him, Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs as far as the house of the temple servants and the merchants, opposite the Inspection Gate, and as far as the upper room above the corner. And between the upper room above the corner and the Sheep Gate, the goldsmiths and merchants made repairs.

Now when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he was furious and filled with indignation. He ridiculed the Jews before his associates and the army of Samaria, saying, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Can they restore the wall by themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Can they bring these burnt stones back to life from the mounds of rubble?"

Then Tobiah the Ammonite, who was beside him, said, "If even a fox were to climb up on what they are building, it would break down their wall of stones!"

Hear us, O God, for we are despised. Turn their scorn back upon their own heads, and let them be taken as plunder to a land of captivity. Do not cover up their iniquity or let their sin be blotted out from Your sight, for they have provoked the builders.

So we rebuilt the wall until all of it was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.

When Sanballat and Tobiah, together with the Arabs, Ammonites, and Ashdodites, heard that the repair to the walls of Jerusalem was progressing and that the gaps were being closed, they were furious, and all of them conspired to come and fight against Jerusalem and create a hindrance.

So we prayed to our God and posted a guard against them day and night.

Meanwhile, the people of Judah said:

> "The strength of the laborer fails, and there is so much rubble that we will never be able to rebuild the wall."

And our enemies said, "Before they know or see a thing, we will come into their midst, kill them, and put an end to the work."

At that time the Jews who lived nearby came and told us ten times over, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us."

So I stationed men behind the lowest sections of the wall, at the vulnerable areas. I stationed them by families with their swords, spears, and bows.

After I had made an inspection, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people,

"Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes."

When our enemies heard that we were aware of their scheme and that God had frustrated it, each of us returned to his own work on the wall. And from that day on, half of my servants did the work while the other half held spears, shields, bows, and armor.

The officers stationed themselves behind all the people of Judah who were rebuilding the wall. The laborers who carried materials worked with one hand and held a weapon with the other. And each of the builders worked with his sword strapped at his side. But the trumpeter stayed beside me.

Then I said to the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people: "The work is great and extensive, and we are spread out far from one another along the wall. Wherever you hear the sound of the horn, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us!"

So we continued the work, while half of the men held spears from the break of dawn until the stars came out. At that time I also said to the people, "Let every man and his servant spend the night inside Jerusalem, so that they can stand guard by night and work by day."

So neither I nor my brothers nor my servants nor the guards with me changed out of our clothes; each carried his weapon, even to go for water.

About that time there was a great outcry from the people and their wives against their fellow Jews.

Some were saying, "We and our sons and daughters are numerous. We must get grain in order to eat and stay alive."

Others were saying, "We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards, and our homes to get grain during the famine."

Still others were saying, "We have borrowed money to pay the king's tax on our fields and vineyards. We and our children are just like our countrymen and their children, yet we are subjecting our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters are already enslaved, but we are powerless to redeem them because our fields and vineyards belong to others."

When I heard their outcry and these complaints, I became extremely angry, and after serious thought I rebuked the nobles and officials, saying, "You are exacting usury from your own brothers!"

So I called a large assembly against them and said, "We have done our best to buy back our Jewish brothers who were sold to foreigners, but now you are selling your own brothers, that they may be sold back to us!"

But they remained silent, for they could find nothing to say.

So I continued, "What you are doing is not right. Shouldn't you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our foreign enemies? I, as well as my brothers and my servants, have been lending the people money and grain. Please, let us stop this usury. Please restore to them immediately their fields, vineyards, olive groves, and houses, along with the percentage of the money, grain, new wine, and oil that you have been assessing them."

"We will restore it," they replied, "and will require nothing more from them. We will do as you say."

So I summoned the priests and required of the nobles and officials an oath that they would do what they had promised. I also shook out the folds of my robe and said, "May God likewise shake out of his house and possessions every man who does not keep this promise. May such a man be shaken out and have nothing!"

The whole assembly said, "Amen," and they praised the LORD. And the people did as they had promised.

Furthermore, from the day King Artaxerxes appointed me to be their governor in the land of Judah, from his twentieth year until his thirty-second year (twelve years total), neither I nor my brothers ate the food allotted to the governor.

The governors before me had heavily burdened the people, taking from them bread and wine plus forty shekels of silver. Their servants also oppressed the people. But I did not do this, because of my fear of God. Instead, I devoted myself to the construction of the wall, and all my servants were gathered there for the work; we did not acquire any land.

There were 150 Jews and officials at my table, besides the guests from the surrounding nations. Each day one ox, six choice sheep, and some fowl were prepared for me, and once every ten days an abundance of all kinds of wine was provided. But I did not demand the food allotted to the governor, because the burden on the people was so heavy.

Remember me favorably, O my God, for all that I have done for this people.

When Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left— though to that time I had not yet installed the doors in the gates— Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: "Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono."

But they were planning to harm me.

So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it to go down to you?"

Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave the same reply.

The fifth time, Sanballat sent me this same message by his young servant, who had in his hand an unsealed letter that read:

"It is reported among the nations— and Geshem agrees — that you and the Jews are plotting to revolt, and this is why you are building the wall. According to these reports, you are to become their king, and you have even appointed prophets in Jerusalem to proclaim on your behalf: 'There is a king in Judah.' Soon these rumors will reach the ears of the king. So come, let us confer together."

Then I sent him this reply: "There is nothing to these rumors you are spreading; you are inventing them in your own mind."

For they were all trying to frighten us, saying, "Their hands will be weakened in the work, and it will never be finished."

But now, my God, strengthen my hands.

Later, I went to the house of Shemaiah son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel, who was confined to his house. He said:

> "Let us meet at the house of God inside the temple. Let us shut the temple doors because

they are coming to kill you — by night they are coming to kill you!"

But I replied, "Should a man like me run away? Should one like me go into the temple to save his own life? I will not go!"

I realized that God had not sent him, but that he had uttered this prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. He had been hired to intimidate me so that I would sin by doing as he suggested, so they could give me a bad name in order to discredit me.

O my God, remember Tobiah and Sanballat for what they have done, and also Noadiah the prophetess and the other prophets who tried to intimidate me.

So the wall was completed in fifty-two days, on the twenty-fifth of Elul. When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and disheartened, for they realized that this task had been accomplished by our God.

Also in those days, the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and Tobiah's letters kept coming to them. For many in Judah were bound by oath to him, since he was a son-in-law of Shecaniah son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam son of Berechiah.

Moreover, these nobles kept reporting to me Tobiah's good deeds, and they relayed my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to intimidate me.

When the wall had been rebuilt and I had set the doors in place, the gatekeepers, singers, and Levites were appointed.

Then I put my brother Hanani in charge of Jerusalem, along with Hananiah the commander of the fortress, because he was a faithful man who feared God more than most. And I told them, "Do not open the gates of Jerusalem until the sun is hot. While the guards are on duty, keep the doors shut and securely fastened. And appoint the residents of Jerusalem as guards, some at their posts and some at their own homes."

Now the city was large and spacious, but there were few people in it, and the houses had not yet been rebuilt. Then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials, and the people to be enrolled by genealogy. I found the genealogical register of those who had first returned, and I found the following written in it:

These are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles carried away to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar its king. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town, accompanied by Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, and Baanah.

This is the count of the men of Israel:
the descendants of Parosh, 2,172;
the descendants of Shephatiah, 372;
the descendants of Arah, 652;
the descendants of Pahath-moab (through the line of Jeshua and Joab), 2,818;
the descendants of Elam, 1,254;
the descendants of Zattu, 845;
the descendants of Zaccai, 760;
the descendants of Binnui, 648;
the descendants of Bebai, 628;
the descendants of Azgad, 2,322;
the descendants of Adonikam, 667;
the descendants of Bigvai, 2,067;
the descendants of Adin, 655;
the descendants of Ater (through Hezekiah), 98;
the descendants of Hashum, 328;
the descendants of Bezai, 324;
the descendants of Hariph, 112;
the descendants of Gibeon, 95;
the men of Bethlehem and Netophah, 188;
the men of Anathoth, 128;
the men of Beth-azmaveth, 42;
the men of Kiriath-jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, 743;
the men of Ramah and Geba, 621;
the men of Michmash, 122;
the men of Bethel and Ai, 123;
the men of the other Nebo, 52;
the descendants of the other Elam, 1,254;
the descendants of Harim, 320;
the men of Jericho, 345;
the men of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, 721;
and the descendants of Senaah, 3,930.
The priests:
the descendants of Jedaiah (through the house of Jeshua), 973;
the descendants of Immer, 1,052;
the descendants of Pashhur, 1,247;
and the descendants of Harim, 1,017.
The Levites:
the descendants of Jeshua (through Kadmiel, through the line of Hodevah), 74.
The singers:
the descendants of Asaph, 148.
The gatekeepers:
the descendants of Shallum,
the descendants of Ater,
the descendants of Talmon,
the descendants of Akkub,
the descendants of Hatita,
and the descendants of Shobai,
138 in all.
The temple servants:
the descendants of Ziha,
the descendants of Hasupha,
the descendants of Tabbaoth,
the descendants of Keros,
the descendants of Sia,
the descendants of Padon,
the descendants of Lebanah,
the descendants of Hagabah,
the descendants of Shalmai,
the descendants of Hanan,
the descendants of Giddel,
the descendants of Gahar,
the descendants of Reaiah,
the descendants of Rezin,
the descendants of Nekoda,
the descendants of Gazzam,
the descendants of Uzza,
the descendants of Paseah,
the descendants of Besai,
the descendants of Meunim,
the descendants of Nephushesim,
the descendants of Bakbuk,
the descendants of Hakupha,
the descendants of Harhur,
the descendants of Bazlith,
the descendants of Mehida,

the descendants of Harsha,
the descendants of Barkos,
the descendants of Sisera,
the descendants of Temah,
the descendants of Neziah,
and the descendants of Hatipha.
The descendants of the servants of Solomon:
the descendants of Sotai,
the descendants of Sophereth,
the descendants of Perida,
the descendants of Jaala,
the descendants of Darkon,
the descendants of Giddel,
the descendants of Shephatiah,
the descendants of Hattil,
the descendants of Pochereth-hazzebaim,
and the descendants of Amon.
The temple servants and descendants of the servants of Solomon numbered 392 in all.
The following came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer, but they could not prove that their families were descended from Israel:
the descendants of Delaiah,
the descendants of Tobiah,
and the descendants of Nekoda,
642 in all.
And from among the priests: the descendants of Hobaiah,
the descendants of Hakkoz,
and the descendants of Barzillai (who had married a daughter of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by their name).
These men searched for their family records, but they could not find them and so were excluded from the priesthood as unclean. The governor ordered them not to eat the most holy things until there was a priest to consult the Urim and Thummim.
The whole assembly numbered 42,360, in addition to their 7,337 menservants and maidservants, as well as their 245 male and female singers. They had 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys.
Some of the heads of the families contributed to the project. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 darics of gold, 50 bowls, and 530 priestly garments. And some of the heads of the families gave to the treasury for the project 20,000 darics of gold and 2,200 minas of silver. The rest of the people gave a total of 20,000 darics of gold, 2,000 minas of silver, and 67 priestly garments.
So the priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers, and temple servants, along with some of the people and the rest of the Israelites, settled in their own towns. And by the seventh month the Israelites had settled in their towns.
At that time all the people gathered together in the square before the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded for Israel.
On the first day of the seventh month, Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who could listen and understand. So Ezra read it aloud from daybreak until noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate, in front of the men and women and those who could understand.
And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.
Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform built for this occasion. At his right side stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, and at his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hash-baddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam.
Ezra opened the book in full view of all the people, since he was standing above them all, and as he opened it, all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and with their hands uplifted, all the people said, “Amen, Amen!” Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.
The Levites — Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah — instructed the people in the Law as they stood in their places. So they read from the Book of the Law of God, explaining it and giving insight, so that the people could understand what was being read.
Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to all of them, “This day is holy to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep.”
For all the people were weeping as they heard the words of the Law.
Then Nehemiah told them, “Go and eat what is rich, drink what is sweet, and send out portions to those who have nothing prepared, since today is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”
And the Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be still, since today is holy. Do not grieve.”
Then all the people began to eat and drink, to send out portions, and to rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that had been made known to them.
On the second day of the month, the heads of all the families, along with the priests and Levites, gathered around Ezra the scribe to study the words of the Law. And they found written in the Law, which the LORD had commanded through Moses, that the Israelites were to dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, and that they should proclaim this message and spread it throughout their towns and in Jerusalem, saying, “Go out to the hill country and bring back branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees, to make booths, as it is written.”
And the people went out, brought back branches, and made booths on their own rooftops, in their courtyards, in the courts of the house of God, and in the squares by the Water Gate and by the Gate of Ephraim. The whole assembly that had returned from exile made booths and lived in them. From the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated like this. And there was great rejoicing.
Day after day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. The Israelites kept the feast for seven days, and on the eighth day they held an assembly, according to the ordinance.
On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth, with dust on their heads. Those of Israelite descent separated themselves from all the foreigners,

and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.

While they stood in their places, they read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day, and they spent another quarter of the day in confession and worship of the LORD their God.

And the Levites — Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani — stood on the raised platform and cried out in a loud voice to the LORD their God. Then the Levites— Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah— said, "Stand up and bless the LORD your God from everlasting to everlasting:

> Blessed be Your glorious name, and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise. You alone are the LORD. You created the heavens, the highest heavens with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to all things, and the host of heaven worships You. You are the LORD, the God who chose Abram, who brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham. You found his heart faithful before You, and made a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites and Hittites, of the Amorites and Perizzites, of the Jebusites and Girgashites— to give it to his descendants. You have kept Your promise, because You are righteous. You saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt; You heard their cry at the Red Sea. You performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh, all his officials, and all the people of his land, for You knew they had acted with arrogance against our fathers. You made a name for Yourself that endures to this day. You divided the sea before them, and they crossed through it on dry ground. You hurled their pursuers into the depths like a stone into raging waters. You led them with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, to light for them the way in which they should travel. You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven. You gave them just ordinances, true laws, and good statutes and commandments. You revealed to them Your holy Sabbath and gave them commandments and statutes and laws through Your servant Moses. In their hunger You gave them bread from heaven; in their thirst You brought them water from the rock. You told them to go in and possess the land that You had sworn to give them. But they and our fathers became arrogant and stiff-necked and did not obey Your commandments. They refused to listen and failed to remember the wonders You performed among them. They stiffened their necks and appointed a leader to return them to their bondage in Egypt. But You are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in loving devotion, and You did not forsake them. Even when they cast for themselves an image of a calf and said, 'This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt,' and when they committed terrible blasphemies, You in Your great compassion did not forsake them in the wilderness. By day the pillar of cloud never turned away from guiding them on their path; and by the night the pillar of fire illuminated the way they should go. You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold Your manna from their mouths, and You gave them water for their thirst. For forty years You sustained them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell. You gave them kingdoms and peoples and allotted to them every corner of the land. So they took the land of Sihon king of Heshbon and of Og king of Bashan. You multiplied their descendants like the stars of heaven and brought them to the land You had told their fathers to enter and possess. So their descendants went in and possessed the land; You subdued before them the Canaanites dwelling in the land. You delivered into their hands the kings and peoples of the land, to do with them as they wished. They captured fortified cities and fertile land and took houses full of all goods, wells already dug, vineyards, olive groves, and fruit trees in abundance. So they ate and were filled; they grew fat and delighted in Your great goodness. But they were disobedient and rebelled against You; they flung Your law behind their backs. They killed Your prophets, who had admonished them to return to You. They committed terrible blasphemies. So You delivered them into the hands of enemies who oppressed them, and in their time of distress they cried out to You. From heaven You heard them, and in Your great compassion You gave them deliverers who saved them from the hands of their enemies. But as soon as they had rest, they again did evil in Your sight. So You abandoned them to the hands of their enemies, who had dominion over them. When they cried out to You again, You heard from heaven, and You delivered them many times in Your compassion. You admonished them to turn back to Your law, but they were arrogant and disobeyed Your commandments. They sinned against Your ordinances, by which a man will live if he practices them. They turned a stubborn shoulder; they stiffened their necks and would not obey. You were patient with them for many years, and Your Spirit admonished them through Your prophets. Yet they would not listen, so You gave them into the hands of the neighboring peoples. But in Your great compassion, You did not put an end to them; nor did You forsake them, for You are a gracious and compassionate God. So now, our God, the great and mighty and awesome God who keeps His gracious covenant, do not view lightly all the hardship that has come upon us, and upon our kings and leaders, our priests

and prophets, our ancestors and all Your people, from the days of the kings of Assyria until today. You are just in all that has befallen us, because You have acted faithfully, while we have acted wickedly. Our kings and leaders and priests and fathers did not obey Your law or listen to Your commandments and warnings that You gave them. For even while they were in their kingdom, with the abundant goodness that You had given them, and in the spacious and fertile land that You had set before them, they would not serve You or turn from their wicked ways. So here we are today as slaves in the land You gave our fathers to enjoy its fruit and goodness— here we are as slaves! Its abundant harvest goes to the kings You have set over us because of our sins. And they rule over our bodies and our livestock as they please. We are in great distress.

In view of all this, we make a binding agreement, putting it in writing and sealing it with the names of our leaders, Levites, and priests."

Now these were the ones who sealed the document:
Nehemiah the governor, son of Hacaliah,
and also Zedekiah,
Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah,
Pashhur, Amariah, Malchijah,
Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch,
Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah,
Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch,
Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin,
Maaziah, Bilgai, and Shemaiah.
These were the priests.
The Levites:
Jeshua son of Azaniah,
Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel,
and their associates: Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan,
Mica, Rehob, Hashabiah,
Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah,
Hodiah, Bani, and Beninu.
And the leaders of the people:
Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani,
Bunni, Azgad, Bebai,
Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin,
Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur,
Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai,
Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai,
Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir,
Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua,
Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah,
Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub,
Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek,
Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah,
Ahijah, Hanan, Anan,
Malluch, Harim, and Baanah.

"The rest of the people— the priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers, temple servants, and all who had separated themselves from the people of the land to obey the Law of God— along with their wives and all their sons and daughters who are able to understand, hereby join with their noble brothers and commit themselves with a sworn oath to follow the Law of God given through His servant Moses and to obey carefully all the commandments, ordinances, and statutes of the LORD our Lord.

We will not give our daughters in marriage to the people of the land, and we will not take their daughters for our sons.

When the people of the land bring merchandise or any kind of grain to sell on the Sabbath day, we will not buy from them on a Sabbath or holy day. Every seventh year we will let the fields lie fallow and will cancel every debt.

We also place ourselves under the obligation to contribute a third of a shekel yearly for the service of the house of our God: for the showbread, for the regular grain offerings and burnt offerings, for the Sabbath offerings, for the New Moons and appointed feasts, for the holy offerings, for the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and for all the duties of the house of our God.

We have cast lots among the priests, Levites, and people for the donation of wood by our families at the appointed times each year. They are to bring it to the house of our God to burn on the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the Law.

We will also bring the firstfruits of our land and of every fruit tree to the house of the LORD year by year. And we will bring the firstborn of our sons and our livestock, as it is written in the Law, and will bring the firstborn of our herds and flocks to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God.

Moreover, we will bring to the priests at the storerooms of the house of our God the firstfruits of our dough, of our grain offerings, of the fruit of all our trees, and of our new wine and oil. A tenth of our produce belongs to the Levites, so that they shall receive tithes in all the towns where we labor. A priest of Aaron's line is to accompany the Levites when they collect the tenth, and the Levites are to bring a tenth of these tithes to the storerooms of the treasury in the house of our God. For the Israelites and the Levites are to bring the contributions of grain, new wine, and oil to the storerooms where the articles of the sanctuary are kept and where the ministering priests, the gatekeepers, and the singers stay.

Thus we will not neglect the house of our God."

Now the leaders of the people settled in Jerusalem, and the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in the holy city of Jerusalem, while the remaining nine were to dwell in their own towns. And the people blessed all the men who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.

These are the heads of the provinces who settled in Jerusalem. (In the villages of Judah, however, each lived on his own property in their towns— the Israelites, priests, Levites, temple servants, and descendants of Solomon's servants— while some of the descendants of Judah and Benjamin settled in Jerusalem.)

From the descendants of Judah:
Athaiah son of Uzziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalalel, a descendant of Perez; and Maaseiah son of Baruch, the son of Col-hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, a descendant

of Shelah. The descendants of Perez who settled in Jerusalem totaled 468 men of valor.

From the descendants of Benjamin:

Sallu son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jeshaiah; and his followers Gabbai and Sallai — 928 men. Joel son of Zichri was the officer over them, and Judah son of Hassenuah was over the Second District of the city.

From the priests:

Jedaiah son of Joiarib; Jachin; Seraiah son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the chief official of the house of God; and their associates who did the work at the temple — 822 men;

Adaiah son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashhur, the son of Malchijah; and his associates, the leaders of families — 242 men;

Amashai son of Azarel, the son of Ahzai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer; and his associates — 128 mighty men of valor. Zabdiel son of Haggedolim was their overseer.

From the Levites:

Shemaiah son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni; Shabbethai and Jozabad, two leaders of the Levites, who supervised the work outside the house of God; Mattaniah son of Mica, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, who led in thanksgiving and prayer; Bakbukiah, second among his associates; and Abda son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun. The Levites in the holy city totaled 284.

And the gatekeepers:

Akkub, Talmon, and their associates, who kept watch at the gates — 172 men.

The rest of the Israelites, with the priests and Levites, were in all the villages of Judah, each on his own inheritance. The temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel, with Ziha and Gishpa over them.

Now the overseer of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Mica. He was one of Asaph's descendants, who were the singers in charge of the service of the house of God. For there was a command from the king concerning the singers, an ordinance regulating their daily activities. Pethahiah son of Meshezabel, a descendant of Zerah son of Judah, was the king's agent in every matter concerning the people.

As for the villages with their fields, some of the people of Judah lived in Kiriath-arba, Dibon, Jekabzeel, and their villages; in Jeshua, Moladah, and Beth-pelet; in Hazar-shual; in Beersheba and its villages; in Ziklag; in Meconah and its villages; in En-rimmon, Zorah, Jarmuth, Zanoah, Adullam, and their villages; in Lachish and its fields; and in Azekah and its villages. So they settled from Beersheba all the way to the Valley of Hinnom.

The descendants of Benjamin from Geba lived in Michmash, Aija, and Bethel with its villages; in Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, Lod, and Ono; and in the Valley of the Craftsmen.

And some divisions of the Levites of Judah settled in Benjamin.

Now these are the priests and Levites who went up with Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and with Jeshua:

Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra,
Amariah, Malluch, Hattush,
Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth,
Iddo, Ginnethon, Abijah,
Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah,
Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah,
Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, and Jedaiah.
These were the leaders of the priests and their associates in the days of Jeshua.

The Levites were Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, who, with his associates, led the songs of thanksgiving. Bakbukiah and Unni, their associates, stood across from them in the services.

Jeshua was the father of Joiakim,
Joiakim was the father of Eliashib,
Eliashib was the father of Joiada,
Joiada was the father of Jonathan,
and Jonathan was the father of Jaddua.

In the days of Joiakim, these were the heads of the priestly families:

of the family of Seraiah, Meraiah;
of Jeremiah, Hananiah;
of Ezra, Meshullam;
of Amariah, Jehohanan;
of Malluchi, Jonathan;
of Shebaniah, Joseph;
of Harim, Adna;
of Meraioth, Helkai;
of Iddo, Zechariah;
of Ginnethon, Meshullam;
of Abijah, Zichri;
of Miniamin and of Moadiah, Piltai;
of Bilgah, Shammua;
of Shemaiah, Jonathan;
of Joiarib, Mattenai;
of Jedaiah, Uzzi;
of Sallai, Kallai;
of Amok, Eber;
of Hilkiah, Hashabiah;
and of Jedaiah, Nethanel.

In the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua, during the reign of Darius the Persian, the heads of the families of the Levites and priests were recorded.

As for the descendants of Levi, the family heads up to the days of Johanan son of Eliashib were recorded in the Book of the Chronicles. The leaders of the Levites were Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua son of Kadmiel, along with their associates, who stood across from them to give praise and thanksgiving as one section alternated with the other, as prescribed by David the man of God.

Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers who guarded the storerooms at the gates. They served in the days of Joiakim son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor and Ezra the priest and scribe.

At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were sought out from all their homes and brought to Jerusalem to celebrate the joyous dedication with thanksgiving and singing, accompanied by cymbals, harps, and lyres. The singers were also assembled

from the region around Jerusalem, from the villages of the Netophathites, from Beth-gilgal, and from the fields of Geba and Azmaveth, for they had built villages for themselves around Jerusalem. After the priests and Levites had purified themselves, they purified the people, the gates, and the wall.

Then I brought the leaders of Judah up on the wall, and I appointed two great thanksgiving choirs. One was to proceed along the top of the wall to the right, toward the Dung Gate. Hoshaiah and half the leaders of Judah followed, along with Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah, and some of the priests with trumpets, and also Zechariah son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph, and his associates— Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani— with the musical instruments prescribed by David the man of God. Ezra the scribe led the procession. At the Fountain Gate they went directly up the steps of the City of David on the ascent to the wall and passed above the house of David to the Water Gate on the east.

The second thanksgiving choir proceeded to the left, and I followed it with half the people along the top of the wall, past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall, over the Gate of Ephraim, the Jeshanah Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, and the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Sheep Gate. And they stopped at the Gate of the Guard.

The two thanksgiving choirs then stood in the house of God, as did I, along with the half of the officials accompanying me, as well as the priests with their trumpets — Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah — and also Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer. Then the choirs sang out under the direction of Jezrahiah.

On that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard from afar.

And on that same day men were appointed over the rooms that housed the supplies, contributions, first-fruits, and tithes. The portions specified by the Law for the priests and Levites were gathered into these storerooms from the fields of the villages, because Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who were serving.

They performed the service of their God and the service of purification, along with the singers and gatekeepers, as David and his son Solomon had prescribed. For long ago, in the days of David and Asaph, there were directors for the singers and for the songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.

So in the days of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah, all Israel contributed the daily portions for the singers and gatekeepers. They also set aside daily portions for the Levites, and the Levites set aside daily portions for the descendants of Aaron.

At that time the Book of Moses was read aloud in the hearing of the people, and in it they found the passage stating that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God, because they had not met the Israelites with food and water, but had hired Balaam to call down a curse against them (although our God had turned the curse into a blessing).

As soon as the people heard this law, they excluded from Israel all of foreign descent.

Now before this, Eliashib the priest, a relative of Tobiah, had been put in charge of the storerooms of the house of our God and had prepared for Tobiah a large room where they had previously stored the grain offerings, the frankincense, the temple articles, and the tithes of grain, new wine, and oil prescribed for the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, along with the contributions for the priests.

While all this was happening, I was not in Jerusalem, because I had returned to Artaxerxes king of Babylon in the thirty-second year of his reign. Some time later I obtained leave from the king to return to Jerusalem. Then I discovered the evil that Eliashib had done on behalf of Tobiah by providing him a room in the courts of the house of God.

And I was greatly displeased and threw all of Tobiah's household goods out of the room. Then I ordered that the rooms be purified, and I had the articles of the house of God restored to them, along with the grain offerings and frankincense.

I also learned that because the portions for the Levites had not been given to them, all the Levites and singers responsible for performing the service had gone back to their own fields. So I rebuked the officials and asked, "Why has the house of God been neglected?"

Then I gathered the Levites and singers together and stationed them at their posts, and all Judah brought a tenth of the grain, new wine, and oil into the storerooms. I appointed as treasurers over the storerooms Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah of the Levites, with Hanan son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah, to assist them, because they were considered trustworthy. They were responsible for distributing the supplies to their fellow Levites.

Remember me for this, O my God, and do not blot out my deeds of loving devotion for the house of my God and for its services.

In those days I saw people in Judah treading winepresses on the Sabbath and bringing in grain and loading it on donkeys, along with wine, grapes, and figs. All kinds of goods were being brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. So I warned them against selling food on that day. Additionally, men of Tyre who lived there were importing fish and all kinds of merchandise and selling them on the Sabbath to the people of Judah in Jerusalem.

Then I rebuked the nobles of Judah and asked, "What is this evil you are doing— profaning the Sabbath day? Did not your forefathers do the same things, so that our God brought all this disaster on us and on this city? And now you are rekindling His wrath against Israel by profaning the Sabbath!"

When the evening shadows began to fall on the gates of Jerusalem, just before the Sabbath, I ordered that the gates be shut and not opened until after the Sabbath. I posted some of my servants at the gates so that no load could enter on the Sabbath day.

Once or twice, the merchants and those who sell all kinds of goods camped outside Jerusalem, but I warned

them, “Why are you camping in front of the wall? If you do it again, I will lay hands on you.” From that time on, they did not return on the Sabbath. Then I instructed the Levites to purify themselves and guard the gates in order to keep the Sabbath day holy.

Remember me for this as well, O my God, and show me mercy according to Your abundant loving devotion.

In those days I also saw Jews who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or of the other peoples, but could not speak the language of Judah. I rebuked them and called down curses on them. I beat some of these men and pulled out their hair.

Then I made them take an oath before God and said, “You must not give your daughters in marriage to their sons or take their daughters as wives for your sons or for yourselves! Did not King Solomon of Israel sin in matters like this? There was not a king like him among many nations, and he was loved by his God, who made him king over all Israel— yet foreign women drew him into sin. Must we now hear that you too are doing all this terrible evil and acting unfaithfully against our God by marrying foreign women?”

Even one of the sons of Jehoiada son of Eliashib the high priest had become a son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite. Therefore I drove him away from me.

Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites.

Thus I purified the priests and Levites from everything foreign, and I assigned specific duties to each of the priests and Levites. I also arranged for contributions of wood at the appointed times, and for the firstfruits.

Remember me, O my God, with favor.

Esther

Book of Esther

This is what happened in the days of Xerxes, who reigned over 127 provinces from India to Cush. In those days King Xerxes sat on his royal throne in the citadel of Susa.

In the third year of his reign, Xerxes held a feast for all his officials and servants. The military leaders of Persia and Media were there, along with the nobles and princes of the provinces. And for a full 180 days he displayed the glorious riches of his kingdom and the magnificent splendor of his greatness.

At the end of this time, in the garden court of the royal palace, the king held a seven-day feast for all the people in the citadel of Susa, from the least to the greatest. Hangings of white and blue linen were fastened with cords of fine white and purple material to silver rings on the marble pillars. Gold and silver couches were arranged on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and other costly stones.

Beverages were served in an array of goblets of gold, each with a different design, and the royal wine flowed freely, according to the king's bounty. By order of the king, no limit was placed on the drinking, and every official of his household was to serve each man whatever he desired.

Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of King Xerxes.

On the seventh day, when the king's heart was merry with wine, he ordered the seven eunuchs who served him — Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carkas — to bring Queen Vashti before him, wearing her royal crown, to display her beauty to the people and officials. For she was beautiful to behold.

Queen Vashti, however, refused to come at the king's command brought by his eunuchs. And the king became furious, and his anger burned within him.

Then the king consulted the wise men who knew the times, for it was customary for him to confer with the experts in law and justice. His closest advisors were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media who had personal access to the king and ranked highest in the kingdom.

"According to law," he asked, "what should be done with Queen Vashti, since she refused to obey the command of King Xerxes delivered by the eunuchs?"

And in the presence of the king and his princes, Memucan replied, "Queen Vashti has wronged not only the king, but all the princes and the peoples in all the provinces of King Xerxes. For the conduct of the queen will become known to all women, causing them to despise their husbands and say, 'King Xerxes ordered Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she did not come.'

This very day the noble women of Persia and Media who have heard about the queen's conduct will say the same thing to all the king's officials, resulting in much contempt and wrath.

So if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree, and let it be recorded in the laws of Persia and Media so that it cannot be repealed, that Vashti shall never again enter the presence of King Xerxes, and that her royal position shall be given to a woman better than she. The edict the king issues will be heard throughout his vast kingdom — and so all women, from the least to the greatest, will honor their husbands."

The king and his princes were pleased with this counsel; so the king did as Memucan advised. He sent letters to all the provinces of the kingdom, to each province in its own script and to each people in their own language, proclaiming that every man should be master of his own household.

Some time later, when the anger of King Xerxes had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done, and what had been decreed against her.

Then the king's attendants proposed, "Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king, and let the king appoint commissioners in each province of his kingdom to assemble all the beautiful young women into the harem at the citadel of Susa. Let them be placed under the care of Hegai, the king's eunuch in charge of the women, and let them be given beauty treatments. Then let the young woman who pleases the king become queen in place of Vashti."

This suggestion pleased the king, and he acted accordingly.

Now there was at the citadel of Susa a Jewish man from the tribe of Benjamin named Mordecai son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish. He had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon among those taken captive with Jeconiah king of Judah.

And Mordecai had brought up Hadassah (that is, Esther), the daughter of his uncle, because she did not have a father or mother. The young woman was lovely in form and appearance, and when her father and mother had died, Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter.

When the king's command and edict had been proclaimed, many young women gathered at the citadel of Susa under the care of Hegai. Esther was also taken to the palace and placed under the care of Hegai, the custodian of the women. And the young woman pleased him and obtained his favor, so he quickly provided her with beauty treatments and the special diet. He assigned to her seven select maidservants from the palace and transferred her with them to the best place in the harem.

Esther did not reveal her people or her lineage, because Mordecai had instructed her not to do so. And every day Mordecai would walk back and forth in front of the court of the harem to learn about Esther's welfare and what was happening to her.

In the twelve months before her turn to go to King Xerxes, the harem regulation required each young woman to receive beauty treatments with oil of myrrh for six months, and then with perfumes and cosmetics for another six months. When the young woman would go to the king, she was given whatever she requested to take with her from the harem to the king's palace.

She would go there in the evening, and in the morning she would return to a second harem under the care of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch in charge of the concubines. She would not return to the king unless he delighted in her and summoned her by name.

Now Esther was the daughter of Abihail, the uncle from whom Mordecai had adopted her as his own daughter. And when it was her turn to go to the king, she did not ask for anything except what Hegai, the king's trusted official in charge of the harem, had advised. And Esther found favor in the eyes of everyone who saw her.

She was taken to King Xerxes in the royal palace in the tenth month, the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

And the king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she found grace and favor in his sight more than all of the other virgins. So he placed the royal crown upon her head and made her queen in place of Vashti.

Then the king held a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his officials and servants. He proclaimed a tax holiday in the provinces and gave gifts worthy of the king's bounty.

When the virgins were assembled a second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. Esther still had not revealed her lineage or her people, just as Mordecai had instructed. She obeyed Mordecai's command, as she had done under his care.

In those days, while Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who guarded the entrance, grew angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes.

When Mordecai learned of the plot, he reported it to Queen Esther, and she informed the king on Mordecai's behalf.

After the report had been investigated and verified, both officials were hanged on the gallows. And all this was recorded in the Book of the Chronicles in the presence of the king.

After these events, King Xerxes honored Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, elevating him to a position above all the princes who were with him. All the royal servants at the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman, because the king had commanded that this be done for him. But Mordecai would not bow down or pay homage.

Then the royal servants at the king's gate asked Mordecai, "Why do you disobey the command of the king?"

Day after day they warned him, but he would not comply. So they reported it to Haman to see whether Mordecai's behavior would be tolerated, since he had told them he was a Jew.

When Haman saw that Mordecai would not bow down or pay him homage, he was filled with rage. And when he learned the identity of Mordecai's people, he scorned the notion of laying hands on Mordecai alone. Instead, he sought to destroy all of Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the kingdom of Xerxes.

In the twelfth year of King Xerxes, in the first month, the month of Nisan, the Pur (that is, the lot) was cast before Haman to determine a day and month. And the lot fell on the twelfth month, the month of Adar.

Then Haman informed King Xerxes, "There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the peoples of every province of your kingdom. Their laws are different from everyone else's, and they do not obey the king's laws. So it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will deposit ten thousand talents of silver into the royal treasury to pay those who carry it out."

So the king removed the signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. "Keep your money," said the king to Haman. "These people are given to you to do with them as you please."

On the thirteenth day of the first month, the royal scribes were summoned and the order was written exactly as Haman commanded the royal satraps, the governors of each province, and the officials of each people, in the script of each province and the language of every people. It was written in the name of King Xerxes and sealed with the royal signet ring.

And the letters were sent by couriers to each of the royal provinces with the order to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the Jews— young and old, women and children— and to plunder their possessions on a single day, the thirteenth day of Adar, the twelfth month.

A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued in every province and published to all the people, so that they would be ready on that day. The couriers left, spurred on by the king's command, and the edict was issued in the citadel of Susa. Then the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was in confusion.

When Mordecai learned of all that had happened, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the middle of the city, wailing loudly and bitterly. But he went only as far as the king's gate, because the law prohibited anyone wearing sackcloth from entering that gate.

In every province to which the king's command and edict came, there was great mourning among the Jews. They fasted, wept, and lamented, and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

When Esther's maidens and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, the queen was overcome with distress. She sent clothes for Mordecai to wear instead of his sackcloth, but he would not accept them.

Then Esther summoned Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs appointed to her, and she dispatched him to Mordecai to learn what was troubling him and why. So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square in front of the king's gate, and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, including the exact amount of money that Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury in order to destroy the Jews.

Mordecai also gave Hathach a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for the destruction of the Jews, to show and explain to Esther, urging her to approach the king, implore his favor, and plead before him for her people.

So Hathach went back and relayed Mordecai's response to Esther.

Then Esther spoke to Hathach and instructed him to tell Mordecai, "All the royal officials and the people

of the king's provinces know that one law applies to every man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned— that he be put to death. Only if the king extends the gold scepter may that person live. But I have not been summoned to appear before the king for the past thirty days."

When Esther's words were relayed to Mordecai, he sent back to her this reply: "Do not imagine that because you are in the king's palace you alone will escape the fate of all the Jews. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows if perhaps you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "Go and assemble all the Jews who can be found in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day, and I and my maidens will fast as you do. After that, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish!"

So Mordecai went and did all that Esther had instructed him.

On the third day, Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace across from the king's quarters. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the royal courtroom, facing the entrance.

As soon as the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she found favor in his sight. The king extended the gold scepter in his hand toward Esther, and she approached and touched the tip of the scepter.

"What is it, Queen Esther?" the king inquired. "What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given to you."

"If it pleases the king," Esther replied, "may the king and Haman come today to the banquet I have prepared for the king."

"Hurry," commanded the king, "and bring Haman, so we can do as Esther has requested."

So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared. And as they drank their wine, the king said to Esther, "What is your petition? It will be given to you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be fulfilled."

Esther replied, "This is my petition and my request: If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, may the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king's question."

That day Haman went out full of joy and glad of heart. At the king's gate, however, he saw Mordecai, who did not rise or tremble in fear at his presence. And Haman was filled with rage toward Mordecai.

Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home. And calling for his friends and his wife Zeresh, Haman recounted to them his glorious wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored and promoted him over the other officials and servants.

"What is more," Haman added, "Queen Esther invited no one but me to join the king at the banquet she prepared, and I am invited back tomorrow along with the king. Yet none of this satisfies me as long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

His wife Zeresh and all his friends told him, "Have them build a gallows fifty cubits high, and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then go to the banquet with the king and enjoy yourself."

The advice pleased Haman, and he had the gallows constructed.

That night sleep escaped the king; so he ordered the Book of Records, the Chronicles, to be brought in and read to him. And there it was found recorded that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the eunuchs who guarded the king's entrance, when they had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes.

The king inquired, "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this act?"

"Nothing has been done for him," replied the king's attendants.

"Who is in the court?" the king asked.

Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to ask the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows he had prepared for him. So the king's attendants answered him, "Haman is there, standing in the court."

"Bring him in," ordered the king.

Haman entered, and the king asked him, "What should be done for the man whom the king is delighted to honor?"

Now Haman thought to himself, "Whom would the king be delighted to honor more than me?"

And Haman told the king, "For the man whom the king is delighted to honor, have them bring a royal robe that the king himself has worn and a horse on which the king himself has ridden— one with a royal crest placed on its head. Let the robe and the horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them array the man the king wants to honor and parade him on the horse through the city square, proclaiming before him, 'This is what is done for the man whom the king is delighted to honor!'"

"Hurry," said the king to Haman, "and do just as you proposed. Take the robe and the horse to Mordecai the Jew, who is sitting at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything that you have suggested."

So Haman took the robe and the horse, arrayed Mordecai, and paraded him through the city square, crying out before him, "This is what is done for the man whom the king is delighted to honor!"

Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman rushed home, with his head covered in grief.

Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened. His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, "Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has begun, is Jewish, you will not prevail against him — for surely you will fall before him."

While they were still speaking with Haman, the king's eunuchs arrived and rushed him to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

So the king and Haman went to dine with Esther the queen, and as they drank their wine on that second day, the king asked once more, "Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given to you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be fulfilled."

Queen Esther replied, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, grant me my life as my petition, and the lives of my people as my request. For my people and I have been sold out to

destruction, death, and annihilation. If we had merely been sold as menservants and maidservants, I would have remained silent, because no such distress would justify burdening the king."

Then King Xerxes spoke up and asked Queen Esther, "Who is this, and where is the one who would devise such a scheme?"

Esther replied, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked man — Haman!"

And Haman stood in terror before the king and queen.

In his fury, the king arose from drinking his wine and went to the palace garden, while Haman stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life, for he realized that the king was planning a terrible fate for him.

Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, "Would he actually assault the queen while I am in the palace?"

As soon as the words had left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

Then Harbonah, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said: "There is a gallows fifty cubits high at Haman's house. He had it built for Mordecai, who gave the report that saved the king."

"Hang him on it!" declared the king.

So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the fury of the king subsided.

That same day King Xerxes awarded Queen Esther the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai entered the king's presence because Esther had revealed his relation to her. The king removed the signet ring he had recovered from Haman and presented it to Mordecai. And Esther appointed Mordecai over the estate of Haman.

And once again, Esther addressed the king. She fell at his feet weeping and begged him to revoke the evil scheme of Haman the Agagite, which he had devised against the Jews.

The king extended the gold scepter toward Esther, and she arose and stood before the king.

"If it pleases the king," she said, "and if I have found favor in his sight, and the matter seems proper to the king, and I am pleasing in his sight, may an order be written to revoke the letters that the scheming Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces. For how could I bear to see the disaster that would befall my people? How could I bear to see the destruction of my kindred?"

So King Xerxes said to Esther the Queen and Mordecai the Jew, "Behold, I have given Haman's estate to Esther, and he was hanged on the gallows because he attacked the Jews. Now you may write in the king's name as you please regarding the Jews, and seal it with the royal signet ring. For a decree that is written in the name of the king and sealed with the royal signet ring cannot be revoked."

At once the royal scribes were summoned, and on the twenty-third day of the third month (the month of Sivan), they recorded all of Mordecai's orders to the Jews and to the satraps, governors, and princes of the 127 provinces from India to Cush — writing to each province in its own script, to every people in their own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language.

Mordecai wrote in the name of King Xerxes and sealed it with the royal signet ring. He sent the documents by mounted couriers riding on swift horses bred from the royal mares.

By these letters the king permitted the Jews in each and every city the right to assemble and defend themselves, to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the forces of any people or province hostile to them, including women and children, and to plunder their possessions. The single day appointed throughout all the provinces of King Xerxes was the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar.

A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued in every province and published to all the people, so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. The couriers rode out in haste on their royal horses, pressed on by the command of the king. And the edict was also issued in the citadel of Susa.

Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal garments of blue and white, with a large gold crown and a purple robe of fine linen. And the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced.

For the Jews it was a time of light and gladness, of joy and honor. In every province and every city, wherever the king's edict and decree reached, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating. And many of the people of the land themselves became Jews, because the fear of the Jews had fallen upon them.

On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, the king's command and edict were to be executed. On this day the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, but their plan was overturned and the Jews overpowered those who hated them. In each of the provinces of King Xerxes, the Jews assembled in their cities to attack those who sought to harm them. No man could withstand them, because the fear of them had fallen upon all peoples.

And all the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and the king's administrators helped the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai had fallen upon them. For Mordecai exercised great power in the palace, and his fame spread throughout the provinces as he became more and more powerful.

The Jews put all their enemies to the sword, killing and destroying them, and they did as they pleased to those who hated them. In the citadel of Susa, the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men, including Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha. They killed these ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.

On that day the number of those killed in the citadel of Susa was reported to the king, who said to Queen Esther, "In the citadel of Susa the Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men, including Haman's ten sons. What have they done in the rest of the royal provinces? Now what is your petition? It will be given

to you. And what further do you request? It will be fulfilled."

Esther replied, "If it pleases the king, may the Jews in Susa also have tomorrow to carry out today's edict, and may the bodies of Haman's ten sons be hanged on the gallows."

So the king commanded that this be done. An edict was issued in Susa, and they hanged the ten sons of Haman. On the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, the Jews in Susa came together again and put to death three hundred men there, but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.

The rest of the Jews in the royal provinces also assembled to defend themselves and rid themselves of their enemies. They killed 75,000 who hated them, but they did not lay a hand on the plunder. This was done on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth day they rested, making it a day of feasting and joy.

The Jews in Susa, however, had assembled on the thirteenth and the fourteenth days of the month. So they rested on the fifteenth day, making it a day of feasting and joy. This is why the rural Jews, who live in the villages, observe the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a day of joy and feasting. It is a holiday for sending gifts to one another.

Mordecai recorded these events and sent letters to all the Jews in all the provinces of King Xerxes, both near and far, to establish among them an annual celebration on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar as the days on which the Jews gained rest from their enemies and the month in which their sorrow turned to joy and their mourning into a holiday. He wrote that these were to be days of feasting and joy, of sending gifts to one another and to the poor.

So the Jews agreed to continue the custom they had started, as Mordecai had written to them. For Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them and had cast the Pur (that is, the lot) to crush and destroy them. But when it came before the king, he commanded by letter that the wicked scheme which Haman had devised against the Jews should come back upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

Therefore these days are called Purim, from the word Pur.

Because of all the instructions in this letter, and because of all they had seen and experienced, the Jews bound themselves to establish the custom that they and their descendants and all who join them should not fail to celebrate these two days at the appointed time each and every year, according to their regulation. These days should be remembered and celebrated by every generation, family, province, and city, so that these days of Purim should not fail to be observed among the Jews, nor should the memory of them fade from their descendants.

So Queen Esther daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter concerning Purim. And Mordecai sent letters with words of peace and truth to all the Jews in the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Xerxes, in order to confirm these days of Purim at their appointed time, just as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had established them and had committed themselves and their descendants to the times of fasting and lamentation.

So Esther's decree confirmed these regulations about Purim, which were written into the record.

Now King Xerxes imposed tribute throughout the land, even to its farthest shores.

And all of Mordecai's powerful and magnificent accomplishments, together with the full account of the greatness to which the king had raised him, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia? For Mordecai the Jew was second only to King Xerxes, preeminent among the Jews and highly favored by his many kinsmen, seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his countrymen.

Job

Book of Job

There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. And this man was blameless and upright, fearing God and shunning evil. He had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and a very large number of servants. Job was the greatest man of all the people of the East.

Job's sons would take turns holding feasts in their homes, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.

And when the days of feasting were over, Job would send for his children to purify them, rising early in the morning to offer burnt offerings for all of them. For Job thought, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular practice.

One day the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them.

"Where have you come from?" said the LORD to Satan.

"From roaming through the earth," he replied, "and walking back and forth in it."

Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one on earth like him, a man who is blameless and upright, who fears God and shuns evil."

Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not placed a hedge on every side around him and his household and all that he owns? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out Your hand and strike all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face."

"Very well," said the LORD to Satan. "Everything he has is in your hands, but you must not lay a hand on the man himself."

Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

One day, while Job's sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, a messenger came and reported to Job: "While the oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, the Sabeans swooped down and took them away. They put the servants to the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

While he was still speaking, another messenger came and reported: "The fire of God fell from heaven. It burned and consumed the sheep and the servants, and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

While he was still speaking, another messenger came and reported: "The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels, and took them away. They put the servants to the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

While he was still speaking, another messenger came and reported: "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on the young people and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

Then Job stood up, tore his robe, and shaved his head. He fell to the ground and worshiped, saying:

> "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD."

In all this, Job did not sin or charge God with wrongdoing.

On another day the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before Him.

"Where have you come from?" said the LORD to Satan.

"From roaming through the earth," he replied, "and walking back and forth in it."

Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one on earth like him, a man who is blameless and upright, who fears God and shuns evil. He still retains his integrity, even though you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause."

"Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give up all he owns in exchange for his life. But stretch out Your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse You to Your face."

"Very well," said the LORD to Satan. "He is in your hands, but you must spare his life."

So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and infected Job with terrible boils from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. And Job took a piece of broken pottery to scrape himself as he sat among the ashes.

Then Job's wife said to him, "Do you still retain your integrity? Curse God and die!"

"You speak as a foolish woman speaks," he told her. "Should we accept from God only good and not adversity?"

In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

Now when Job's three friends— Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite — heard about all this adversity that had come upon him, each of them came from his home, and they met together to go and sympathize with Job and comfort him.

When they lifted up their eyes from afar, they could barely recognize Job. They began to weep aloud, and each man tore his robe and threw dust in the air over his head. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights, but no one spoke a word to him because they saw how intense his suffering was.

After this, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. And this is what he said:

> "May the day of my birth perish, and the night it was said, 'A boy is conceived.' If only that day had turned to darkness! May God above disregard it; may no light shine upon it. May darkness and gloom reclaim it, and a cloud settle over it; may the blackness of the day overwhelm it. If only darkness had taken that night away! May it not appear among the days of the year; may it never be entered in any of

the months. Behold, may that night be barren;
may no joyful voice come into it. May it be
cursed by those who curse the day — those
prepared to rouse Leviathan. May its morning
stars grow dark; may it wait in vain for day-
light; may it not see the breaking of dawn. For
that night did not shut the doors of the womb
to hide the sorrow from my eyes. Why did I not
perish at birth; why did I not die as I came from
the womb? Why were there knees to receive
me, and breasts that I should be nursed? For
now I would be lying down in peace; I would be
asleep and at rest with kings and counselors of
the earth, who built for themselves cities now
in ruins, or with princes who had gold, who
filled their houses with silver. Or why was I not
hidden like a stillborn child, like an infant who
never sees daylight? There the wicked cease
from raging, and there the weary find rest. The
captives enjoy their ease; they do not hear the
voice of the oppressor. Both small and great are
there, and the slave is freed from his master.
Why is light given to the miserable, and life to
the bitter of soul, who long for death that does
not come, and search for it like hidden trea-
sure, who rejoice and greatly exult when they
reach the grave? Why is life given to a man
whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged
in? I sigh when food is put before me, and
my groans pour out like water. For the thing I
feared has overtaken me, and what I dreaded
has befallen me. I am not at ease or quiet; I
have no rest, for trouble has come."

Then Eliphaz the Temanite replied:

"If one ventures a word with you, will you
be wearied? Yet who can keep from speaking?
Surely you have instructed many, and have
strengthened their feeble hands. Your words
have steadied those who stumbled; you have
braced the knees that were buckling. But now
trouble has come upon you, and you are
weary. It strikes you, and you are dismayed. Is
your reverence not your confidence, and the
uprightness of your ways your hope? Consider
now, I plead: Who, being innocent, has ever
perished? Or where have the upright been de-
stroyed? As I have observed, those who plow
iniquity and those who sow trouble reap the
same. By the breath of God they perish, and by
the blast of His anger they are consumed. The
lion may roar, and the fierce lion may growl,
yet the teeth of the young lions are broken. The
old lion perishes for lack of prey, and the cubs
of the lioness are scattered. Now a word came
to me secretly; my ears caught a whisper of it.
In disquieting visions in the night, when deep
sleep falls on men, fear and trembling came
over me and made all my bones shudder. Then
a spirit glided past my face, and the hair on
my body bristled. It stood still, but I could not
discern its appearance; a form loomed before
my eyes, and I heard a whispering voice: 'Can
a mortal be more righteous than God, or a
man more pure than his Maker? If God puts
no trust in His servants, and He charges His
angels with error, how much more those who
dwell in houses of clay, whose foundations are
in the dust, who can be crushed like a moth!
They are smashed to pieces from dawn to dusk;
unnoticed, they perish forever. Are not their
tent cords pulled up, so that they die without
wisdom?'"

"Call out if you please, but who will answer?
To which of the holy ones will you turn? For
resentment kills a fool, and envy slays the sim-
ple. I have seen a fool taking root, but suddenly
his house was cursed. His sons are far from
safety, crushed in court without a defender.
The hungry consume his harvest, taking it
even from the thorns, and the thirsty pant
after his wealth. For distress does not spring
from the dust, and trouble does not sprout
from the ground. Yet man is born to trouble as
surely as sparks fly upward. However, if I were
you, I would appeal to God and lay my cause
before Him— the One who does great and un-
searchable things, wonders without number.
He gives rain to the earth and sends water
upon the fields. He sets the lowly on high, so
that mourners are lifted to safety. He thwarts
the schemes of the crafty, so that their hands
find no success. He catches the wise in their
craftiness, and sweeps away the plans of the
cunning. They encounter darkness by day and
grope at noon as in the night. He saves the
needy from the sword in their mouth and from
the clutches of the powerful. So the poor have
hope, and injustice shuts its mouth. Blessed
indeed is the man whom God corrects; so do
not despise the discipline of the Almighty. For
He wounds, but He also binds; He strikes, but
His hands also heal. He will rescue you from
six calamities; no harm will touch you in seven.
In famine He will redeem you from death, and
in battle from the stroke of the sword. You will
be hidden from the scourge of the tongue, and
will not fear havoc when it comes. You will
laugh at destruction and famine, and need not
fear the beasts of the earth. For you will have
a covenant with the stones of the field, and the
wild animals will be at peace with you. You will
know that your tent is secure, and find nothing
amiss when inspecting your home. You will
know that your offspring will be many, your
descendants like the grass of the earth. You
will come to the grave in full vigor, like a sheaf
of grain gathered in season. Indeed, we have
investigated, and it is true! So hear it and know
for yourself."

Then Job replied:

"If only my grief could be weighed and placed
with my calamity on the scales. For then it
would outweigh the sand of the seas — no
wonder my words have been rash. For the
arrows of the Almighty have pierced me; my
spirit drinks in their poison; the terrors of God

are arrayed against me. Does a wild donkey bray over fresh grass, or an ox low over its fodder? Is tasteless food eaten without salt, or is there flavor in the white of an egg? My soul refuses to touch them; they are loathsome food to me. If only my request were granted and God would fulfill my hope: that God would be willing to crush me, to unleash His hand and cut me off! It still brings me comfort, and joy through unrelenting pain, that I have not denied the words of the Holy One. What strength do I have, that I should still hope? What is my future, that I should be patient? Is my strength like that of stone, or my flesh made of bronze? Is there any help within me now that success is driven from me? A despairing man should have the kindness of his friend, even if he forsakes the fear of the Almighty. But my brothers are as faithless as wadis, as seasonal streams that overflow, darkened because of the ice and the inflow of melting snow, but ceasing in the dry season and vanishing from their channels in the heat. Caravans turn aside from their routes; they go into the wasteland and perish. The caravans of Tema look for water; the travelers of Sheba hope to find it. They are confounded because they had hoped; their arrival brings disappointment. For now you are of no help; you see terror, and you are afraid. Have I ever said, 'Give me something; offer me a bribe from your wealth; deliver me from the hand of the enemy; redeem me from the grasp of the ruthless'? Teach me, and I will be silent. Help me understand how I have erred. How painful are honest words! But what does your argument prove? Do you intend to correct my words, and treat as wind my cry of despair? You would even cast lots for an orphan and barter away your friend. But now, please look at me. Would I lie to your face? Reconsider; do not be unjust. Reconsider, for my righteousness is at stake. Is there iniquity on my tongue? Can my mouth not discern malice?"

"Is not man consigned to labor on earth? Are not his days like those of a hired hand? Like a slave he longs for shade; like a hireling he waits for his wages. So I am allotted months of futility, and nights of misery are appointed to me. When I lie down I think: 'When will I get up?' But the night drags on, and I toss and turn until dawn. My flesh is clothed with worms and encrusted with dirt; my skin is cracked and festering. My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle; they come to an end without hope. Remember that my life is but a breath. My eyes will never again see happiness. The eye that beholds me will no longer see me. You will look for me, but I will be no more. As a cloud vanishes and is gone, so he who goes down to Sheol does not come back up. He never returns to his house; his place remembers him no more. Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. Am I the sea, or the monster of the deep, that You must keep me under guard? When I think my bed will comfort me and my couch will ease my complaint, then You frighten me with dreams and terrify me with visions, so that I would prefer strangling and death over my life in this body. I loathe my life! I would not live forever. Leave me alone, for my days are but a breath. What is man that You should exalt him, that You should set Your heart upon him, that You attend to him every morning, and test him every moment? Will You never look away from me, or leave me alone to swallow my spittle? If I have sinned, what have I done to You, O watcher of mankind? Why have You made me Your target, so that I am a burden to You? Why do You not pardon my transgression and take away my iniquity? For soon I will lie down in the dust; You will seek me, but I will be no more."

Then Bildad the Shuhite replied:

"How long will you go on saying such things? The words of your mouth are a blustering wind. Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right? When your children sinned against Him, He gave them over to their rebellion. But if you would earnestly seek God and ask the Almighty for mercy, if you are pure and upright, even now He will rouse Himself on your behalf and restore your righteous estate. Though your beginnings were modest, your latter days will flourish. Please inquire of past generations and consider the discoveries of their fathers. For we were born yesterday and know nothing; our days on earth are but a shadow. Will they not teach you and tell you, and speak from their understanding? Does papyrus grow where there is no marsh? Do reeds flourish without water? While the shoots are still uncut, they dry up more quickly than grass. Such is the destiny of all who forget God; so the hope of the godless will perish. His confidence is fragile; his security is in a spider's web. He leans on his web, but it gives way; he holds fast, but it does not endure. He is a well-watered plant in the sunshine, spreading its shoots over the garden. His roots wrap around the rock heap; he looks for a home among the stones. If he is uprooted from his place, it will disown him, saying, ' I never saw you.' Surely this is the joy of his way; yet others will spring from the dust. Behold, God does not reject the blameless, nor will He strengthen the hand of evildoers. He will yet fill your mouth with laughter, and your lips with a shout of joy. Your enemies will be clothed in shame, and the tent of the wicked will be no more."

Then Job answered:

"Yes, I know that it is so, but how can a mortal be righteous before God? If one wished to contend with God, he could not answer Him one

time out of a thousand. God is wise in heart and mighty in strength. Who has resisted Him and prospered? He moves mountains without their knowledge and overturns them in His anger. He shakes the earth from its place, so that its foundations tremble. He commands the sun not to shine; He seals off the stars. He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea. He is the Maker of the Bear and Orion, of the Pleiades and the constellations of the south. He does great things beyond searching out, and wonders without number. Were He to pass by me, I would not see Him; were He to move, I would not recognize Him. If He takes away, who can stop Him? Who dares to ask Him, 'What are You doing?' God does not restrain His anger; the helpers of Rahab cower beneath Him. How then can I answer Him or choose my arguments against Him? For even if I were right, I could not answer. I could only beg my Judge for mercy. If I summoned Him and He answered me, I do not believe He would listen to my voice. For He would crush me with a tempest and multiply my wounds without cause. He does not let me catch my breath, but overwhelms me with bitterness. If it is a matter of strength, He is indeed mighty! If it is a matter of justice, who can summon Him? Even if I were righteous, my mouth would condemn me; if I were blameless, it would declare me guilty. Though I am blameless, I have no concern for myself; I despise my own life. It is all the same, and so I say, 'He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.' When the scourge brings sudden death, He mocks the despair of the innocent. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; He blindfolds its judges. If it is not He, then who is it? My days are swifter than a runner; they flee without seeing good. They sweep by like boats of papyrus, like an eagle swooping down on its prey. If I were to say, 'I will forget my complaint and change my expression and smile,' I would still dread all my sufferings; I know that You will not acquit me. Since I am already found guilty, why should I labor in vain? If I should wash myself with snow and cleanse my hands with lye, then You would plunge me into the pit, and even my own clothes would despise me. For He is not a man like me, that I can answer Him, that we can take each other to court. Nor is there a mediator between us, to lay his hand upon us both. Let Him remove His rod from me, so that His terror will no longer frighten me. Then I would speak without fear of Him. But as it is, I am on my own."

"I loathe my own life; I will express my complaint and speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God: Do not condemn me! Let me know why You prosecute me. Does it please You to oppress me, to reject the work of Your hands and favor the schemes of the wicked? Do You have eyes of flesh? Do You see as man sees? Are Your days like those of a mortal, or Your years like those of a man, that You should seek my iniquity and search out my sin — though You know that I am not guilty, and there is no deliverance from Your hand? Your hands shaped me and altogether formed me. Would You now turn and destroy me? Please remember that You molded me like clay. Would You now return me to dust? Did You not pour me out like milk, and curdle me like cheese? You clothed me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews. You have granted me life and loving devotion, and Your care has preserved my spirit. Yet You concealed these things in Your heart, and I know that this was in Your mind: If I sinned, You would take note, and would not acquit me of my iniquity. If I am guilty, woe to me! And even if I am righteous, I cannot lift my head. I am full of shame and aware of my affliction. Should I hold my head high, You would hunt me like a lion, and again display Your power against me. You produce new witnesses against me and multiply Your anger toward me. Hardships assault me in wave after wave. Why then did You bring me from the womb? Oh, that I had died, and no eye had seen me! If only I had never come to be, but had been carried from the womb to the grave. Are my days not few? Withdraw from me, that I may have a little comfort, before I go — never to return — to a land of darkness and gloom, to a land of utter darkness, of deep shadow and disorder, where even the light is like darkness."

Then Zophar the Naamathite replied:

"Should this stream of words go unanswered and such a speaker be vindicated? Should your babbling put others to silence? Will you scoff without rebuke? You have said, 'My doctrine is sound, and I am pure in Your sight.' But if only God would speak and open His lips against you, and disclose to you the secrets of wisdom, for true wisdom has two sides. Know then that God exacts from you less than your iniquity deserves. Can you fathom the deep things of God or discover the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than the heavens— what can you do? They are deeper than Sheol— what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea. If He comes along to imprison you, or convenes a court, who can stop Him? Surely He knows the deceit of men. If He sees iniquity, does He not take note? But a witless man can no more become wise than the colt of a wild donkey can be born a man! As for you, if you direct your heart and lift up your hands to Him, if you put away the iniquity in your hand, and allow no injustice to dwell in your tents, then indeed you will lift up your face without blemish; you will stand firm and unafraid. For you will forget your misery, recalling it only as waters gone by. Your life will be brighter than noonday; its darkness will be

like the morning. You will be secure, because there is hope, and you will look around and lie down in safety. You will lie down without fear, and many will court your favor. But the eyes of the wicked will fail, and escape will elude them; they will hope for their last breath."

Then Job answered:

"Truly then you are the people with whom wisdom itself will die! But I also have a mind; I am not inferior to you. Who does not know such things as these? I am a laughingstock to my friends, though I called on God, and He answered. The righteous and upright man is a laughingstock. The one at ease scorns misfortune as the fate of those whose feet are slipping. The tents of robbers are safe, and those who provoke God are secure — those who carry their god in their hands. But ask the animals, and they will instruct you; ask the birds of the air, and they will tell you. Or speak to the earth, and it will teach you; let the fish of the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this? The life of every living thing is in His hand, as well as the breath of all mankind. Does not the ear test words as the tongue tastes its food? Wisdom is found with the elderly, and understanding comes with long life. Wisdom and strength belong to God; counsel and understanding are His. What He tears down cannot be rebuilt; the man He imprisons cannot be released. If He holds back the waters, they dry up, and if He releases them, they overwhelm the land. True wisdom and power belong to Him. The deceived and the deceiver are His. He leads counselors away barefoot and makes fools of judges. He loosens the bonds placed by kings and fastens a belt around their waists. He leads priests away barefoot and overthrows the established. He deprives the trusted of speech and takes away the discernment of elders. He pours out contempt on nobles and disarms the mighty. He reveals the deep things of darkness and brings deep shadows into light. He makes nations great and destroys them; He enlarges nations, then disperses them. He deprives the earth's leaders of reason and makes them wander in a trackless wasteland. They grope in the darkness without light; He makes them stagger like drunkards."

"Indeed, my eyes have seen all this; my ears have heard and understood. What you know, I also know; I am not inferior to you. Yet I desire to speak to the Almighty and argue my case before God. You, however, smear with lies; you are all worthless physicians. If only you would remain silent; for that would be your wisdom! Hear now my argument, and listen to the plea of my lips. Will you speak wickedly on God's behalf or speak deceitfully for Him? Would you show Him partiality or argue in His defense? Would it be well when He examined you? Could you deceive Him as you would deceive a man? Surely He would rebuke you if you secretly showed partiality. Would His majesty not terrify you? Would the dread of Him not fall upon you? Your maxims are proverbs of ashes; your defenses are defenses of clay. Be silent, and I will speak. Then let come to me what may. Why do I put myself at risk and take my life in my own hands? Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. I will still defend my ways to His face. Moreover, this will be my salvation, for no godless man can appear before Him. Listen carefully to my words; let my declaration ring in your ears. See now, I have prepared my case; I know that I will be vindicated. Can anyone indict me? If so, I will be silent and die. Only grant these two things to me, so that I need not hide from You: Withdraw Your hand from me, and do not let Your terror frighten me. Then call me, and I will answer, or let me speak, and You can reply. How many are my iniquities and sins? Reveal to me my transgression and sin. Why do You hide Your face and consider me as Your enemy? Would You frighten a windblown leaf? Would You chase after dry chaff? For You record bitter accusations against me and bequeath to me the iniquities of my youth. You put my feet in the stocks and stand watch over all my paths; You set a limit for the soles of my feet. So man wastes away like something rotten, like a moth-eaten garment."

"Man, who is born of woman, is short of days and full of trouble. Like a flower, he comes forth, then withers away; like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure. Do You open Your eyes to one like this? Will You bring him into judgment before You? Who can bring out clean from unclean? No one! Since his days are determined and the number of his months is with You, and since You have set limits that he cannot exceed, look away from him and let him rest, so he can enjoy his day as a hired hand. For there is hope for a tree: If it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its tender shoots will not fail. If its roots grow old in the ground and its stump dies in the soil, at the scent of water it will bud and put forth twigs like a sapling. But a man dies and is laid low; he breathes his last, and where is he? As water disappears from the sea and a river becomes parched and dry, so a man lies down and does not rise. Until the heavens are no more, he will not be awakened or roused from sleep. If only You would hide me in Sheol and conceal me until Your anger has passed! If only You would appoint a time for me and then remember me! When a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, until my renewal comes. You will call, and I will answer; You will desire the work of Your hands. For then You would count my steps, but would not keep track of my sin. My transgression would be sealed in a bag, and You would cover over my iniquity.

But as a mountain erodes and crumbles and a rock is dislodged from its place, as water wears away the stones and torrents wash away the soil, so You destroy a man's hope. You forever overpower him, and he passes on; You change his countenance and send him away. If his sons receive honor, he does not know it; if they are brought low, he is unaware. He feels only the pain of his own body and mourns only for himself."

Then Eliphaz the Temanite replied:

"Does a wise man answer with empty counsel or fill his belly with the hot east wind? Should he argue with useless words or speeches that serve no purpose? But you even undermine the fear of God and hinder meditation before Him. For your iniquity instructs your mouth, and you choose the language of the crafty. Your own mouth, not mine, condemns you; your own lips testify against you. Were you the first man ever born? Were you brought forth before the hills? Do you listen in on the council of God or limit wisdom to yourself? What do you know that we do not? What do you understand that is not clear to us? Both the gray-haired and the aged are on our side — men much older than your father. Are the consolations of God not enough for you, even words spoken gently to you? Why has your heart carried you away, and why do your eyes flash, so that you turn your spirit against God and pour such words from your mouth? What is man, that he should be pure, or one born of woman, that he should be righteous? If God puts no trust in His holy ones, if even the heavens are not pure in His eyes, how much less man, who is vile and corrupt, who drinks injustice like water? Listen to me and I will inform you. I will describe what I have seen, what was declared by wise men and was not concealed from their fathers, to whom alone the land was given when no foreigner passed among them. A wicked man writhes in pain all his days; only a few years are reserved for the ruthless. Sounds of terror fill his ears; in his prosperity the destroyer attacks him. He despairs of his return from darkness; he is marked for the sword. He wanders about as food for vultures; he knows the day of darkness is at hand. Distress and anguish terrify him, overwhelming him like a king poised to attack. For he has stretched out his hand against God and has vaunted himself against the Almighty, rushing headlong at Him with a thick, studded shield. Though his face is covered with fat and his waistline bulges with flesh, he will dwell in ruined cities, in abandoned houses destined to become rubble. He will no longer be rich; his wealth will not endure. His possessions will not overspread the land. He will not escape from the darkness; the flame will wither his shoots, and the breath of God's mouth will carry him away. Let him not deceive himself with trust in emptiness, for emptiness will be his reward. It will be paid in full before his time, and his branch will not flourish. He will be like a vine stripped of its unripe grapes, like an olive tree that sheds its blossoms. For the company of the godless will be barren, and fire will consume the tents of bribery. They conceive trouble and give birth to evil; their womb is pregnant with deceit."

Then Job answered:

"I have heard many things like these; miserable comforters are you all. Is there no end to your long-winded speeches? What provokes you to continue testifying? I could also speak like you if you were in my place; I could heap up words against you and shake my head at you. But I would encourage you with my mouth, and the consolation of my lips would bring relief. Even if I speak, my pain is not relieved, and if I hold back, how will it go away? Surely He has now exhausted me; You have devastated all my family. You have bound me, and it has become a witness; my frailty rises up and testifies against me. His anger has torn me and opposed me; He gnashes His teeth at me. My adversary pierces me with His eyes. They open their mouths against me and strike my cheeks with contempt; they join together against me. God has delivered me to unjust men; He has thrown me to the clutches of the wicked. I was at ease, but He shattered me; He seized me by the neck and crushed me. He has set me up as His target; His archers surround me. He pierces my kidneys without mercy and spills my gall on the ground. He breaks me with wound upon wound; He rushes me like a mighty warrior. I have sewn sackcloth over my skin; I have buried my horn in the dust. My face is red with weeping, and deep shadows ring my eyes; yet my hands are free of violence and my prayer is pure. O earth, do not cover my blood; may my cry for help never be laid to rest. Even now my witness is in heaven, and my advocate is on high. My friends are my scoffers as my eyes pour out tears to God. Oh, that a man might plead with God as he pleads with his neighbor! For when only a few years are past I will go the way of no return."

"My spirit is broken; my days are extinguished; the grave awaits me. Surely mockers surround me, and my eyes must gaze at their rebellion. Give me, I pray, the pledge You demand. Who else will be my guarantor? You have closed their minds to understanding; therefore You will not exalt them. If a man denounces his friends for a price, the eyes of his children will fail. He has made me a byword among the people, a man in whose face they spit. My eyes have grown dim with grief, and my whole body is but a shadow. The upright are appalled at this, and the innocent are stirred against the godless. Yet a righteous one holds to his way, and the one with clean hands grows stronger. But come back and try again, all of you. For I

will not find a wise man among you. My days have passed; my plans are broken off — even the desires of my heart. They have turned night into day, making light seem near in the face of darkness. If I look for Sheol as my home, if I spread out my bed in darkness, and say to corruption, 'You are my father,' and to the worm, 'My mother,' or 'My sister,' where then is my hope? Who can see any hope for me? Will it go down to the gates of Sheol? Will we go down together into the dust?"

Then Bildad the Shuhite replied:

"How long until you end these speeches? Show some sense, and then we can talk. Why are we regarded as cattle, as stupid in your sight? You who tear yourself in anger— should the earth be forsaken on your account, or the rocks be moved from their place? Indeed, the lamp of the wicked is extinguished; the flame of his fire does not glow. The light in his tent grows dark, and the lamp beside him goes out. His vigorous stride is shortened, and his own schemes trip him up. For his own feet lead him into a net, and he wanders into its mesh. A trap seizes his heel; a snare grips him. A noose is hidden in the ground, and a trap lies in his path. Terrors frighten him on every side and harass his every step. His strength is depleted, and calamity is ready at his side. It devours patches of his skin; the firstborn of death devours his limbs. He is torn from the shelter of his tent and is marched off to the king of terrors. Fire resides in his tent; burning sulfur rains down on his dwelling. The roots beneath him dry up, and the branches above him wither away. The memory of him perishes from the earth, and he has no name in the land. He is driven from light into darkness and is chased from the inhabited world. He has no offspring or posterity among his people, no survivor where he once lived. Those in the west are appalled at his fate, while those in the east tremble in horror. Surely such is the dwelling of the wicked and the place of one who does not know God."

Then Job answered:

"How long will you torment me and crush me with your words? Ten times now you have reproached me; you shamelessly mistreat me. Even if I have truly gone astray, my error concerns me alone. If indeed you would exalt yourselves above me and use my disgrace against me, then understand that it is God who has wronged me and drawn His net around me. Though I cry out, 'Violence!' I get no response; though I call for help, there is no justice. He has blocked my way so I cannot pass; He has veiled my paths with darkness. He has stripped me of my honor and removed the crown from my head. He tears me down on every side until I am gone; He uproots my hope like a tree. His anger burns against me, and He counts me among His enemies. His troops advance together; they construct a ramp against me and encamp around my tent. He has removed my brothers from me; my acquaintances have abandoned me. My kinsmen have failed me, and my friends have forgotten me. My guests and maidservants count me as a stranger; I am a foreigner in their sight. I call for my servant, but he does not answer, though I implore him with my own mouth. My breath is repulsive to my wife, and I am loathsome to my own family. Even little boys scorn me; when I appear, they deride me. All my best friends despise me, and those I love have turned against me. My skin and flesh cling to my bones; I have escaped by the skin of my teeth. Have pity on me, my friends, have pity, for the hand of God has struck me. Why do you persecute me as God does? Will you never get enough of my flesh? I wish that my words were recorded and inscribed in a book, by an iron stylus on lead, or chiseled in stone forever. But I know that my Redeemer lives, and in the end He will stand upon the earth. Even after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God. I will see Him for myself; my eyes will behold Him, and not as a stranger. How my heart yearns within me! If you say, 'Let us persecute him, since the root of the matter lies with him,' then you should fear the sword yourselves, because wrath brings punishment by the sword, so that you may know there is a judgment."

Then Zophar the Naamathite replied:

"So my anxious thoughts compel me to answer, because of the turmoil within me. I have heard a rebuke that insults me, and my understanding prompts a reply. Do you not know that from antiquity, since man was placed on the earth, the triumph of the wicked has been brief and the joy of the godless momentary? Though his arrogance reaches the heavens, and his head touches the clouds, he will perish forever, like his own dung; those who had seen him will ask, 'Where is he?' He will fly away like a dream, never to be found; he will be chased away like a vision in the night. The eye that saw him will see him no more, and his place will no longer behold him. His sons will seek the favor of the poor, for his own hands must return his wealth. The youthful vigor that fills his bones will lie down with him in the dust. Though evil is sweet in his mouth and he conceals it under his tongue, though he cannot bear to let it go and keeps it in his mouth, yet in his stomach his food sours into the venom of cobras within him. He swallows wealth but vomits it out; God will force it from his stomach. He will suck the poison of cobras; the fangs of a viper will kill him. He will not enjoy the streams, the rivers flowing with honey and cream. He must return the fruit of his labor without consuming it; he cannot enjoy the profits of his trading. For he has oppressed and forsaken the poor; he has seized houses he did not build. Because his

appetite is never satisfied, he cannot escape with his treasure. Nothing is left for him to consume; thus his prosperity will not endure. In the midst of his plenty, he will be distressed; the full force of misery will come upon him. When he has filled his stomach, God will vent His fury upon him, raining it down on him as he eats. Though he flees from an iron weapon, a bronze-tipped arrow will pierce him. It is drawn out of his back, the gleaming point from his liver. Terrors come over him. Total darkness is reserved for his treasures. A fire unfanned will consume him and devour what is left in his tent. The heavens will expose his iniquity, and the earth will rise up against him. The possessions of his house will be removed, flowing away on the day of God's wrath. This is the wicked man's portion from God, the inheritance God has appointed him."

Then Job answered:

"Listen carefully to my words; let this be your consolation to me. Bear with me while I speak; then, after I have spoken, you may go on mocking. Is my complaint against a man? Then why should I not be impatient? Look at me and be appalled; put your hand over your mouth. When I remember, terror takes hold, and my body trembles in horror. Why do the wicked live on, growing old and increasing in power? Their descendants are established around them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their homes are safe from fear; no rod of punishment from God is upon them. Their bulls breed without fail; their cows bear calves and do not miscarry. They send forth their little ones like a flock; their children skip about, singing to the tambourine and lyre and making merry at the sound of the flute. They spend their days in prosperity and go down to Sheol in peace. Yet they say to God: 'Leave us alone! For we have no desire to know Your ways. Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him, and what would we gain if we pray to Him?' Still, their prosperity is not in their own hands, so I stay far from the counsel of the wicked. How often is the lamp of the wicked put out? Does disaster come upon them? Does God, in His anger, apportion destruction? Are they like straw before the wind, like chaff swept away by a storm? It is said that God lays up one's punishment for his children. Let God repay the man himself, so he will know it. Let his eyes see his own destruction; let him drink for himself the wrath of the Almighty. For what does he care about his household after him, when the number of his months has run out? Can anyone teach knowledge to God, since He judges those on high? One man dies full of vigor, completely secure and at ease. His body is well nourished, and his bones are rich with marrow. Yet another man dies in the bitterness of his soul, having never tasted prosperity. But together they lie down in the dust, and worms cover them both. Behold, I know your thoughts full well, the schemes by which you would wrong me. For you say, 'Where now is the nobleman's house, and where are the tents in which the wicked dwell?' Have you never asked those who travel the roads? Do you not accept their reports? Indeed, the evil man is spared from the day of calamity, delivered from the day of wrath. Who denounces his behavior to his face? Who repays him for what he has done? He is carried to the grave, and watch is kept over his tomb. The clods of the valley are sweet to him; everyone follows behind him, and those before him are without number. So how can you comfort me with empty words? For your answers remain full of falsehood."

Then Eliphaz the Temanite replied:

"Can a man be of use to God? Can even a wise man benefit Him? Does it delight the Almighty that you are righteous? Does He profit if your ways are blameless? Is it for your reverence that He rebukes you and enters into judgment against you? Is not your wickedness great? Are not your iniquities endless? For you needlessly demanded security from your brothers and deprived the naked of their clothing. You gave no water to the weary and withheld food from the famished, while the land belonged to a mighty man, and a man of honor lived on it. You sent widows away empty-handed, and the strength of the fatherless was crushed. Therefore snares surround you, and sudden peril terrifies you; it is so dark you cannot see, and a flood of water covers you. Is not God as high as the heavens? Look at the highest stars, how lofty they are! Yet you say: 'What does God know? Does He judge through thick darkness? Thick clouds veil Him so He does not see us as He traverses the vault of heaven.' Will you stay on the ancient path that wicked men have trod? They were snatched away before their time, and their foundations were swept away by a flood. They said to God, 'Depart from us. What can the Almighty do to us?' But it was He who filled their houses with good things; so I stay far from the counsel of the wicked. The righteous see it and are glad; the innocent mock them: 'Surely our foes are destroyed, and fire has consumed their excess.' Reconcile now and be at peace with Him; thereby good will come to you. Receive instruction from His mouth, and lay up His words in your heart. If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored. If you remove injustice from your tents and consign your gold to the dust and the gold of Ophir to the stones of the ravines, then the Almighty will be your gold and the finest silver for you. Surely then you will delight in the Almighty and lift up your face to God. You will pray to Him, and He will hear you, and you will fulfill your vows. Your decisions will be carried out, and light will shine on your ways. When men are brought low and you say, 'Lift

them up!' then He will save the lowly. He will deliver even one who is not innocent, rescuing him through the cleanness of your hands."

Then Job answered:

"Even today my complaint is bitter. His hand is heavy despite my groaning. If only I knew where to find Him, so that I could go to His seat. I would plead my case before Him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would learn how He would answer, and consider what He would say. Would He contend with me in His great power? No, He would certainly take note of me. Then an upright man could reason with Him, and I would be delivered forever from my Judge. If I go east, He is not there, and if I go west, I cannot find Him. When He is at work in the north, I cannot behold Him; when He turns to the south, I cannot see Him. Yet He knows the way I have taken; when He has tested me, I will come forth as gold. My feet have followed in His tracks; I have kept His way without turning aside. I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my daily bread. But He is unchangeable, and who can oppose Him? He does what He desires. For He carries out His decree against me, and He has many such plans. Therefore I am terrified in His presence; when I consider this, I fear Him. God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me. Yet I am not silenced by the darkness, by the thick darkness that covers my face.''

"Why does the Almighty not reserve times for judgment? Why may those who know Him never see His days? Men move boundary stones; they pasture stolen flocks. They drive away the donkey of the fatherless and take the widow's ox in pledge. They push the needy off the road and force all the poor of the land into hiding. Indeed, like wild donkeys in the desert, the poor go to work foraging for food; the wasteland is food for their children. They gather fodder in the fields and glean the vineyards of the wicked. Without clothing, they spend the night naked; they have no covering against the cold. Drenched by mountain rains, they huddle against the rocks for want of shelter. The fatherless infant is snatched from the breast; the nursing child of the poor is seized for a debt. Without clothing, they wander about naked. They carry the sheaves, but still go hungry. They crush olives within their walls; they tread the winepresses, but go thirsty. From the city, men groan, and the souls of the wounded cry out, yet God charges no one with wrongdoing. Then there are those who rebel against the light, not knowing its ways or staying on its paths. When daylight is gone, the murderer rises to kill the poor and needy; in the night he is like a thief. The eye of the adulterer watches for twilight. Thinking, 'No eye will see me,' he covers his face. In the dark they dig through houses; by day they shut themselves in, never to experience the light. For to them, deep darkness is their morning; surely they are friends with the terrors of darkness! They are but foam on the surface of the water; their portion of the land is cursed, so that no one turns toward their vineyards. As drought and heat consume the melting snow, so Sheol steals those who have sinned. The womb forgets them; the worm feeds on them; they are remembered no more. So injustice is broken like a tree. They prey on the barren and childless, and show no kindness to the widow. Yet by His power, God drags away the mighty; though rising up, they have no assurance of life. He gives them a sense of security, but His eyes are on their ways. They are exalted for a moment, then they are gone; they are brought low and gathered up like all others; they are cut off like heads of grain. If this is not so, then who can prove me a liar and reduce my words to nothing?"

Then Bildad the Shuhite replied:

"Dominion and awe belong to God; He establishes harmony in the heights of heaven. Can His troops be numbered? On whom does His light not rise? How then can a man be just before God? How can one born of woman be pure? If even the moon does not shine, and the stars are not pure in His sight, how much less man, who is but a maggot, and the son of man, who is but a worm!"

Then Job answered:

"How you have helped the powerless and saved the arm that is feeble! How you have counseled the unwise and provided fully sound insight! To whom have you uttered these words? And whose spirit spoke through you? The dead tremble — those beneath the waters and those who dwell in them. Sheol is naked before God, and Abaddon has no covering. He stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the earth upon nothing. He wraps up the waters in His clouds, yet the clouds do not burst under their own weight. He covers the face of the full moon, spreading over it His cloud. He has inscribed a horizon on the face of the waters at the boundary between light and darkness. The foundations of heaven quake, astounded at His rebuke. By His power He stirred the sea; by His understanding He shattered Rahab. By His breath the skies were cleared; His hand pierced the fleeing serpent. Indeed, these are but the fringes of His ways; how faint is the whisper we hear of Him! Who then can understand the thunder of His power?"

Job continued his discourse:

"As surely as God lives, who has deprived me of justice — the Almighty, who has embittered my soul — as long as my breath is still within me and the breath of God remains in my nostrils, my lips will not speak wickedness, and

my tongue will not utter deceit. I will never say that you are right; I will maintain my integrity until I die. I will cling to my righteousness and never let go. As long as I live, my conscience will not accuse me.

May my enemy be like the wicked and my opponent like the unjust. For what is the hope of the godless when he is cut off, when God takes away his life? Will God hear his cry when distress comes upon him? Will he delight in the Almighty? Will he call upon God at all times? I will instruct you in the power of God. I will not conceal the ways of the Almighty. Surely all of you have seen it for yourselves. Why then do you keep up this empty talk? This is the wicked man's portion from God — the heritage the ruthless receive from the Almighty. Though his sons are many, they are destined for the sword; and his offspring will never have enough food. His survivors will be buried by the plague, and their widows will not weep for them. Though he heaps up silver like dust and piles up a wardrobe like clay, what he lays up, the righteous will wear, and his silver will be divided by the innocent. The house he built is like a moth's cocoon, like a hut set up by a watchman. He lies down wealthy, but will do so no more; when he opens his eyes, all is gone. Terrors overtake him like a flood; a tempest sweeps him away in the night. The east wind carries him away, and he is gone; it sweeps him out of his place. It hurls itself against him without mercy as he flees headlong from its power. It claps its hands at him and hisses him out of his place."

"Surely there is a mine for silver and a place where gold is refined. Iron is taken from the earth, and copper is smelted from ore. Man puts an end to the darkness; he probes the farthest recesses for ore in deepest darkness. Far from human habitation he cuts a shaft in places forgotten by the foot of man. Far from men he dangles and sways. Food may come from the earth, but from below it is transformed as by fire. Its rocks are the source of sapphires, containing flecks of gold. No bird of prey knows that path; no falcon's eye has seen it. Proud beasts have never trodden it; no lion has ever prowled over it. The miner strikes the flint; he overturns mountains at their base. He hews out channels in the rocks, and his eyes spot every treasure. He stops up the sources of the streams to bring what is hidden to light. But where can wisdom be found, and where does understanding dwell? No man can know its value, nor is it found in the land of the living. The ocean depths say, 'It is not in me,' while the sea declares, 'It is not with me.' It cannot be bought with gold, nor can its price be weighed out in silver. It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in precious onyx or sapphire. Neither gold nor crystal can compare to it, nor jewels of fine gold be exchanged for it. Coral and quartz are unworthy of mention; the price of wisdom is beyond rubies. Topaz from Cush cannot compare to it, nor can it be valued in pure gold. From where, then, does wisdom come, and where does understanding dwell? It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing and concealed from the birds of the air. Abaddon and Death say, 'We have heard a rumor about it.' But God understands its way, and He knows its place. For He looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. When God fixed the weight of the wind and measured out the waters, when He set a limit for the rain and a path for the thunderbolt, then He looked at wisdom and appraised it; He established it and searched it out. And He said to man, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.'"

And Job continued his discourse:

"How I long for the months gone by, for the days when God watched over me, when His lamp shone above my head, and by His light I walked through the darkness, when I was in my prime, when the friendship of God rested on my tent, when the Almighty was still with me and my children were around me, when my steps were bathed in cream and the rock poured out for me streams of oil! When I went out to the city gate and took my seat in the public square, the young men saw me and withdrew, and the old men rose to their feet. The princes refrained from speaking and covered their mouths with their hands. The voices of the nobles were hushed, and their tongues stuck to the roofs of their mouths. For those who heard me called me blessed, and those who saw me commended me, because I rescued the poor who cried out and the fatherless who had no helper. The dying man blessed me, and I made the widow's heart sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; justice was my robe and my turban. I served as eyes to the blind and as feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy, and I took up the case of the stranger. I shattered the fangs of the unjust and snatched the prey from his teeth. So I thought: 'I will die in my nest and multiply my days as the sand. My roots will spread out to the waters, and the dew will rest nightly on my branches. My glory is ever new within me, and my bow is renewed in my hand.' Men listened to me with expectation, waiting silently for my counsel. After my words, they spoke no more; my speech settled on them like dew. They waited for me as for rain and drank in my words like spring showers. If I smiled at them, they did not believe it; the light of my countenance was precious. I chose their course and presided as chief. So I dwelt as a king among his troops, as a comforter of the mourners."

"But now they mock me, men younger than I am, whose fathers I would have refused to put with my sheep dogs. What use to me

was the strength of their hands, since their vigor had left them? Gaunt from poverty and hunger, they gnawed the dry land, and the desolate wasteland by night. They plucked mallow among the shrubs, and the roots of the broom tree were their food. They were banished from among men, shouted at like thieves, so that they lived on the slopes of the wadis, among the rocks and in holes in the ground. They cried out among the shrubs and huddled beneath the nettles. A senseless and nameless brood, they were driven off the land. And now they mock me in song; I have become a byword among them. They abhor me and keep far from me; they do not hesitate to spit in my face. Because God has unstrung my bow and afflicted me, they have cast off restraint in my presence. The rabble arises at my right; they lay snares for my feet and build siege ramps against me. They tear up my path; they profit from my destruction, with no one to restrain them. They advance as through a wide breach; through the ruins they keep rolling in.

Terrors are turned loose against me; they drive away my dignity as by the wind, and my prosperity has passed like a cloud. And now my soul is poured out within me; days of affliction grip me. Night pierces my bones, and my gnawing pains never rest. With great force He grasps my garment; He seizes me by the collar of my tunic. He throws me into the mud, and I have become like dust and ashes. I cry out to You for help, but You do not answer; when I stand up, You merely look at me. You have ruthlessly turned on me; You oppose me with Your strong hand. You snatch me up into the wind and drive me before it; You toss me about in the storm. Yes, I know that You will bring me down to death, to the place appointed for all the living. Yet no one stretches out his hand against a ruined man when he cries for help in his distress. Have I not wept for those in trouble? Has my soul not grieved for the needy? But when I hoped for good, evil came; when I looked for light, darkness fell. I am churning within and cannot rest; days of affliction confront me. I go about blackened, but not by the sun. I stand up in the assembly and cry for help. I have become a brother of jackals, a companion of ostriches. My skin grows black and peels, and my bones burn with fever. My harp is tuned to mourning and my flute to the sound of weeping.''

"I have made a covenant with my eyes. How then could I gaze with desire at a virgin? For what is the allotment of God from above, or the heritage from the Almighty on high? Does not disaster come to the unjust and calamity to the workers of iniquity? Does He not see my ways and count my every step? If I have walked in falsehood or my foot has rushed to deceit, let God weigh me with honest scales, that He may know my integrity. If my steps have turned from the path, if my heart has followed my eyes, or if impurity has stuck to my hands, then may another eat what I have sown, and may my crops be uprooted. If my heart has been enticed by my neighbor's wife, or I have lurked at his door, then may my own wife grind grain for another, and may other men sleep with her. For that would be a heinous crime, an iniquity to be judged. For it is a fire that burns down to Abaddon; it would root out my entire harvest. If I have rejected the cause of my manservant or maidservant when they made a complaint against me, what will I do when God rises to judge? How will I answer when called to account? Did not He who made me in the womb also make them? Did not the same One form us in the womb? If I have denied the desires of the poor or allowed the widow's eyes to fail, if I have eaten my morsel alone, not sharing it with the fatherless — though from my youth I reared him as would a father, and from my mother's womb I guided the widow — if I have seen one perish for lack of clothing, or a needy man without a cloak, if his heart has not blessed me for warming him with the fleece of my sheep, if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless because I saw that I had support in the gate, then may my arm fall from my shoulder and be torn from its socket. For calamity from God terrifies me, and His splendor I cannot overpower. If I have put my trust in gold or called pure gold my security, if I have rejoiced in my great wealth because my hand had gained so much, if I have beheld the sun in its radiance or the moon moving in splendor, so that my heart was secretly enticed and my hand threw a kiss from my mouth, this would also be an iniquity to be judged, for I would have denied God on high. If I have rejoiced in my enemy's ruin, or exulted when evil befell him — I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking for his life with a curse — if the men of my house have not said, 'Who is there who has not had his fill?'— but no stranger had to lodge on the street, for my door has been open to the traveler — if I have covered my transgressions like Adam by hiding my guilt in my heart, because I greatly feared the crowds and the contempt of the clans terrified me, so that I kept silent and would not go outside — (Oh, that I had one to hear me! Here is my signature. Let the Almighty answer me; let my accuser compose an indictment. Surely I would carry it on my shoulder and wear it like a crown. I would give account of all my steps; I would approach Him like a prince.)— if my land cries out against me and its furrows weep together, if I have devoured its produce without payment or broken the spirit of its tenants, then let briers grow instead of wheat and stinkweed instead of barley."

Thus conclude the words of Job.

So these three men stopped answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.

This kindled the anger of Elihu son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram. He burned with anger against Job for justifying himself rather than God, and he burned with anger against Job's three friends because they had failed to refute Job, and yet had condemned him.

Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job because the others were older than he. But when he saw that the three men had no further reply, his anger was kindled. So Elihu son of Barachel the Buzite declared:

> "I am young in years, while you are old; that is why I was timid and afraid to tell you what I know. I thought that age should speak, and many years should teach wisdom. But there is a spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding. It is not only the old who are wise, or the elderly who understand justice. Therefore I say, 'Listen to me; I too will declare what I know.' Indeed, I waited while you spoke; I listened to your reasoning; as you searched for words, I paid you full attention. But no one proved Job wrong; not one of you rebutted his arguments. So do not claim, 'We have found wisdom; let God, not man, refute him.' But Job has not directed his words against me, and I will not answer him with your arguments. Job's friends are dismayed, with no more to say; words have escaped them. Must I wait, now that they are silent, now that they stand and no longer reply? I too will answer; yes, I will declare what I know. For I am full of words, and my spirit within me compels me. Behold, my belly is like unvented wine; it is about to burst like a new wineskin. I must speak and find relief; I must open my lips and respond. I will be partial to no one, nor will I flatter any man. For I do not know how to flatter, or my Maker would remove me in an instant."
>
> "But now, O Job, hear my speech, and listen to all my words. Behold, I will open my mouth; my address is on the tip of my tongue. My words are from an upright heart, and my lips speak sincerely what I know. The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life. Refute me if you can; prepare your case and confront me. I am just like you before God; I was also formed from clay. Surely no fear of me should terrify you; nor will my hand be heavy upon you. Surely you have spoken in my hearing, and I have heard these very words: 'I am pure, without transgression; I am clean, with no iniquity in me. Yet God finds occasions against me; He counts me as His enemy. He puts my feet in the stocks; He watches over all my paths.' Behold, you are not right in this matter. I will answer you, for God is greater than man. Why do you complain to Him that He answers nothing a man asks? For God speaks in one way and in another, yet no one notices. In a dream, in a vision in the night, when deep sleep falls upon men as they slumber on their beds, He opens their ears and terrifies them with warnings to turn a man from wrongdoing and keep him from pride, to preserve his soul from the Pit and his life from perishing by the sword. A man is also chastened on his bed with pain and constant distress in his bones, so that he detests his bread, and his soul loathes his favorite food. His flesh wastes away from sight, and his hidden bones protrude. He draws near to the Pit, and his life to the messengers of death. Yet if there is a messenger on his side, one mediator in a thousand, to tell a man what is right for him, to be gracious to him and say, 'Spare him from going down to the Pit; I have found his ransom,' then his flesh is refreshed like a child's; he returns to the days of his youth. He prays to God and finds favor; he sees God's face and shouts for joy, and God restores His righteousness to that man. Then he sings before men with these words: 'I have sinned and perverted what was right; yet I did not get what I deserved. He redeemed my soul from going down to the Pit, and I will live to see the light.' Behold, all these things God does to a man, two or even three times, to bring back his soul from the Pit, that he may be enlightened with the light of life. Pay attention, Job, and listen to me; be silent, and I will speak. But if you have something to say, answer me; speak up, for I would like to vindicate you. But if not, then listen to me; be quiet, and I will teach you wisdom."

Then Elihu continued:

> "Hear my words, O wise men; give ear to me, O men of learning. For the ear tests words as the mouth tastes food. Let us choose for ourselves what is right; let us learn together what is good. For Job has declared, 'I am righteous, yet God has deprived me of justice. Would I lie about my case? My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.' What man is like Job, who drinks up derision like water? He keeps company with evildoers and walks with wicked men. For he has said, 'It profits a man nothing that he should delight in God.' Therefore listen to me, O men of understanding. Far be it from God to do wrong, and from the Almighty to act unjustly. For according to a man's deeds He repays him; according to a man's ways He brings consequences. Indeed, it is true that God does not act wickedly, and the Almighty does not pervert justice. Who gave Him charge over the earth? Who appointed Him over the whole world? If He were to set His heart to it and withdraw His Spirit and breath, all flesh would perish together and mankind would return to the dust. If you have understanding, hear this; listen to my words. Could one who hates justice govern? Will you condemn the just and mighty One, who says to kings, 'You are worthless!' and to nobles, 'You

are wicked,' who is not partial to princes and does not favor rich over poor? For they are all the work of His hands. They die in an instant, in the middle of the night. The people convulse and pass away; the mighty are removed without human hand. For His eyes are on the ways of a man, and He sees his every step. There is no darkness or deep shadow where the workers of iniquity can hide. For God need not examine a man further or have him approach for judgment. He shatters the mighty without inquiry and sets up others in their place. Therefore, He recognizes their deeds; He overthrows them in the night and they are crushed. He strikes them for their wickedness in full view, because they turned aside from Him and had no regard for any of His ways. They caused the cry of the poor to come before Him, and He heard the outcry of the afflicted. But when He remains silent, who can condemn Him? When He hides His face, who can see Him? Yet He watches over both man and nation, that godless men should not rule or lay snares for the people. Suppose someone says to God, 'I have endured my punishment; I will offend no more. Teach me what I cannot see; if I have done wrong, I will not do it again.' Should God repay you on your own terms when you have disavowed Him? You must choose, not I; so tell me what you know. Men of understanding will declare to me, and the wise men who hear me will say: 'Job speaks without knowledge; his words lack insight.' If only Job were tried to the utmost for answering like a wicked man. For he adds rebellion to his sin; he claps his hands among us and multiplies his words against God."

And Elihu went on to say:

"Do you think this is just? You say, 'I am more righteous than God.' For you ask, 'What does it profit me, and what benefit do I gain apart from sin?' I will reply to you and to your friends as well. Look to the heavens and see; gaze at the clouds high above you. If you sin, what do you accomplish against Him? If you multiply your transgressions, what do you do to Him? If you are righteous, what do you give Him, or what does He receive from your hand? Your wickedness affects only a man like yourself, and your righteousness only a son of man. Men cry out under great oppression; they plead for relief from the arm of the mighty. But no one asks, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives us songs in the night, who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the birds of the air?' There they cry out, but He does not answer, because of the pride of evil men. Surely God does not listen to empty pleas, and the Almighty does not take note of it. How much less, then, when you say that you do not see Him, that your case is before Him and you must wait for Him, and further, that in His anger He has not punished or taken much notice of folly! So Job opens his mouth in vain and multiplies words without knowledge."

And Elihu continued:

"Bear with me a little longer, and I will show you that there is more to be said on God's behalf. I get my knowledge from afar, and I will ascribe justice to my Maker. For truly my words are free of falsehood; one perfect in knowledge is with you. Indeed, God is mighty, but He despises no one; He is mighty in strength of understanding. He does not keep the wicked alive, but He grants justice to the afflicted. He does not take His eyes off the righteous, but He enthrones them with kings and exalts them forever. And if men are bound with chains, caught in cords of affliction, then He tells them their deeds and how arrogantly they have transgressed. He opens their ears to correction and commands that they turn from iniquity. If they obey and serve Him, then they end their days in prosperity and their years in happiness. But if they do not obey, then they perish by the sword and die without knowledge. The godless in heart harbor resentment; even when He binds them, they do not cry for help. They die in their youth, among the male shrine prostitutes. God rescues the afflicted by their affliction and opens their ears in oppression. Indeed, He drew you from the jaws of distress to a spacious and broad place, to a table full of richness. But now you are laden with the judgment due the wicked; judgment and justice have seized you. Be careful that no one lures you with riches; do not let a large bribe lead you astray. Can your wealth or all your mighty effort keep you from distress? Do not long for the night, when people vanish from their homes. Be careful not to turn to iniquity, for this you have preferred to affliction. Behold, God is exalted in His power. Who is a teacher like Him? Who has appointed His way for Him, or told Him, 'You have done wrong'? Remember to magnify His work, which men have praised in song. All mankind has seen it; men behold it from afar. Indeed, God is great — beyond our knowledge; the number of His years is unsearchable. For He draws up drops of water which distill the rain from the mist, which the clouds pour out and shower abundantly on mankind. Furthermore, who can understand how the clouds spread out, how the thunder roars from His pavilion? See how He scatters His lightning around Him and covers the depths of the sea. For by these He judges the nations and provides food in abundance. He fills His hands with lightning and commands it to strike its mark. The thunder declares His presence; even the cattle regard the rising storm."

"At this my heart also pounds and leaps from its place. Listen closely to the thunder of His voice and the rumbling that comes from His

mouth. He unleashes His lightning beneath the whole sky and sends it to the ends of the earth. Then there comes a roaring sound; He thunders with His majestic voice. He does not restrain the lightning when His voice resounds. God thunders wondrously with His voice; He does great things we cannot comprehend. For He says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth,' and to the gentle rain, 'Pour out a mighty downpour.' He seals up the hand of every man, so that all men may know His work. The wild animals enter their lairs; they settle down in their dens. The tempest comes from its chamber, and the cold from the driving north winds. By the breath of God the ice is formed and the watery expanses are frozen. He loads the clouds with moisture; He scatters His lightning through them. They swirl about, whirling at His direction, accomplishing all that He commands over the face of all the earth. Whether for punishment or for His land, He accomplishes this in His loving devotion. Listen to this, O Job; stand still and consider the wonders of God. Do you know how God dispatches the clouds or makes the lightning flash? Do you understand how the clouds float, those wonders of Him who is perfect in knowledge? You whose clothes get hot when the land lies hushed under the south wind, can you, like Him, spread out the skies, as strong as a mirror of bronze? Teach us what we should say to Him; we cannot draw up our case because of our darkness. Should He be told that I want to speak? Would a man ask to be swallowed up? Now no one can gaze at the sun when it is bright in the skies after the wind has swept them clean. Out of the north He comes in golden splendor; awesome majesty surrounds Him. The Almighty is beyond our reach; He is exalted in power! In His justice and great righteousness He does not oppress. Therefore, men fear Him, for He is not partial to the wise in heart."

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:

"Who is this who obscures My counsel by words without knowledge? Now brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall inform Me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who fixed its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its foundations set, or who laid its cornerstone, while the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Who enclosed the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, when I made the clouds its garment and thick darkness its blanket, when I fixed its boundaries and set in place its bars and doors, and I declared: 'You may come this far, but no farther; here your proud waves must stop'? In your days, have you commanded the morning or assigned the dawn its place, that it might spread to the ends of the earth and shake the wicked out of it? The earth takes shape like clay under a seal; its hills stand out like the folds of a garment. Light is withheld from the wicked, and their upraised arm is broken. Have you journeyed to the vents of the sea or walked in the trenches of the deep? Have the gates of death been revealed to you? Have you seen the gates of the shadow of death? Have you surveyed the extent of the earth? Tell Me, if you know all this. Where is the way to the home of light? Do you know where darkness resides, so you can lead it back to its border? Do you know the paths to its home? Surely you know, for you were already born! And the number of your days is great! Have you entered the storehouses of snow or observed the storehouses of hail, which I hold in reserve for times of trouble, for the day of war and battle? In which direction is the lightning dispersed, or the east wind scattered over the earth? Who cuts a channel for the flood or clears a path for the thunderbolt, to bring rain on a barren land, on a desert where no man lives, to satisfy the parched wasteland and make it sprout with tender grass? Does the rain have a father? Who has begotten the drops of dew? From whose womb does the ice emerge? Who gives birth to the frost from heaven, when the waters become hard as stone and the surface of the deep is frozen? Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades or loosen the belt of Orion? Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the Bear and her cubs? Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set their dominion over the earth? Can you command the clouds so that a flood of water covers you? Can you send the lightning bolts on their way? Do they report to you, 'Here we are'? Who has put wisdom in the heart or given understanding to the mind? Who has the wisdom to count the clouds? Or who can tilt the water jars of the heavens when the dust hardens into a mass and the clods of earth stick together? Can you hunt the prey for a lioness or satisfy the hunger of young lions when they crouch in their dens and lie in wait in the thicket? Who provides food for the raven when its young cry out to God as they wander about for lack of food?"

"Do you know when mountain goats give birth? Have you watched the doe bear her fawn? Can you count the months they are pregnant? Do you know the time they give birth? They crouch down and bring forth their young; they deliver their newborn. Their young ones thrive and grow up in the open field; they leave and do not return. Who set the wild donkey free? Who released the swift donkey from the harness? I made the wilderness his home and the salt flats his dwelling. He scorns the tumult of the city and never hears the shouts of a driver. He roams the mountains

for pasture, searching for any green thing. Will the wild ox consent to serve you? Will he stay by your manger at night? Can you hold him to the furrow with a harness? Will he plow the valleys behind you? Can you rely on his great strength? Will you leave your hard work to him? Can you trust him to bring in your grain and gather it to your threshing floor? The wings of the ostrich flap joyfully, but cannot match the pinions and feathers of the stork. For she leaves her eggs on the ground and lets them warm in the sand. She forgets that a foot may crush them, or a wild animal may trample them. She treats her young harshly, as if not her own, with no concern that her labor was in vain. For God has deprived her of wisdom; He has not endowed her with understanding. Yet when she proudly spreads her wings, she laughs at the horse and its rider. Do you give strength to the horse or adorn his neck with a mane? Do you make him leap like a locust, striking terror with his proud snorting? He paws in the valley and rejoices in his strength; he charges into battle. He laughs at fear, frightened of nothing; he does not turn back from the sword. A quiver rattles at his side, along with a flashing spear and lance. Trembling with excitement, he devours the distance; he cannot stand still when the ram's horn sounds. At the blast of the horn, he snorts with fervor. He catches the scent of battle from afar, the shouts of captains and the cry of war. Does the hawk take flight by your understanding and spread his wings toward the south? Does the eagle soar at your command and make his nest on high? He dwells on a cliff and lodges there; his stronghold is on a rocky crag. From there he spies out food; his eyes see it from afar. His young ones feast on blood; and where the slain are, there he is."

And the LORD said to Job:

"Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who argues with God give an answer."

Then Job answered the LORD:

"Behold, I am insignificant. How can I reply to You? I place my hand over my mouth. I have spoken once, but I have no answer — twice, but I have nothing to add."

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:

"Now brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall inform Me. Would you really annul My justice? Would you condemn Me to justify yourself? Do you have an arm like God's? Can you thunder with a voice like His? Then adorn yourself with majesty and splendor, and clothe yourself with honor and glory. Unleash the fury of your wrath; look on every proud man and bring him low. Look on every proud man and humble him; trample the wicked where they stand. Bury them together in the dust; imprison them in the grave. Then I will confess to you that your own right hand can save you. Look at Behemoth, which I made along with you. He feeds on grass like an ox. See the strength of his loins and the power in the muscles of his belly. His tail sways like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are tightly knit. His bones are tubes of bronze; his limbs are rods of iron. He is the foremost of God's works; only his Maker can draw the sword against him. The hills yield him their produce, while all the beasts of the field play nearby. He lies under the lotus plants, hidden among the reeds of the marsh. The lotus plants conceal him in their shade; the willows of the brook surround him. Though the river rages, Behemoth is unafraid; he remains secure, though the Jordan surges to his mouth. Can anyone capture him as he looks on, or pierce his nose with a snare?"

"Can you pull in Leviathan with a hook or tie down his tongue with a rope? Can you put a cord through his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook? Will he beg you for mercy or speak to you softly? Will he make a covenant with you to take him as a slave for life? Can you pet him like a bird or put him on a leash for your maidens? Will traders barter for him or divide him among the merchants? Can you fill his hide with harpoons or his head with fishing spears? If you lay a hand on him, you will remember the battle and never repeat it! Surely hope of overcoming him is false. Is not the sight of him overwhelming? No one is so fierce as to rouse Leviathan. Then who is able to stand against Me? Who has given to Me that I should repay him? Everything under heaven is Mine. I cannot keep silent about his limbs, his power and graceful form. Who can strip off his outer coat? Who can approach him with a bridle? Who can open his jaws, ringed by his fearsome teeth? His rows of scales are his pride, tightly sealed together. One scale is so near to another that no air can pass between them. They are joined to one another; they clasp and cannot be separated. His snorting flashes with light, and his eyes are like the rays of dawn. Firebrands stream from his mouth; fiery sparks shoot forth! Smoke billows from his nostrils as from a boiling pot over burning reeds. His breath sets coals ablaze, and flames pour from his mouth. Strength resides in his neck, and dismay leaps before him. The folds of his flesh are tightly joined; they are firm and immovable. His chest is as hard as a rock, as hard as a lower millstone! When Leviathan rises up, the mighty are terrified; they withdraw before his thrashing. The sword that reaches him has no effect, nor does the spear or dart or arrow. He regards iron as straw and bronze as rotten wood. No arrow can make him flee; slingstones become like chaff to him. A club is regarded as straw, and he laughs at the sound of the lance. His undersides are jagged potsherds, spreading out the mud like a threshing sledge.

> He makes the depths seethe like a cauldron; he makes the sea like a jar of ointment. He leaves a glistening wake behind him; one would think the deep had white hair! Nothing on earth is his equal— a creature devoid of fear! He looks down on all the haughty; he is king over all the proud."

Then Job replied to the LORD:

> "I know that You can do all things and that no plan of Yours can be thwarted. You asked, 'Who is this who conceals My counsel without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak. I will question you, and you shall inform Me.' My ears had heard of You, but now my eyes have seen You. Therefore I despise myself, and I repent in dust and ashes."

After the LORD had spoken these words to Job, He said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is kindled against you and your two friends. For you have not spoken about Me accurately, as My servant Job has. So now, take seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. Then My servant Job will pray for you, for I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. For you have not spoken accurately about Me, as My servant Job has."

So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD had told them; and the LORD accepted Job's prayer.

After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD restored his prosperity and doubled his former possessions. All his brothers and sisters and prior acquaintances came and dined with him in his house. They consoled him and comforted him over all the adversity that the LORD had brought upon him. And each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring.

So the LORD blessed Job's latter days more than his first. He owned 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys. And he also had seven sons and three daughters. He named his first daughter Jemimah, his second Keziah, and his third Keren-happuch. No women as beautiful as Job's daughters could be found in all the land, and their father granted them an inheritance among their brothers.

After this, Job lived 140 years and saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. And so Job died, old and full of years.

Psalms

Book of Psalms

Psalms 1–41

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or set foot on the path of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the Law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, yielding its fruit in season, whose leaf does not wither, and who prospers in all he does. Not so the wicked! For they are like chaff driven off by the wind. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD guards the path of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together, against the LORD and against His Anointed One: “Let us break Their chains and cast away Their cords.” The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord taunts them. Then He rebukes them in His anger, and terrifies them in His fury: “I have installed My King on Zion, upon My holy mountain.” I will proclaim the decree spoken to Me by the LORD: “You are My Son; today I have become Your Father. Ask Me, and I will make the nations Your inheritance, the ends of the earth Your possession. You will break them with an iron scepter; You will shatter them like pottery.” Therefore be wise, O kings; be admonished, O judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish in your rebellion, when His wrath ignites in an instant. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him.

A Psalm of David, when he fled from his son Absalom.

O LORD, how my foes have increased! How many rise up against me! Many say of me, “God will not deliver him.” Selah But You, O LORD, are a shield around me, my glory, and the One who lifts my head. To the LORD I cry aloud, and He answers me from His holy mountain. Selah I lie down and sleep; I wake again, for the LORD sustains me. I will not fear the myriads set against me on every side. Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God! Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked. Salvation belongs to the LORD; may Your blessing be on Your people. Selah

For the choirmaster. With stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.

Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved my distress; show me grace and hear my prayer. How long, O men, will my honor be maligned? How long will you love vanity and seek after lies? Selah Know that the LORD has set apart the godly for Himself; the LORD hears when I call to Him. Be angry, yet do not sin; on your bed, search your heart and be still. Selah Offer the sacrifices of the righteous and trust in the LORD. Many ask, “Who can show us the good?” Shine the light of Your face upon us, O LORD. You have filled my heart with more joy than when grain and new wine abound. I will lie down and sleep in peace, for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

For the choirmaster, to be accompanied by flutes. A Psalm of David.

Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning. Attend to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to You I pray. In the morning, O LORD, You hear my voice; at daybreak I lay my plea before You and wait in expectation. For You are not a God who delights in wickedness; no evil can dwell with You. The boastful cannot stand in Your presence; You hate all workers of iniquity. You destroy those who tell lies; the LORD abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit. But I will enter Your house by the abundance of Your loving devotion; in reverence I will bow down toward Your holy temple. Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies; make straight Your way before me. For not a word they speak can be trusted; destruction lies within them. Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. Declare them guilty, O God; let them fall by their own devices. Drive them out for their many transgressions, for they have rebelled against You. But let all who take refuge in You rejoice; let them ever shout for joy. May You shelter them, that those who love Your name may rejoice in You. For surely You, O LORD, bless the righteous; You surround them with the shield of Your favor.

For the choirmaster. With stringed instruments, according to Sheminith. A Psalm of David.

O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your anger or discipline me in Your wrath. Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I am frail; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are in agony. My soul is deeply distressed. How long, O LORD, how long? Turn, O LORD, and deliver my soul; save me because of Your loving devotion. For there is no mention of You in death; who can praise You from Sheol? I am weary from groaning; all night I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. My eyes fail from grief; they grow dim because of all my foes. Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity, for the LORD has heard my weeping. The LORD has heard my cry for mercy; the LORD accepts my prayer. All my enemies will be ashamed and dismayed; they will turn back in sudden disgrace.

A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning the words of Cush, a Benjamite.

O LORD my God, I take refuge in You; save me and deliver me from all my pursuers, or they will shred my soul like a lion and tear me to pieces with no one to rescue me. O LORD my God, if I have done this, if injustice is on my hands, if I have rewarded my ally with evil, if I have plundered my foe without cause, then may my enemy pursue me and overtake me; may he trample me to the ground and leave my honor in the dust. Selah Arise, O LORD, in Your anger; rise up against the fury of my enemies. Awake, my God, and ordain judgment. Let the assembled peoples gather around You; take Your seat over them on high. The LORD judges the peoples; vindicate me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and integrity. Put an end to the evil of the wicked, but establish the righteous, O righteous God who searches hearts and minds. My shield is with God, who saves the upright in heart. God is a righteous judge and a God who feels indignation each day. If one does not repent, God will sharpen His sword; He has bent and strung His bow. He has prepared His deadly weapons; He ordains His arrows with fire. Behold, the wicked man travails with evil; he conceives trouble and births falsehood. He has dug a hole and hollowed it out; he has fallen into a pit of his own making. His trouble recoils on himself, and his violence falls on his own head. I will thank the LORD for His righteousness and sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.

For the choirmaster. According to Gittith. A Psalm of David.

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth! You have set Your glory above the heavens. From the mouths of children and infants You have ordained praise on account of Your adversaries, to silence the enemy and avenger. When I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place — what is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler of the works of Your hands; You have placed everything under his feet: all sheep and oxen, and even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!

For the choirmaster. To the tune of "The Death of the Son." A Psalm of David.

I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart; I will recount all Your wonders. I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High. When my enemies retreat, they stumble and perish before You. For You have upheld my just cause; You sit on Your throne judging righteously. You have rebuked the nations; You have destroyed the wicked; You have erased their name forever and ever. The enemy has come to eternal ruin, and You have uprooted their cities; the very memory of them has vanished. But the LORD abides forever; He has established His throne for judgment. He judges the world with justice; He governs the people with equity. The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know Your name trust in You, for You, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You. Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion; proclaim His deeds among the nations. For the Avenger of bloodshed remembers; He does not ignore the cry of the afflicted. Be merciful to me, O LORD; see how my enemies afflict me! Lift me up from the gates of death, that I may declare all Your praises — that within the gates of Daughter Zion I may rejoice in Your salvation. The nations have fallen into a pit of their making; their feet are caught in the net they have hidden. The LORD is known by the justice He brings; the wicked are ensnared by the work of their hands. Higgaion Selah The wicked will return to Sheol— all the nations who forget God. For the needy will not always be forgotten; nor the hope of the oppressed forever dashed. Rise up, O LORD, do not let man prevail; let the nations be judged in Your presence. Lay terror upon them, O LORD; let the nations know they are but men. Selah

Why, O LORD, do You stand far off? Why do You hide in times of trouble? In pride the wicked pursue the needy; let them be caught in the schemes they devise. For the wicked man boasts in the cravings of his heart; he blesses the greedy and reviles the LORD. In his pride the wicked man does not seek Him; in all his schemes there is no God. He is secure in his ways at all times; Your lofty judgments are far from him; he sneers at all his foes. He says to himself, "I will not be moved; from age to age I am free of distress." His mouth is full of cursing, deceit, and violence; trouble and malice are under his tongue. He lies in wait near the villages; in ambush he slays the innocent; his eyes watch in stealth for the helpless. He lies in wait like a lion in a thicket; he lurks to seize the oppressed; he catches the lowly in his net. They are crushed and beaten down; the helpless fall prey to his strength. He says to himself, "God has forgotten; He hides His face and never sees." Arise, O LORD! Lift up Your hand, O God! Do not forget the helpless. Why has the wicked man renounced God? He says to himself, "You will never call me to account." But You have regarded trouble and grief; You see to repay it by Your hand. The victim entrusts himself to You; You are the helper of the fatherless. Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer; call him to account for his wickedness until none is left to be found. The LORD is King forever and ever; the nations perish from His land. You have heard, O LORD, the desire of the humble; You will

strengthen their hearts. You will incline Your ear, to vindicate the fatherless and oppressed, that the men of the earth may strike terror no more.

For the choirmaster. Of David.

In the LORD I take refuge. How then can you say to me: "Flee like a bird to your mountain! For behold, the wicked bend their bows. They set their arrow on the string to shoot from the shadows at the upright in heart. If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD is on His heavenly throne. His eyes are watching closely; they examine the sons of men. The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked; His soul hates the lover of violence. On the wicked He will rain down fiery coals and sulfur; a scorching wind will be their portion. For the LORD is righteous; He loves justice. The upright will see His face.

For the choirmaster. According to Sheminith. A Psalm of David.

Help, O LORD, for the godly are no more; the faithful have vanished from among men. They lie to one another; they speak with flattering lips and a double heart. May the LORD cut off all flattering lips and every boastful tongue. They say, "With our tongues we will prevail. We own our lips— who can be our master?" "For the cause of the oppressed and for the groaning of the needy, I will now arise," says the LORD. "I will bring safety to him who yearns." The words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace, like gold purified sevenfold. You, O LORD, will keep us; You will forever guard us from this generation. The wicked wander freely, and vileness is exalted among men.

For the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long must I wrestle in my soul, with sorrow in my heart each day? How long will my enemy dominate me? Consider me and respond, O LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, lest I sleep in death, lest my enemy say, "I have overcome him," and my foes rejoice when I fall. But I have trusted in Your loving devotion; my heart will rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, for He has been good to me.

For the choirmaster. Of David.

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt; their acts are vile. There is no one who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if any understand, if any seek God. All have turned away, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one. Will the workers of iniquity never learn? They devour my people like bread; they refuse to call upon the LORD. There they are, overwhelmed with dread, for God is in the company of the righteous. You sinners frustrate the plans of the oppressed, yet the LORD is their shelter. Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come from Zion! When the LORD restores His captive people, let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad!

A Psalm of David.

O LORD, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy mountain? He who walks with integrity and practices righteousness, who speaks the truth from his heart, who has no slander on his tongue, who does no harm to his neighbor, who casts no scorn on his friend, who despises the vile but honors those who fear the LORD, who does not revise a costly oath, who lends his money without interest and refuses a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken.

A Miktam of David.

Preserve me, O God, for in You I take refuge. I said to the LORD, "You are my Lord; apart from You I have no good thing." As for the saints in the land, they are the excellence in whom all my delight resides. Sorrows will multiply to those who chase other gods. I will not pour out their libations of blood, or speak their names with my lips. The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; You have made my lot secure. The lines of my boundary have fallen in pleasant places; surely my inheritance is delightful. I will bless the LORD who counsels me; even at night my conscience instructs me. I have set the LORD always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will dwell securely. For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, nor will You let Your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand.

A prayer of David.

Hear, O LORD, my righteous plea; listen to my cry. Give ear to my prayer— it comes from lips free of deceit. May my vindication come from Your presence; may Your eyes see what is right. You have tried my heart; You have visited me in the night. You have tested me and found no evil; I have resolved not to sin with my mouth. As for the deeds of men — by the word of Your lips I have avoided the ways of the violent. My steps have held to Your paths; my feet have not slipped. I call on You, O God, for You will answer me. Incline Your ear to me; hear my words. Show the wonders of Your loving devotion, You who save by Your right hand those who seek refuge from their foes. Keep me as the apple of Your eye; hide me in the shadow of Your wings from the wicked who assail me, from my mortal enemies who surround me. They have closed their callous hearts; their mouths speak with arrogance. They have tracked us down, and now surround us; their eyes are set to cast us to the ground,

like a lion greedy for prey, like a young lion lurking in ambush. Arise, O LORD, confront them! Bring them to their knees; deliver me from the wicked by Your sword, from such men, O LORD, by Your hand— from men of the world whose portion is in this life. May You fill the bellies of Your treasured ones and satisfy their sons, so they leave their abundance to their children. As for me, I will behold Your face in righteousness; when I awake, I will be satisfied in Your presence.

For the choirmaster. Of David the servant of the LORD, who sang this song to the LORD on the day the LORD had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. He said:

I love You, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer. My God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies. The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of chaos overwhelmed me. The cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the LORD; I cried to my God for help. From His temple He heard my voice, and my cry for His help reached His ears. Then the earth shook and quaked, and the foundations of the mountains trembled; they were shaken because He burned with anger. Smoke rose from His nostrils, and consuming fire came from His mouth; glowing coals blazed forth. He parted the heavens and came down with dark clouds beneath His feet. He mounted a cherub and flew; He soared on the wings of the wind. He made darkness His hiding place, and storm clouds a canopy around Him. From the brightness of His presence His clouds advanced — hailstones and coals of fire. The LORD thundered from heaven; the voice of the Most High resounded — hailstones and coals of fire. He shot His arrows and scattered the foes; He hurled lightning and routed them. The channels of the sea appeared, and the foundations of the world were exposed, at Your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of Your nostrils. He reached down from on high and took hold of me; He drew me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from foes too mighty for me. They confronted me in my day of calamity, but the LORD was my support. He brought me out into the open; He rescued me because He delighted in me. The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness; He has repaid me according to the cleanness of my hands. For I have kept the ways of the LORD and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all His ordinances are before me; I have not disregarded His statutes. And I have been blameless before Him and kept myself from iniquity. So the LORD has repaid me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His sight. To the faithful You show Yourself faithful, to the blameless You show Yourself blameless; to the pure You show Yourself pure, but to the crooked You show Yourself shrewd. For You save an afflicted people, but You humble those with haughty eyes. For You, O LORD, light my lamp; my God lights up my darkness. For in You I can charge an army, and with my God I can scale a wall. As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the LORD is flawless. He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him. For who is God besides the LORD? And who is the Rock except our God? It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way clear. He makes my feet like those of a deer and stations me upon the heights. He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze. You have given me Your shield of salvation; Your right hand upholds me, and Your gentleness exalts me. You broaden the path beneath me so that my ankles do not give way. I pursued my enemies and overtook them; I did not turn back until they were consumed. I crushed them so they could not rise; they have fallen under my feet. You have armed me with strength for battle; You have subdued my foes beneath me. You have made my enemies retreat before me; I destroyed those who hated me. They cried for help, but there was no one to save them — to the LORD, but He did not answer. I ground them as dust in the face of the wind; I trampled them like mud in the streets. You have delivered me from the strife of the people; You have made me the head of nations; a people I had not known shall serve me. When they hear me, they obey me; foreigners cower before me. Foreigners lose heart and come trembling from their strongholds. The LORD lives, and blessed be my Rock! And may the God of my salvation be exalted— the God who avenges me and subdues nations beneath me, who delivers me from my enemies. You exalt me above my foes; You rescue me from violent men. Therefore I will praise You, O LORD, among the nations; I will sing praises to Your name. Great salvation He brings to His king. He shows loving devotion to His anointed, to David and his descendants forever.

For the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. Without speech or language, without a sound to be heard, their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens He has pitched a tent for the sun. Like a bridegroom emerging from his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course, it rises at one end of the heavens and runs its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth. The Law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is trustworthy, making

wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, bringing joy to the heart; the commandments of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true, being altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them indeed Your servant is warned; in keeping them is great reward. Who can discern his own errors? Cleanse me from my hidden faults. Keep Your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless and cleansed of great transgression. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

For the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you. May He send you help from the sanctuary and sustain you from Zion. May He remember all your gifts and look favorably on your burnt offerings. Selah May He give you the desires of your heart and make all your plans succeed. May we shout for joy at your victory and raise a banner in the name of our God. May the LORD grant all your petitions. Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed; He answers him from His holy heaven with the saving power of His right hand. Some trust in chariots and others in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God. They collapse and fall, but we rise up and stand firm. O LORD, save the king. Answer us on the day we call.

For the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

O LORD, the king rejoices in Your strength. How greatly he exults in Your salvation! You have granted his heart's desire and have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah For You welcomed him with rich blessings; You placed on his head a crown of pure gold. He asked You for life, and You granted it— length of days, forever and ever. Great is his glory in Your salvation; You bestow on him splendor and majesty. For You grant him blessings forever; You cheer him with joy in Your presence. For the king trusts in the LORD; through the loving devotion of the Most High, he will not be shaken. Your hand will apprehend all Your enemies; Your right hand will seize those who hate You. You will place them in a fiery furnace at the time of Your appearing. In His wrath the LORD will engulf them, and the fire will consume them. You will wipe their descendants from the earth, and their offspring from the sons of men. Though they intend You harm, the schemes they devise will not prevail. For You will put them to flight when Your bow is trained upon them. Be exalted, O LORD, in Your strength; we will sing and praise Your power.

For the choirmaster. To the tune of "The Doe of the Dawn." A Psalm of David.

My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Why are You so far from saving me, so far from my words of groaning? I cry out by day, O my God, but You do not answer, and by night, but I have no rest. Yet You are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In You our fathers trusted; they trusted and You delivered them. They cried out to You and were set free; they trusted in You and were not disappointed. But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they sneer and shake their heads: "He trusts in the LORD, let the LORD deliver him; let the LORD rescue him, since He delights in him." Yet You brought me forth from the womb; You made me secure at my mother's breast. From birth I was cast upon You; from my mother's womb You have been my God. Be not far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help. Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. They open their jaws against me like lions that roar and maul. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are disjointed. My heart is like wax; it melts away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You lay me in the dust of death. For dogs surround me; a band of evil men encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet. I can count all my bones; they stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing. But You, O LORD, be not far off; O my Strength, come quickly to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword, my precious life from the power of wild dogs. Save me from the mouth of the lion; at the horns of the wild oxen You have answered me! I will proclaim Your name to my brothers; I will praise You in the assembly. You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All descendants of Jacob, honor Him! All offspring of Israel, revere Him! For He has not despised or detested the torment of the afflicted. He has not hidden His face from him, but has attended to his cry for help. My praise for You resounds in the great assembly; I will fulfill my vows before those who fear You. The poor will eat and be satisfied; those who seek the LORD will praise Him. May your hearts live forever! All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD. All the families of the nations will bow down before Him. For dominion belongs to the LORD and He rules over the nations. All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before Him— even those unable to preserve their lives. Posterity will serve Him; they will declare the Lord to a new generation. They will come and proclaim His righteousness to a people yet unborn — all that He has done.

A Psalm of David.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads

me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for the sake of His name. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

A Psalm of David.

The earth is the LORD's, and the fullness thereof, the world and all who dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters. Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear deceitfully. He will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from the God of his salvation. Such is the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face, O God of Jacob. Selah Lift up your heads, O gates! Be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of Glory may enter! Who is this King of Glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O gates! Be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of Glory may enter! Who is He, this King of Glory? The LORD of Hosts — He is the King of Glory. Selah

Of David.

To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul; in You, my God, I trust. Do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me. Surely none who wait for You will be put to shame; but those who engage in treachery without cause will be disgraced. Show me Your ways, O LORD; teach me Your paths. Guide me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; all day long I wait for You. Remember, O LORD, Your compassion and loving devotion, for they are from age to age. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my rebellious acts; remember me according to Your loving devotion, because of Your goodness, O LORD. Good and upright is the LORD; therefore He shows sinners the way. He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them His way. All the LORD's ways are loving and faithful to those who keep His covenant and His decrees. For the sake of Your name, O LORD, forgive my iniquity, for it is great. Who is the man who fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the path chosen for him. His soul will dwell in prosperity, and his descendants will inherit the land. The LORD confides in those who fear Him, and reveals His covenant to them. My eyes are always on the LORD, for He will free my feet from the mesh. Turn to me and be gracious, for I am lonely and afflicted. The troubles of my heart increase; free me from my distress. Consider my affliction and trouble, and take away all my sins. Consider my enemies, for they are many, and they hate me with vicious hatred. Guard my soul and deliver me; let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in You. May integrity and uprightness preserve me, because I wait for You. Redeem Israel, O God, from all its distress.

Of David.

Vindicate me, O LORD! For I have walked with integrity; I have trusted in the LORD without wavering. Test me, O LORD, and try me; examine my heart and mind. For Your loving devotion is before my eyes, and I have walked in Your truth. I do not sit with deceitful men, nor keep company with hypocrites. I hate the mob of evildoers, and refuse to sit with the wicked. I wash my hands in innocence that I may go about Your altar, O LORD, to raise my voice in thanksgiving and declare all Your wonderful works. O LORD, I love the house where You dwell, the place where Your glory resides. Do not take my soul away with sinners, or my life with men of bloodshed, in whose hands are wicked schemes, whose right hands are full of bribes. But I will walk with integrity; redeem me and be merciful to me. My feet stand on level ground; in the congregations I will bless the LORD.

Of David.

The LORD is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life— whom shall I dread? When the wicked came upon me to devour my flesh, my enemies and foes stumbled and fell. Though an army encamps around me, my heart will not fear; though a war breaks out against me, I will keep my trust. One thing I have asked of the LORD; this is what I desire: to dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and seek Him in His temple. For in the day of trouble He will hide me in His shelter; He will conceal me under the cover of His tent; He will set me high upon a rock. Then my head will be held high above my enemies around me. At His tabernacle I will offer sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the LORD. Hear, O LORD, my voice when I call; be merciful and answer me. My heart said, "Seek His face." Your face, O LORD, I will seek. Hide not Your face from me, nor turn away Your servant in anger. You have been my helper; do not leave me or forsake me, O God of my salvation. Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me. Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me on a level path, because of my oppressors. Do not hand me over to the will of my foes, for false witnesses rise up against me, breathing out violence. Still I am certain to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait patiently for the LORD; be strong and courageous. Wait patiently for the LORD!

Of David.

To You, O LORD, I call; be not deaf to me, O my Rock. For if You remain silent, I will be like those descending to the Pit. Hear my cry for mercy when I call to You for help, when I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary. Do not drag me away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, who speak peace to their neighbors while malice is in their hearts. Repay them according to their deeds and for their works of evil. Repay them for what their hands have done; bring back on them what they deserve. Since they show no regard for the works of the LORD or what His hands have done, He will tear them down and never rebuild them. Blessed be the LORD, for He has heard my cry for mercy. The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and I am helped. Therefore my heart rejoices, and I give thanks to Him with my song. The LORD is the strength of His people, a stronghold of salvation for His anointed. Save Your people and bless Your inheritance; shepherd them and carry them forever.

A Psalm of David.

Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; worship the LORD in the splendor of His holiness. The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders; the LORD is heard over many waters. The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is majestic. The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD shatters the cedars of Lebanon. He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox. The voice of the LORD strikes with flames of fire. The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the Wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the LORD twists the oaks and strips the forests bare. And in His temple all cry, "Glory!" The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD is enthroned as King forever. The LORD gives His people strength; the LORD blesses His people with peace.

A Psalm. A song for the dedication of the temple. Of David.

I will exalt You, O LORD, for You have lifted me up and have not allowed my foes to rejoice over me. O LORD my God, I cried to You for help, and You healed me. O LORD, You pulled me up from Sheol; You spared me from descending into the Pit. Sing to the LORD, O you His saints, and praise His holy name. For His anger is fleeting, but His favor lasts a lifetime. Weeping may stay the night, but joy comes in the morning. In prosperity I said, "I will never be shaken." O LORD, You favored me; You made my mountain stand strong. When You hid Your face, I was dismayed. To You, O LORD, I called, and I begged my Lord for mercy: "What gain is there in my bloodshed, in my descent to the Pit? Will the dust praise You? Will it proclaim Your faithfulness? Hear me, O LORD, and have mercy; O LORD, be my helper." You turned my mourning into dancing; You peeled off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing Your praises and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks forever.

For the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

In You, O LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; save me by Your righteousness. Incline Your ear to me; come quickly to my rescue. Be my rock of refuge, the stronghold of my deliverance. For You are my rock and my fortress; lead me and guide me for the sake of Your name. You free me from the net laid out for me, for You are my refuge. Into Your hands I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O LORD, God of truth. I hate those who cling to worthless idols, but in the LORD I trust. I will be glad and rejoice in Your loving devotion, for You have seen my affliction; You have known the anguish of my soul. You have not delivered me to the enemy; You have set my feet in the open. Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eyes fail from sorrow, my soul and body as well. For my life is consumed with grief and my years with groaning; my iniquity has drained my strength, and my bones are wasting away. Among all my enemies I am a disgrace, and among my neighbors even more. I am dreaded by my friends — they flee when they see me on the street. I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind. I am like a broken vessel. For I hear the slander of many; there is terror on every side. They conspire against me and plot to take my life. But I trust in You, O LORD; I say, "You are my God." My times are in Your hands; deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me. Make Your face shine on Your servant; save me by Your loving devotion. O LORD, let me not be ashamed, for I have called on You. Let the wicked be put to shame; let them lie silent in Sheol. May lying lips be silenced — lips that speak with arrogance against the righteous, full of pride and contempt. How great is Your goodness which You have laid up for those who fear You, which You have bestowed before the sons of men on those who take refuge in You! You hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the schemes of men. You conceal them in Your shelter from accusing tongues. Blessed be the LORD, for He has shown me His loving devotion in a city under siege. In my alarm I said, "I am cut off from Your sight!" But You heard my plea for mercy when I called to You for help. Love the LORD, all His saints. The LORD preserves the faithful, but fully repays the arrogant. Be strong and courageous, all you who hope in the LORD.

Of David. A Maskil.

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose iniquity the LORD does not count

against him, in whose spirit there is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones became brittle from my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was drained as in the summer heat. Selah Then I acknowledged my sin to You and did not hide my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah Therefore let all the godly pray to You while You may be found. Surely when great waters rise, they will not come near. You are my hiding place. You protect me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will give you counsel and watch over you. Do not be like the horse or mule, which have no understanding; they must be controlled with bit and bridle to make them come to you. Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but loving devotion surrounds him who trusts in the LORD. Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous ones; shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

Rejoice in the LORD, O righteous ones; it is fitting for the upright to praise Him. Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to Him with ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy. For the word of the LORD is upright, and all His work is trustworthy. The LORD loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of His loving devotion. By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the stars by the breath of His mouth. He piles up the waters of the sea; He puts the depths into storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere Him. For He spoke, and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood firm. The LORD frustrates the plans of the nations; He thwarts the devices of the peoples. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the purposes of His heart to all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people He has chosen as His inheritance! The LORD looks down from heaven; He sees all the sons of men. From His dwelling place He gazes on all who inhabit the earth. He shapes the hearts of each; He considers all their works. No king is saved by his vast army; no warrior is delivered by his great strength. A horse is a vain hope for salvation; even its great strength cannot save. Surely the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear Him, on those whose hope is in His loving devotion to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine. Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield. For our hearts rejoice in Him, since we trust in His holy name. May Your loving devotion rest on us, O LORD, as we put our hope in You.

Of David, when he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, so that the king drove him away.

I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise will always be on my lips. My soul boasts in the LORD; let the oppressed hear and rejoice. Magnify the LORD with me; let us exalt His name together. I sought the LORD, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to Him are radiant with joy; their faces shall never be ashamed. This poor man called out, and the LORD heard him; He saved him from all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, and he delivers them. Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him! Fear the LORD, you His saints, for those who fear Him lack nothing. Young lions go lacking and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. Come, children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. Who is the man who delights in life, who desires to see good days? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from deceitful speech. Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are inclined to their cry. But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to wipe out all memory of them from the earth. The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears; He delivers them from all their troubles. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted; He saves the contrite in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him from them all. He protects all his bones; not one of them will be broken. Evil will slay the wicked, and the haters of the righteous will be condemned. The LORD redeems His servants, and none who take refuge in Him will be condemned.

Of David.

Contend with my opponents, O LORD; fight against those who fight against me. Take up Your shield and buckler; arise and come to my aid. Draw the spear and javelin against my pursuers; say to my soul: "I am your salvation." May those who seek my life be disgraced and put to shame; may those who plan to harm me be driven back and confounded. May they be like chaff in the wind, as the angel of the LORD drives them away. May their path be dark and slick, as the angel of the LORD pursues. For without cause they laid their net for me; without reason they dug a pit for my soul. May ruin befall them by surprise; may the net they hid ensnare them; may they fall into the hazard they created. Then my soul will rejoice in the LORD and exult in His salvation. All my bones will exclaim, "Who is like You, O LORD, who delivers the afflicted from the aggressor, the poor and needy from the robber?" Hostile witnesses come forward; they make charges I know nothing about. They repay me evil for good, to the bereavement of my soul. Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting, but my prayers returned unanswered. I paced about as for my friend or brother; I was bowed down with grief, like

one mourning for his mother. But when I stumbled, they assembled in glee; they gathered together against me. Assailants I did not know slandered me without ceasing. Like godless jesters at a feast, they gnashed their teeth at me. How long, O Lord, will You look on? Rescue my soul from their ravages, my precious life from these lions. Then I will give You thanks in the great assembly; I will praise You among many people. Let not my enemies gloat over me without cause, nor those who hate me without reason wink in malice. For they do not speak peace, but they devise deceitful schemes against those who live quietly in the land. They gape at me and say, "Aha, aha! Our eyes have seen!" O LORD, You have seen it; be not silent. O Lord, be not far from me. Awake and rise to my defense, to my cause, my God and my Lord! Vindicate me by Your righteousness, O LORD my God, and do not let them gloat over me. Let them not say in their hearts, "Aha, just what we wanted!" Let them not say, "We have swallowed him up!" May those who gloat in my distress be ashamed and confounded; may those who exalt themselves over me be clothed in shame and reproach. May those who favor my vindication shout for joy and gladness; may they always say, "Exalted be the LORD who delights in His servant's well-being." Then my tongue will proclaim Your righteousness and Your praises all day long.

For the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, the servant of the LORD.

An oracle is in my heart regarding the transgression of the wicked man: There is no fear of God before his eyes. For his eyes are too full of conceit to detect or hate his own sin. The words of his mouth are wicked and deceitful; he has ceased to be wise and well-doing. Even on his bed he plots wickedness; he sets himself on a path that is not good; he fails to reject evil. Your loving devotion, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, Your faithfulness to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the highest mountains; Your judgments are like the deepest sea. O LORD, You preserve man and beast. How precious is Your loving devotion, O God, that the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings! They feast on the abundance of Your house, and You give them drink from Your river of delights. For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light. Extend Your loving devotion to those who know You, and Your righteousness to the upright in heart. Let not the foot of the proud come against me, nor the hand of the wicked drive me away. There the evildoers lie fallen, thrown down and unable to rise.

Of David.

Do not fret over those who do evil; do not envy those who do wrong. For they wither quickly like grass and wilt like tender plants. Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him, and He will do it. He will bring forth your righteousness like the dawn, your justice like the noonday sun. Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him; do not fret when men prosper in their ways, when they carry out wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and abandon wrath; do not fret— it can only bring harm. For the evildoers will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land. Yet a little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found. But the meek will inherit the land and delight in abundant prosperity. The wicked scheme against the righteous and gnash their teeth at them, but the Lord laughs, seeing that their day is coming. The wicked have drawn the sword and bent the bow to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose ways are upright. But their swords will pierce their own hearts, and their bows will be broken. Better is the little of the righteous than the abundance of many who are wicked. For the arms of the wicked will be broken, but the LORD upholds the righteous. The LORD knows the days of the blameless, and their inheritance will last forever. In the time of evil they will not be ashamed, and in the days of famine they will be satisfied. But the wicked and enemies of the LORD will perish like the glory of the fields. They will vanish; like smoke they will fade away. The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous are gracious and giving. Surely those He blesses will inherit the land, but the cursed will be destroyed. The steps of a man are ordered by the LORD who takes delight in his journey. Though he falls, he will not be overwhelmed, for the LORD is holding his hand. I once was young and now am old, yet never have I seen the righteous abandoned or their children begging for bread. They are ever generous and quick to lend, and their children are a blessing. Turn away from evil and do good, so that you will abide forever. For the LORD loves justice and will not forsake His saints. They are preserved forever, but the offspring of the wicked will be cut off. The righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever. The mouth of the righteous man utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice. The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not falter. Though the wicked lie in wait for the righteous, and seek to slay them, the LORD will not leave them in their power or let them be condemned under judgment. Wait for the LORD and keep His way, and He will raise you up to inherit the land. When the wicked are cut off, you will see it. I have seen a wicked, ruthless man flourishing like a well-rooted native tree, yet he passed away and was no more; though I searched, he

could not be found. Consider the blameless and observe the upright, for posterity awaits the man of peace. But the transgressors will all be destroyed; the future of the wicked will be cut off. The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; He is their stronghold in time of trouble. The LORD helps and delivers them; He rescues and saves them from the wicked, because they take refuge in Him.

A Psalm of David, for remembrance.

O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your anger or discipline me in Your wrath. For Your arrows have pierced me deeply, and Your hand has pressed down on me. There is no soundness in my body because of Your anger; there is no rest in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have overwhelmed me; they are a burden too heavy to bear. My wounds are foul and festering because of my sinful folly. I am bent and brought low; all day long I go about mourning. For my loins are full of burning pain, and no soundness remains in my body. I am numb and badly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart. O Lord, my every desire is before You; my groaning is not hidden from You. My heart pounds, my strength fails, and even the light of my eyes has faded. My beloved and friends shun my disease, and my kinsmen stand at a distance. Those who seek my life lay snares; those who wish me harm speak destruction, plotting deceit all day long. But like a deaf man, I do not hear; and like a mute man, I do not open my mouth. I am like a man who cannot hear, whose mouth offers no reply. I wait for You, O LORD; You will answer, O Lord my God. For I said, "Let them not gloat over me — those who taunt me when my foot slips." For I am ready to fall, and my pain is ever with me. Yes, I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin. Many are my enemies without cause, and many hate me without reason. Those who repay my good with evil attack me for pursuing the good. Do not forsake me, O LORD; be not far from me, O my God. Come quickly to help me, O Lord my Savior.

For the choirmaster. For Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

I said, "I will watch my ways so that I will not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth with a muzzle as long as the wicked are present." I was speechless and still; I remained silent, even from speaking good, and my sorrow was stirred. My heart grew hot within me; as I mused, the fire burned. Then I spoke with my tongue: "Show me, O LORD, my end and the measure of my days. Let me know how fleeting my life is. You, indeed, have made my days as handbreadths, and my lifetime as nothing before You. Truly each man at his best exists as but a breath. Selah Surely every man goes about like a phantom; surely he bustles in vain; he heaps up riches not knowing who will haul them away. And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in You. Deliver me from all my transgressions; do not make me the reproach of fools. I have become mute; I do not open my mouth because of what You have done. Remove Your scourge from me; I am perishing by the force of Your hand. You discipline and correct a man for his iniquity, consuming like a moth what he holds dear; surely each man is but a vapor. Selah Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry for help; do not be deaf to my weeping. For I am a foreigner dwelling with You, a stranger like all my fathers. Turn Your gaze away from me, that I may again be cheered before I depart and am no more."

For the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

I waited patiently for the LORD; He inclined to me and heard my cry. He lifted me up from the pit of despair, out of the miry clay; He set my feet upon a rock, and made my footsteps firm. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD. Blessed is the man who has made the LORD his trust, who has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood. Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders You have done, and the plans You have for us — none can compare to You — if I proclaim and declare them, they are more than I can count. Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but my ears You have opened. Burnt offerings and sin offerings You did not require. Then I said, "Here I am, I have come — it is written about me in the scroll: I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your law is within my heart." I proclaim righteousness in the great assembly; behold, I do not seal my lips, as You, O LORD, do know. I have not covered up Your righteousness in my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and salvation; I have not concealed Your loving devotion and faithfulness from the great assembly. O LORD, do not withhold Your mercy from me; Your loving devotion and faithfulness will always guard me. For evils without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, so that I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart has failed within me. Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me; hurry, O LORD, to help me. May those who seek my life be ashamed and confounded; may those who wish me harm be repelled and humiliated. May those who say to me, "Aha, aha!" be appalled at their own shame. May all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; may those who love Your salvation always say, "The LORD be magnified!" But I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my helper and deliverer; O my God, do not delay.

For the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

Blessed is the one who cares for the poor; the LORD will deliver him in the day of trouble. The LORD will protect and preserve him; He will bless him in the land and refuse to give him over to the will of his foes. The LORD will

sustain him on his bed of illness and restore him from his bed of sickness. I said, “O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against You.” My enemies say with malice: “When will he die and be forgotten?” My visitor speaks falsehood; he gathers slander in his heart; he goes out and spreads it abroad. All who hate me whisper against me; they imagine the worst for me: “A vile disease has been poured into him; he will never get up from where he lies!” Even my close friend whom I trusted, the one who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me. But You, O LORD, be gracious to me and raise me up, that I may repay them. By this I know that You delight in me, for my enemy does not triumph over me. In my integrity You uphold me and set me in Your presence forever. Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen.

Psalms 42–72

For the choirmaster. A Maskil of the sons of Korah.

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul longs after You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, the living God. When shall I come and appear in God’s presence? My tears have been my food both day and night, while men ask me all day long, “Where is your God?” These things come to mind as I pour out my soul: how I walked with the multitude, leading the festive procession to the house of God with shouts of joy and praise. Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why the unease within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him for the salvation of His presence. O my God, my soul despairs within me. Therefore I remember You from the land of Jordan and the peaks of Hermon — even from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep in the roar of Your waterfalls; all Your breakers and waves have rolled over me. The LORD decrees His loving devotion by day, and at night His song is with me as a prayer to the God of my life. I say to God my Rock, “Why have You forgotten me? Why must I walk in sorrow because of the enemy’s oppression?” Like the crushing of my bones, my enemies taunt me, while they say to me all day long, “Where is your God?” Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why the unease within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God.

Vindicate me, O God, and plead my case against an ungodly nation; deliver me from deceitful and unjust men. For You are the God of my refuge. Why have You rejected me? Why must I walk in sorrow because of the enemy’s oppression? Send out Your light and Your truth; let them lead me. Let them bring me to Your holy mountain and to the place where You dwell. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God, my greatest joy. I will praise You with the harp, O God, my God. Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why the unease within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God.

For the choirmaster. A Maskil of the sons of Korah.

We have heard with our ears, O God; our fathers have told us the work You did in their days, in the days of old. With Your hand You drove out the nations and planted our fathers there; You crushed the peoples and cast them out. For it was not by their sword that they took the land; their arm did not bring them victory. It was by Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your face, because You favored them. You are my King, O God, who ordains victories for Jacob. Through You we repel our foes; through Your name we trample our enemies. For I do not trust in my bow, nor does my sword save me. For You save us from our enemies; You put those who hate us to shame. In God we have boasted all day long, and Your name we will praise forever. Selah But You have rejected and humbled us; You no longer go forth with our armies. You have made us retreat from the foe, and those who hate us have plundered us. You have given us up as sheep to be devoured; You have scattered us among the nations. You sell Your people for nothing; no profit do You gain from their sale. You have made us a reproach to our neighbors, a mockery and derision to those around us. You have made us a byword among the nations, a laughingstock among the peoples. All day long my disgrace is before me, and shame has covered my face, at the voice of the scorner and reviler, because of the enemy, bent on revenge. All this has come upon us, though we have not forgotten You or betrayed Your covenant. Our hearts have not turned back; our steps have not strayed from Your path. But You have crushed us in the lair of jackals; You have covered us with deepest darkness. If we had forgotten the name of our God or spread out our hands to a foreign god, would not God have discovered, since He knows the secrets of the heart? Yet for Your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. Wake up, O Lord! Why are You sleeping? Arise! Do not reject us forever. Why do You hide Your face and forget our affliction and oppression? For our soul has sunk to the dust; our bodies cling to the earth. Rise up; be our help! Redeem us on account of Your loving devotion.

For the choirmaster. To the tune of “The Lilies.” A Maskil of the sons of Korah. A love song.

My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses to the king; my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer. You are the most handsome of men; grace has anointed your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever. Strap your sword at your side, O mighty warrior; appear in your majesty and splendor. In your splendor ride forth in victory on behalf of truth and humility and justice; may your right hand show your awesome deeds. Your arrows pierce the hearts

of the king's foes; the nations fall beneath your feet. Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever, and justice is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you above your companions with the oil of joy. All your garments are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia; from palaces of ivory the harps make you glad. The daughters of kings are among your honored women; the queen stands at your right hand, adorned with the gold of Ophir. Listen, O daughter! Consider and incline your ear: Forget your people and your father's house, and the king will desire your beauty; bow to him, for he is your lord. The Daughter of Tyre will come with a gift; men of wealth will seek your favor. All glorious is the princess in her chamber; her gown is embroidered with gold. In colorful garments she is led to the king; her virgin companions are brought before you. They are led in with joy and gladness; they enter the palace of the king. Your sons will succeed your fathers; you will make them princes throughout the land. I will commemorate your name through all generations; therefore the nations will praise you forever and ever.

For the choirmaster. Of the sons of Korah. According to Alamoth. A song.

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth is transformed and the mountains are toppled into the depths of the seas, though their waters roar and foam and the mountains quake in the surge. Selah There is a river whose streams delight the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her; she will not be moved. God will help her when morning dawns. Nations rage, kingdoms crumble; the earth melts when He lifts His voice. The LORD of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah Come, see the works of the LORD, who brings devastation upon the earth. He makes wars to cease throughout the earth; He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; He burns the shields in the fire. "Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted over the earth." The LORD of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah

For the choirmaster. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout unto God with a voice of triumph. How awesome is the LORD Most High, the great King over all the earth! He subdues nations beneath us, and peoples under our feet. He chooses our inheritance for us, the pride of Jacob, whom He loves. Selah God has ascended amid shouts of joy, the LORD with the sound of the horn. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises! For God is King of all the earth; sing to Him a psalm of praise. God reigns over the nations; God is seated on His holy throne. The nobles of the nations have assembled as the people of the God of Abraham; for the shields of the earth belong to God; He is highly exalted.

A song. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, His holy mountain. Beautiful in loftiness, the joy of all the earth, like the peaks of Zaphon is Mount Zion, the city of the great King. God is in her citadels; He has shown Himself to be a fortress. For behold, the kings assembled; they all advanced together. They saw and were astounded; they fled in terror. Trembling seized them there, anguish like a woman in labor. With a wind from the east You wrecked the ships of Tarshish. As we have heard, so we have seen in the city of the LORD of Hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish her forever. Selah Within Your temple, O God, we contemplate Your loving devotion. Your name, O God, like Your praise, reaches to the ends of the earth; Your right hand is full of righteousness. Mount Zion is glad, the daughters of Judah rejoice, on account of Your judgments. March around Zion, encircle her, count her towers, consider her ramparts, tour her citadels, that you may tell the next generation. For this God is our God forever and ever; He will be our guide even till death.

For the choirmaster. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

Hear this, all you peoples; listen, all inhabitants of the world, both low and high, rich and poor alike. My mouth will impart wisdom, and the meditation of my heart will bring understanding. I will incline my ear to a proverb; I will express my riddle with the harp: Why should I fear in times of trouble, when wicked usurpers surround me? They trust in their wealth and boast in their great riches. No man can possibly redeem his brother or pay his ransom to God. For the redemption of his soul is costly, and never can payment suffice, that he should live on forever and not see decay. For it is clear that wise men die, and the foolish and the senseless both perish and leave their wealth to others. Their graves are their eternal homes — their dwellings for endless generations — even though their lands were their namesakes. But a man, despite his wealth, cannot endure; he is like the beasts that perish. This is the fate of the foolish and their followers who endorse their sayings. Selah Like sheep they are destined for Sheol. Death will be their shepherd. The upright will rule them in the morning, and their form will decay in Sheol, far from their lofty abode. But God will redeem my life from Sheol, for He will surely take me to Himself. Selah Do not be afraid when a man grows rich, when the splendor of his house increases. For when he dies, he will carry nothing away; his abundance will not follow him down. Though in his lifetime he blesses his soul — and men praise you when

you prosper — he will join the generation of his fathers, who will never see the light of day. A man who has riches without understanding is like the beasts that perish.

A Psalm of Asaph.

The Mighty One, God the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from where the sun rises to where it sets. From Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth. Our God approaches and will not be silent! Consuming fire precedes Him, and a tempest rages around Him. He summons the heavens above, and the earth, that He may judge His people: "Gather to Me My saints, who made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." And the heavens proclaim His righteousness, for God Himself is Judge. Selah "Hear, O My people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you: I am God, your God. I do not rebuke you for your sacrifices, and your burnt offerings are ever before Me. I have no need for a bull from your stall or goats from your pens, for every beast of the forest is Mine — the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof. Do I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Sacrifice a thank offering to God, and fulfill your vows to the Most High. Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor Me." To the wicked, however, God says, "What right have you to recite My statutes and to bear My covenant on your lips? For you hate My instruction and cast My words behind you. When you see a thief, you befriend him, and throw in your lot with adulterers. You unleash your mouth for evil and harness your tongue to deceit. You sit and malign your brother; you slander your own mother's son. You have done these things, and I kept silent; you thought I was just like you. But now I rebuke you and accuse you to your face. Now consider this, you who forget God, lest I tear you to pieces, with no one to rescue you: He who sacrifices a thank offering honors Me, and to him who rightly orders his way, I will show the salvation of God."

For the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. When Nathan the prophet came to him after his adultery with Bathsheba.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your loving devotion; according to Your great compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash me clean of my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You may be proved right when You speak and blameless when You judge. Surely I was brought forth in iniquity; I was sinful when my mother conceived me. Surely You desire truth in the inmost being; You teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones You have crushed rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence; take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and sustain me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will return to You. Deliver me from bloodguilt, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing of Your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise. For You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; You take no pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. In Your good pleasure, cause Zion to prosper; build up the walls of Jerusalem. Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices, in whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on Your altar.

For the choirmaster. A Maskil of David. After Doeg the Edomite went to Saul and told him, "David has gone to the house of Ahimelech."

Why do you boast of evil, O mighty man? The loving devotion of God endures all day long. Your tongue devises destruction like a sharpened razor, O worker of deceit. You love evil more than good, falsehood more than speaking truth. Selah You love every word that devours, O deceitful tongue. Surely God will bring you down to everlasting ruin; He will snatch you up and tear you away from your tent; He will uproot you from the land of the living. Selah The righteous will see and fear; they will mock the evildoer, saying, "Look at the man who did not make God his refuge, but trusted in the abundance of his wealth and strengthened himself by destruction." But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God; I trust in the loving devotion of God forever and ever. I will praise You forever, because You have done it. I will wait on Your name — for it is good — in the presence of Your saints.

For the choirmaster. According to Mahalath. A Maskil of David.

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt; their ways are vile. There is no one who does good. God looks down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if any understand, if any seek God. All have turned away, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one. Will the workers of iniquity never learn? They devour my people like bread; they refuse to call upon God. There they are, overwhelmed with dread, where there was nothing to fear. For God has scattered the bones of those who besieged you. You put them to shame, for God has despised them. Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come from Zion! When God re-

stores His captive people, let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad!

For the choirmaster. With stringed instruments. A Maskil of David. When the Ziphites went to Saul and said, "Is David not hiding among us?"

Save me, O God, by Your name, and vindicate me by Your might! Hear my prayer, O God; listen to the words of my mouth. For strangers rise up against me, and ruthless men seek my life — men with no regard for God. Selah Surely God is my helper; the Lord is the sustainer of my soul. He will reward my enemies with evil. In Your faithfulness, destroy them. Freely I will sacrifice to You; I will praise Your name, O LORD, for it is good. For He has delivered me from every trouble, and my eyes have looked in triumph on my foes.

For the choirmaster. With stringed instruments. A Maskil of David.

Listen to my prayer, O God, and do not ignore my plea. Attend to me and answer me. I am restless in my complaint, and distraught at the voice of the enemy, at the pressure of the wicked. For they bring down disaster upon me and resent me in their anger. My heart pounds within me, and the terrors of death assail me. Fear and trembling grip me, and horror has overwhelmed me. I said, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and find rest. How far away I would flee! In the wilderness I would remain. Selah I would hurry to my shelter, far from this raging tempest." O Lord, confuse and confound their speech, for I see violence and strife in the city. Day and night they encircle the walls, while malice and trouble lie within. Destruction is within; oppression and deceit never leave the streets. For it is not an enemy who insults me; that I could endure. It is not a foe who rises against me; from him I could hide. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion and close friend. We shared sweet fellowship together; we walked with the crowd into the house of God. Let death seize them by surprise; let them go down to Sheol alive, for evil is with them in their homes. But I call to God, and the LORD saves me. Morning, noon, and night, I cry out in distress, and He hears my voice. He redeems my soul in peace from the battle waged against me, even though many oppose me. God will hear and humiliate them — the One enthroned for the ages — Selah because they do not change and they have no fear of God. My companion attacks his friends; he violates his covenant. His speech is smooth as butter, but war is in his heart. His words are softer than oil, yet they are swords unsheathed. Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous be shaken. But You, O God, will bring them down to the Pit of destruction; men of bloodshed and deceit will not live out half their days. But I will trust in You.

For the choirmaster. To the tune of "A Dove on Distant Oaks." A Miktam of David, when the Philistines seized him in Gath.

Be merciful to me, O God, for men are hounding me; all day they press their attack. My enemies pursue me all day long, for many proudly assail me. When I am afraid, I put my trust in You. In God, whose word I praise — in God I trust. I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? All day long they twist my words; all their thoughts are on my demise. They conspire, they lurk, they watch my steps while they wait to take my life. In spite of such sin, will they escape? In Your anger, O God, cast down the nations. You have taken account of my wanderings. Put my tears in Your bottle — are they not in Your book? Then my enemies will retreat on the day I cry for help. By this I will know that God is on my side. In God, whose word I praise, in the LORD, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? Your vows are upon me, O God; I will render thank offerings to You. For You have delivered my soul from death, and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.

For the choirmaster. To the tune of "Do Not Destroy." A Miktam of David, when he fled from Saul into the cave.

Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy, for in You my soul takes refuge. In the shadow of Your wings I will take shelter until the danger has passed. I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills His purpose for me. He reaches down from heaven and saves me; He rebukes those who trample me. Selah God sends forth His loving devotion and His truth. My soul is among the lions; I lie down with ravenous beasts— with men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; may Your glory cover all the earth. They spread a net for my feet; my soul was despondent. They dug a pit before me, but they themselves have fallen into it! Selah My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast. I will sing and make music. Awake, my glory! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn. I will praise You, O Lord, among the nations; I will sing Your praises among the peoples. For Your loving devotion reaches to the heavens, and Your faithfulness to the clouds. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; may Your glory cover all the earth.

For the choirmaster. To the tune of "Do Not Destroy." A Miktam of David.

Do you indeed speak justly, O rulers? Do you judge uprightly, O sons of men? No, in your hearts you devise injustice; with your hands you mete out violence on the earth. The wicked are estranged from the womb; the liars go astray from birth. Their venom is like the venom of a snake, like a cobra that shuts its ears, refusing to hear the tune of the charmer who skillfully weaves his spell. O God, shatter

their teeth in their mouths; O LORD, tear out the fangs of the lions. May they vanish like water that runs off; when they draw the bow, may their arrows be blunted. Like a slug that dissolves in its slime, like a woman's stillborn child, may they never see the sun. Before your pots can feel the burning thorns— whether green or dry— He will sweep them away. The righteous will rejoice when they see they are avenged; they will wash their feet in the blood of the wicked. Then men will say, "There is surely a reward for the righteous! There is surely a God who judges the earth!"

For the choirmaster. To the tune of "Do Not Destroy." A Miktam of David, when Saul sent men to watch David's house in order to kill him.

Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; protect me from those who rise against me. Deliver me from workers of iniquity, and save me from men of bloodshed. See how they lie in wait for me. Fierce men conspire against me for no transgression or sin of my own, O LORD. For no fault of my own, they move swiftly to attack me. Arise to help me, and take notice. O LORD God of Hosts, the God of Israel, rouse Yourself to punish all the nations; show no mercy to the wicked traitors. Selah They return in the evening, snarling like dogs and prowling around the city. See what they spew from their mouths— sharp words from their lips: "For who can hear us?" But You, O LORD, laugh at them; You scoff at all the nations. I will keep watch for You, O my strength, because You, O God, are my fortress. My God of loving devotion will come to meet me; God will let me stare down my foes. Do not kill them, or my people will forget. Scatter them by Your power, and bring them down, O Lord, our shield. By the sins of their mouths and the words of their lips, let them be trapped in their pride, in the curses and lies they utter. Consume them in wrath; consume them till they are no more, so it may be known to the ends of the earth that God rules over Jacob. Selah They return in the evening, snarling like dogs and prowling around the city. They scavenge for food, and growl if they are not satisfied. But I will sing of Your strength and proclaim Your loving devotion in the morning. For You are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble. To You, O my strength, I sing praises, for You, O God, are my fortress, my God of loving devotion.

For the choirmaster. To the tune of "The Lily of the Covenant." A Miktam of David for instruction. When he fought Aram-naharaim and Aram-zobah, and Joab returned and struck down 12,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt.

You have rejected us, O God; You have broken us; You have been angry; restore us! You have shaken the land and torn it open. Heal its fractures, for it is quaking. You have shown Your people hardship; we are staggered from the wine You made us drink. You have raised a banner for those who fear You, that they may flee the bow. Selah Respond and save us with Your right hand, that Your beloved may be delivered. God has spoken from His sanctuary: "I will triumph! I will parcel out Shechem and apportion the Valley of Succoth. Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim is My helmet, Judah is My scepter. Moab is My washbasin; upon Edom I toss My sandal; over Philistia I shout in triumph." Who will bring me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom? Have You not rejected us, O God? Will You no longer march out, O God, with our armies? Give us aid against the enemy, for the help of man is worthless. With God we will perform with valor, and He will trample our enemies.

For the choirmaster. With stringed instruments. Of David.

Hear my cry, O God; attend to my prayer. From the ends of the earth I call out to You whenever my heart is faint. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For You have been my refuge, a tower of strength against the enemy. Let me dwell in Your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of Your wings. Selah For You have heard my vows, O God; You have given me the inheritance reserved for those who fear Your name. Increase the days of the king's life; may his years span many generations. May he sit enthroned in God's presence forever; appoint Your loving devotion and Your faithfulness to guard him. Then I will ever sing praise to Your name and fulfill my vows day by day.

For the choirmaster. According to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

In God alone my soul finds rest; my salvation comes from Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation. He is my fortress; I will never be shaken. How long will you threaten a man? Will all of you throw him down like a leaning wall or a tottering fence? They fully intend to cast him down from his lofty perch; they delight in lies; with their mouths they bless, but inwardly they curse. Selah Rest in God alone, O my soul, for my hope comes from Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress; I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor rest on God, my strong rock; my refuge is in God. Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts before Him. God is our refuge. Selah Lowborn men are but a vapor; the exalted are but a lie. Weighed on the scale, they go up; together they are but a vapor. Place no trust in extortion or false hope in stolen goods. If your riches increase, do not set your heart upon them. God has spoken once; I have heard this twice: that power belongs to God, and loving devotion to You, O Lord. For You will repay each man according to his deeds.

A Psalm of David, when he was in the Wilderness of Judah.

O God, You are my God. Earnestly I seek You; my soul thirsts for You. My body yearns for You in a dry and weary land without water. So I have seen You in the sanctuary and beheld Your power and glory. Because Your loving devotion is better than life, my lips will glorify You. So I will bless You as long as I live; in Your name I will lift my hands. My soul is satisfied as with the richest of foods; with joyful lips my mouth will praise You. When I remember You on my bed, I think of You through the watches of the night. For You are my help; I will sing for joy in the shadow of Your wings. My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me. But those who seek my life to destroy it will go into the depths of the earth. They will fall to the power of the sword; they will become a portion for foxes. But the king will rejoice in God; all who swear by Him will exult, for the mouths of liars will be shut.

For the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

Hear, O God, my voice of complaint; preserve my life from dread of the enemy. Hide me from the scheming of the wicked, from the mob of workers of iniquity, who sharpen their tongues like swords and aim their bitter words like arrows, ambushing the innocent in seclusion, shooting suddenly, without fear. They hold fast to their evil purpose; they speak of hiding their snares. “Who will see them?” they say. They devise injustice and say, “We have perfected a secret plan.” For the inner man and the heart are mysterious. But God will shoot them with arrows; suddenly they will be wounded. They will be made to stumble, their own tongues turned against them. All who see will shake their heads. Then all mankind will fear and proclaim the work of God; so they will ponder what He has done. Let the righteous rejoice in the LORD and take refuge in Him; let all the upright in heart exult.

For the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. A song.

Praise awaits You, O God, in Zion; to You our vows will be fulfilled. O You who listen to prayer, all people will come to You. When iniquities prevail against me, You atone for our transgressions. Blessed is the one You choose and bring near to dwell in Your courts! We are filled with the goodness of Your house, the holiness of Your temple. With awesome deeds of righteousness You answer us, O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas. You formed the mountains by Your power, having girded Yourself with might. You stilled the roaring of the seas, the pounding of their waves, and the tumult of the nations. Those who live far away fear Your wonders; You make the dawn and sunset shout for joy. You attend to the earth and water it; with abundance You enrich it. The streams of God are full of water, for You prepare our grain by providing for the earth. You soak its furrows and level its ridges; You soften it with showers and bless its growth. You crown the year with Your bounty, and Your paths overflow with plenty. The pastures of the wilderness overflow; the hills are robed with joy. The pastures are clothed with flocks, and the valleys are decked with grain. They shout in triumph; indeed, they sing.

For the choirmaster. A song. A Psalm.

Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of His name; make His praise glorious. Say to God, “How awesome are Your deeds! So great is Your power that Your enemies cower before You. All the earth bows down to You; they sing praise to You; they sing praise to Your name.” Selah Come and see the works of God; how awesome are His deeds toward mankind. He turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the waters on foot; there we rejoiced in Him. He rules forever by His power; His eyes watch the nations. Do not let the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah Bless our God, O peoples; let the sound of His praise be heard. He preserves our lives and keeps our feet from slipping. For You, O God, have tested us; You have refined us like silver. You led us into the net; You laid burdens on our backs. You let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and water, but You brought us into abundance. I will enter Your house with burnt offerings; I will fulfill my vows to You — the vows that my lips promised and my mouth spoke in my distress. I will offer You fatlings as burnt offerings, with the fragrant smoke of rams; I will offer bulls and goats. Selah Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will declare what He has done for me. I cried out to Him with my mouth and praised Him with my tongue. If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But God has surely heard; He has attended to the sound of my prayer. Blessed be God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld from me His loving devotion!

For the choirmaster. With stringed instruments. A Psalm. A song.

May God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us, Selah that Your ways may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for You judge the peoples justly and lead the nations of the earth. Selah Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. The earth has yielded its harvest; God, our God, blesses us. God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.

For the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. A song.

God arises. His enemies are scattered, and those who hate Him flee His presence. As smoke is blown away, You will drive them out; as wax melts before the fire, the wicked will perish in the presence of God. But the

righteous will be glad and rejoice before God; they will celebrate with joy. Sing to God! Sing praises to His name. Exalt Him who rides on the clouds— His name is the LORD— and rejoice before Him. A father of the fatherless and a defender of widows is God in His holy habitation. God settles the lonely in families; He leads the prisoners out to prosperity, but the rebellious dwell in a sun-scorched land. O God, when You went out before Your people, when You marched through the wasteland, Selah the earth shook and the heavens poured down rain before God, the One on Sinai, before God, the God of Israel. You sent abundant rain, O God; You refreshed Your weary inheritance. Your flock settled therein; O God, from Your bounty You provided for the poor. The Lord gives the command; a great company of women proclaim it: "Kings and their armies flee in haste; she who waits at home divides the plunder. Though you lie down among the sheepfolds, the wings of the dove are covered with silver, and her feathers with shimmering gold." When the Almighty scattered the kings in the land, it was like the snow falling on Zalmon. A mountain of God is Mount Bashan; a mountain of many peaks is Mount Bashan. Why do you gaze in envy, O mountains of many peaks? This is the mountain God chose for His dwelling, where the LORD will surely dwell forever. The chariots of God are tens of thousands — thousands of thousands are they; the Lord is in His sanctuary as He was at Sinai. You have ascended on high; You have led captives away. You have received gifts from men, even from the rebellious, that the LORD God may dwell there. Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burden, the God of our salvation. Selah Our God is a God of deliverance; the Lord GOD is our rescuer from death. Surely God will crush the heads of His enemies, the hairy crowns of those who persist in guilty ways. The Lord said, "I will retrieve them from Bashan, I will bring them up from the depths of the sea, that your foot may be dipped in the blood of your foes— the tongues of your dogs in the same." They have seen Your procession, O God — the march of my God and King into the sanctuary. The singers lead the way, the musicians follow after, among the maidens playing tambourines. Bless God in the great congregation; bless the LORD from the fountain of Israel. There is Benjamin, the youngest, ruling them, the princes of Judah in their company, the princes of Zebulun and of Naphtali. Summon Your power, O God; show Your strength, O God, which You have exerted on our behalf. Because of Your temple at Jerusalem kings will bring You gifts. Rebuke the beast in the reeds, the herd of bulls among the calves of the nations, until it submits, bringing bars of silver. Scatter the nations who delight in war. Envoys will arrive from Egypt; Cush will stretch out her hands to God. Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth; sing praises to the Lord— Selah to Him who rides upon the highest heavens of old; behold, His mighty voice resounds. Ascribe the power to God, whose majesty is over Israel, whose strength is in the skies. O God, You are awesome in Your sanctuary; the God of Israel Himself gives strength and power to His people. Blessed be God!

For the choirmaster. To the tune of "Lilies." Of David.

Save me, O God, for the waters are up to my neck. I have sunk into the miry depths, where there is no footing; I have drifted into deep waters, where the flood engulfs me. I am weary from my crying; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God. Those who hate me without cause outnumber the hairs of my head; many are those who would destroy me — my enemies for no reason. Though I did not steal, I must repay. You know my folly, O God, and my guilt is not hidden from You. May those who hope in You not be ashamed through me, O Lord GOD of Hosts; may those who seek You not be dishonored through me, O God of Israel. For I have endured scorn for Your sake, and shame has covered my face. I have become a stranger to my brothers and a foreigner to my mother's sons, because zeal for Your house has consumed me, and the insults of those who insult You have fallen on me. I wept and fasted, but it brought me reproach. I made sackcloth my clothing, and I was sport to them. Those who sit at the gate mock me, and I am the song of drunkards. But my prayer to You, O LORD, is for a time of favor. In Your abundant loving devotion, O God, answer me with Your sure salvation. Rescue me from the mire and do not let me sink; deliver me from my foes and out of the deep waters. Do not let the floods engulf me or the depths swallow me up; let not the Pit close its mouth over me. Answer me, O LORD, for Your loving devotion is good; turn to me in keeping with Your great compassion. Hide not Your face from Your servant, for I am in distress. Answer me quickly! Draw near to my soul and redeem me; ransom me because of my foes. You know my reproach, my shame and disgrace. All my adversaries are before You. Insults have broken my heart, and I am in despair. I looked for sympathy, but there was none, for comforters, but I found no one. They poisoned my food with gall and gave me vinegar to quench my thirst. May their table become a snare; may it be a retribution and a trap. May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever. Pour out Your wrath upon them, and let Your burning anger overtake them. May their place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in their tents. For they persecute the one You struck and recount the pain of those You wounded. Add iniquity to their iniquity;

let them not share in Your righteousness. May they be blotted out of the Book of Life and not listed with the righteous. But I am in pain and distress; let Your salvation protect me, O God. I will praise God's name in song and exalt Him with thanksgiving. And this will please the LORD more than an ox, more than a bull with horns and hooves. The humble will see and rejoice. You who seek God, let your hearts be revived! For the LORD listens to the needy and does not despise His captive people. Let heaven and earth praise Him, the seas and everything that moves in them. For God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah, that they may dwell there and possess it. The descendants of His servants will inherit it, and those who love His name will settle in it.

For the choirmaster. Of David. To bring remembrance.

Make haste, O God, to deliver me! Hurry, O LORD, to help me! May those who seek my life be ashamed and confounded; may those who wish me harm be repelled and humiliated. May those who say, "Aha, aha!" retreat because of their shame. May all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; may those who love Your salvation always say, "Let God be magnified!" But I am poor and needy; hurry to me, O God. You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay.

In You, O LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame. In Your justice, rescue and deliver me; incline Your ear and save me. Be my rock of refuge, where I can always go. Give the command to save me, for You are my rock and my fortress. Deliver me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and ruthless. For You are my hope, O Lord GOD, my confidence from my youth. I have leaned on You since birth; You pulled me from my mother's womb. My praise is always for You. I have become a portent to many, but You are my strong refuge. My mouth is filled with Your praise and with Your splendor all day long. Do not discard me in my old age; do not forsake me when my strength fails. For my enemies speak against me, and those who lie in wait for my life conspire, saying, "God has forsaken him; pursue him and seize him, for there is no one to rescue him." Be not far from me, O God. Hurry, O my God, to help me. May the accusers of my soul be ashamed and consumed; may those who seek my harm be covered with scorn and disgrace. But I will always hope and will praise You more and more. My mouth will declare Your righteousness and Your salvation all day long, though I cannot know their full measure. I will come in the strength of the Lord GOD; I will proclaim Your righteousness — Yours alone. O God, You have taught me from my youth, and to this day I proclaim Your marvelous deeds. Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, until I proclaim Your power to the next generation, Your might to all who are to come. Your righteousness reaches to the heavens, O God, You who have done great things. Who, O God, is like You? Though You have shown me many troubles and misfortunes, You will revive me once again. Even from the depths of the earth You will bring me back up. You will increase my honor and comfort me once again. So I will praise You with the harp for Your faithfulness, O my God; I will sing praise to You with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel. When I sing praise to You my lips will shout for joy, along with my soul, which You have redeemed. My tongue will indeed proclaim Your righteousness all day long, for those who seek my harm are disgraced and confounded.

Of Solomon.

Endow the king with Your justice, O God, and the son of the king with Your righteousness. May he judge Your people with righteousness and Your afflicted with justice. May the mountains bring peace to the people, and the hills bring righteousness. May he vindicate the afflicted among the people; may he save the children of the needy and crush the oppressor. May they fear him as long as the sun shines, as long as the moon remains, through all generations. May he be like rain that falls on freshly cut grass, like spring showers that water the earth. May the righteous flourish in his days and prosperity abound until the moon is no more. May he rule from sea to sea, and from the Euphrates to the ends of the earth. May the nomads bow before him, and his enemies lick the dust. May the kings of Tarshish and distant shores bring tribute; may the kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts. May all kings bow down to him and all nations serve him. For he will deliver the needy who cry out and the afflicted who have no helper. He will take pity on the poor and needy and save the lives of the oppressed. He will redeem them from oppression and violence, for their blood is precious in his sight. Long may he live! May gold from Sheba be given him. May people ever pray for him; may they bless him all day long. May there be an abundance of grain in the land; may it sway atop the hills. May its fruit trees flourish like the forests of Lebanon, the people of its cities like the grass of the field. May his name endure forever; may his name continue as long as the sun shines. In him may all nations be blessed; may they call him blessed. Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who alone does marvelous deeds. And blessed be His glorious name forever; may all the earth be filled with His glory. Amen and amen.

Thus conclude the prayers of David son of Jesse.

Psalms 73–89

A Psalm of Asaph.

Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped.

For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggle in their death; their bodies are well-fed. They are free of the burdens others carry; they are not afflicted like other men. Therefore pride is their necklace; a garment of violence covers them. From their prosperity proceeds iniquity; the imaginations of their hearts run wild. They mock and speak with malice; with arrogance they threaten oppression. They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongues strut across the earth. So their people return to this place and drink up waters in abundance. The wicked say, "How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?" Behold, these are the wicked — always carefree as they increase their wealth. Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure; in innocence I have washed my hands. For I am afflicted all day long and punished every morning. If I had said, "I will speak this way," then I would have betrayed Your children. When I tried to understand all this, it was troublesome in my sight until I entered God's sanctuary; then I discerned their end. Surely You set them on slick ground; You cast them down into ruin. How suddenly they are laid waste, completely swept away by terrors! Like one waking from a dream, so You, O Lord, awaken and despise their form. When my heart was grieved and I was pierced within, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before You. Yet I am always with You; You hold my right hand. You guide me with Your counsel, and later receive me in glory. Whom have I in heaven but You? And on earth I desire no one besides You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Those far from You will surely perish; You destroy all who are unfaithful to You. But as for me, it is good to draw near to God. I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, that I may proclaim all Your works.

A Maskil of Asaph.

Why have You rejected us forever, O God? Why does Your anger smolder against the sheep of Your pasture? Remember Your congregation, which You purchased long ago and redeemed as the tribe of Your inheritance — Mount Zion, where You dwell. Turn Your steps to the everlasting ruins, to everything in the sanctuary the enemy has destroyed. Your foes have roared within Your meeting place; they have unfurled their banners as signs, like men wielding axes in a thicket of trees and smashing all the carvings with hatchets and picks. They have burned Your sanctuary to the ground; they have defiled the dwelling place of Your Name. They said in their hearts, "We will crush them completely." They burned down every place where God met us in the land. There are no signs for us to see. There is no longer any prophet. And none of us knows how long this will last. How long, O God, will the enemy taunt You? Will the foe revile Your name forever? Why do You withdraw Your strong right hand? Stretch it out to destroy them! Yet God is my King from ancient times, working salvation on the earth. You divided the sea by Your strength; You smashed the heads of the dragons of the sea; You crushed the heads of Leviathan; You fed him to the creatures of the desert. You broke open the fountain and the flood; You dried up the ever-flowing rivers. The day is Yours, and also the night; You established the moon and the sun. You set all the boundaries of the earth; You made the summer and winter. Remember how the enemy has mocked You, O LORD, how a foolish people has spurned Your name. Do not deliver the soul of Your dove to beasts; do not forget the lives of Your afflicted forever. Consider Your covenant, for haunts of violence fill the dark places of the land. Do not let the oppressed retreat in shame; may the poor and needy praise Your name. Rise up, O God; defend Your cause! Remember how the fool mocks You all day long. Do not disregard the clamor of Your adversaries, the uproar of Your enemies that ascends continually.

For the choirmaster: To the tune of "Do Not Destroy." A Psalm of Asaph. A song.

We give thanks to You, O God; we give thanks, for Your Name is near. The people declare Your wondrous works. "When I choose a time, I will judge fairly. When the earth and all its dwellers quake, it is I who bear up its pillars. Selah I say to the proud, 'Do not boast,' and to the wicked, 'Do not lift up your horn. Do not lift up your horn against heaven or speak with an outstretched neck.'" For exaltation comes neither from east nor west, nor out of the desert, but it is God who judges; He brings down one and exalts another. For a cup is in the hand of the LORD, full of foaming wine mixed with spices. He pours from His cup, and all the wicked of the earth drink it down to the dregs. But I will proclaim Him forever; I will sing praise to the God of Jacob. "All the horns of the wicked I will cut off, but the horns of the righteous will be exalted."

For the choirmaster. With stringed instruments. A Psalm of Asaph. A song.

God is known in Judah; His name is great in Israel. His tent is in Salem, His dwelling place in Zion. There He shattered the flaming arrows, the shield and sword and weapons of war. Selah You are resplendent with light, more majestic than mountains filled with game. The valiant lie plundered; they sleep their last sleep. No men of might could lift a hand. At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob, both horse and rider lie stunned. You alone are to be feared. When You are angry, who can stand before You? From heaven You pronounced judgment, and the earth feared and was still when God rose up to judge, to save all the lowly of the

earth. Selah Even the wrath of man shall praise You; with the survivors of wrath You will clothe Yourself. Make and fulfill your vows to the LORD your God; let all the neighboring lands bring tribute to Him who is to be feared. He breaks the spirits of princes; He is feared by the kings of the earth.

For the choirmaster. According to Jeduthun. A Psalm of Asaph.

I cried out to God; I cried aloud to God to hear me. In the day of trouble I sought the Lord; through the night my outstretched hands did not grow weary; my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered You, O God, and I groaned; I mused and my spirit grew faint. Selah You have kept my eyes from closing; I am too troubled to speak. I considered the days of old, the years long in the past. At night I remembered my song; in my heart I mused, and my spirit pondered: "Will the Lord spurn us forever and never show His favor again? Is His loving devotion gone forever? Has His promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has His anger shut off His compassion?" Selah So I said, "I am grieved that the right hand of the Most High has changed." I will remember the works of the LORD; yes, I will remember Your wonders of old. I will reflect on all You have done and ponder Your mighty deeds. Your way, O God, is holy. What god is so great as our God? You are the God who works wonders; You display Your strength among the peoples. With power You redeemed Your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah The waters saw You, O God; the waters saw You and swirled; even the depths were shaken. The clouds poured down water; the skies resounded with thunder; Your arrows flashed back and forth. Your thunder resounded in the whirlwind; the lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked. Your path led through the sea, Your way through the mighty waters, but Your footprints were not to be found. You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

A Maskil of Asaph.

Give ear, O my people, to my instruction; listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden from the beginning, that we have heard and known and our fathers have relayed to us. We will not hide them from their children but will declare to the next generation the praises of the LORD and His might and the wonders He has performed. For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the coming generation would know them— even children yet to be born— to arise and tell their own children that they should put their confidence in God, not forgetting His works, but keeping His commandments. Then they will not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose heart was not loyal, whose spirit was not faithful to God. The archers of Ephraim turned back on the day of battle. They failed to keep God's covenant and refused to live by His law. They forgot what He had done, the wonders He had shown them. He worked wonders before their fathers in the land of Egypt, in the region of Zoan. He split the sea and brought them through; He set the waters upright like a wall. He led them with a cloud by day and with a light of fire all night. He split the rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink as abundant as the seas. He brought streams from the stone and made water flow down like rivers. But they continued to sin against Him, rebelling in the desert against the Most High. They willfully tested God by demanding the food they craved. They spoke against God, saying, "Can God really prepare a table in the wilderness? When He struck the rock, water gushed out and torrents raged. But can He also give bread or supply His people with meat?" Therefore the LORD heard and was filled with wrath; so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and His anger flared against Israel, because they did not believe God or rely on His salvation. Yet He commanded the clouds above and opened the doors of the heavens. He rained down manna for them to eat; He gave them grain from heaven. Man ate the bread of angels; He sent them food in abundance. He stirred the east wind from the heavens and drove the south wind by His might. He rained meat on them like dust, and winged birds like the sand of the sea. He felled them in the midst of their camp, all around their dwellings. So they ate and were well filled, for He gave them what they craved. Yet before they had filled their desire, with the food still in their mouths, God's anger flared against them, and He put to death their strongest and subdued the young men of Israel. In spite of all this, they kept on sinning; despite His wonderful works, they did not believe. So He ended their days in futility, and their years in sudden terror. When He slew them, they would seek Him; they repented and searched for God. And they remembered that God was their Rock, that God Most High was their Redeemer. But they deceived Him with their mouths, and lied to Him with their tongues. Their hearts were disloyal to Him, and they were unfaithful to His covenant. And yet He was compassionate; He forgave their iniquity and did not destroy them. He often restrained His anger and did not unleash His full wrath. He remembered that they were but flesh, a passing breeze that does not return. How often they disobeyed Him in the wilderness and grieved Him in the desert! Again and again they tested God and provoked the Holy One of Israel. They did not

remember His power — the day He redeemed them from the adversary, when He performed His signs in Egypt and His wonders in the fields of Zoan. He turned their rivers to blood, and from their streams they could not drink. He sent swarms of flies that devoured them, and frogs that devastated them. He gave their crops to the grasshopper, the fruit of their labor to the locust. He killed their vines with hailstones and their sycamore-figs with sleet. He abandoned their cattle to the hail and their livestock to bolts of lightning. He unleashed His fury against them, wrath, indignation, and calamity— a band of destroying angels. He cleared a path for His anger; He did not spare them from death but delivered their lives to the plague. He struck all the firstborn of Egypt, the virility in the tents of Ham. He led out His people like sheep and guided them like a flock in the wilderness. He led them safely, so they did not fear, but the sea engulfed their enemies. He brought them to His holy land, to the mountain His right hand had acquired. He drove out nations before them and apportioned their inheritance; He settled the tribes of Israel in their tents. But they tested and disobeyed God Most High, for they did not keep His decrees. They turned back and were faithless like their fathers, twisted like a faulty bow. They enraged Him with their high places and provoked His jealousy with their idols. On hearing it, God was furious and rejected Israel completely. He abandoned the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent He had pitched among men. He delivered His strength to captivity, and His splendor to the hand of the adversary. He surrendered His people to the sword because He was enraged by His heritage. Fire consumed His young men, and their maidens were left without wedding songs. His priests fell by the sword, but their widows could not lament. Then the Lord awoke as from sleep, like a mighty warrior overcome by wine. He beat back His foes; He put them to everlasting shame. He rejected the tent of Joseph and refused the tribe of Ephraim. But He chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which He loved. He built His sanctuary like the heights, like the earth He has established forever. He chose David His servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from tending the ewes He brought him to be shepherd of His people Jacob, of Israel His inheritance. So David shepherded them with integrity of heart and guided them with skillful hands.

A Psalm of Asaph.

The nations, O God, have invaded Your inheritance; they have defiled Your holy temple and reduced Jerusalem to rubble. They have given the corpses of Your servants as food to the birds of the air, the flesh of Your saints to the beasts of the earth. They have poured out their blood like water all around Jerusalem, and there is no one to bury the dead. We have become a reproach to our neighbors, a scorn and derision to those around us. How long, O LORD? Will You be angry forever? Will Your jealousy burn like fire? Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not acknowledge You, on the kingdoms that refuse to call on Your name, for they have devoured Jacob and devastated his homeland. Do not hold past sins against us; let Your compassion come quickly, for we are brought low. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name; deliver us and atone for our sins, for the sake of Your name. Why should the nations ask, "Where is their God?" Before our eyes, make known among the nations Your vengeance for the bloodshed of Your servants. May the groans of the captives reach You; by the strength of Your arm preserve those condemned to death. Pay back into the laps of our neighbors sevenfold the reproach they hurled at You, O Lord. Then we Your people, the sheep of Your pasture, will thank You forever; from generation to generation we will declare Your praise.

For the choirmaster. To the tune of "The Lilies of the Covenant." A Psalm of Asaph.

Hear us, O Shepherd of Israel, who leads Joseph like a flock; You who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh. Rally Your mighty power and come to save us. Restore us, O God, and cause Your face to shine upon us, that we may be saved. O LORD God of Hosts, how long will Your anger smolder against the prayers of Your people? You fed them with the bread of tears and made them drink the full measure of their tears. You make us contend with our neighbors; our enemies mock us. Restore us, O God of Hosts, and cause Your face to shine upon us, that we may be saved. You uprooted a vine from Egypt; You drove out the nations and transplanted it. You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land. The mountains were covered by its shade, and the mighty cedars with its branches. It sent out its branches to the Sea, and its shoots toward the River. Why have You broken down its walls, so that all who pass by pick its fruit? The boar from the forest ravages it, and the creatures of the field feed upon it. Return, O God of Hosts, we pray! Look down from heaven and see! Attend to this vine— the root Your right hand has planted, the son You have raised up for Yourself. Your vine has been cut down and burned; they perish at the rebuke of Your countenance. Let Your hand be upon the man at Your right hand, on the son of man You have raised up for Yourself. Then we will not turn away from You; revive us, and we will call on Your name. Restore us, O LORD God of Hosts; cause Your face to shine upon us, that we may be saved.

For the choirmaster. According to Gittith. Of Asaph.

Sing for joy to God our strength; make a joyful noise to the God of Jacob. Lift up a song, strike the tambourine, play the sweet-sounding harp and lyre. Sound the ram's horn at the New Moon, and at the full moon on the day of our Feast. For this is a statute for Israel, an ordinance of the God of Jacob. He ordained it as a testimony for Joseph when he went out over the land of Egypt, where I heard an unfamiliar language: "I relieved his shoulder of the burden; his hands were freed from the basket. You called out in distress, and I rescued you; I answered you from the cloud of thunder; I tested you at the waters of Meribah. Selah Hear, O My people, and I will warn you: O Israel, if only you would listen to Me! There must be no strange god among you, nor shall you bow to a foreign god. I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth, and I will fill it. But My people would not listen to Me, and Israel would not obey Me. So I gave them up to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices. If only My people would listen to Me, if Israel would follow My ways, how soon I would subdue their enemies and turn My hand against their foes! Those who hate the LORD would feign obedience, and their doom would last forever. But I would feed you the finest wheat; with honey from the rock I would satisfy you."

A Psalm of Asaph.

God presides in the divine assembly; He renders judgment among the gods: "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Selah Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; uphold the rights of the afflicted and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; save them from the hand of the wicked. They do not know or understand; they wander in the darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. I have said, 'You are gods; you are all sons of the Most High.' But like mortals you will die, and like rulers you will fall." Arise, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are Your inheritance.

A song. A Psalm of Asaph.

O God, be not silent; be not speechless; be not still, O God. See how Your enemies rage, how Your foes have reared their heads. With cunning they scheme against Your people and conspire against those You cherish, saying, "Come, let us erase them as a nation; may the name of Israel be remembered no more." For with one mind they plot together; they form an alliance against You— the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, of Moab and the Hagrites, of Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek, of Philistia with the people of Tyre. Even Assyria has joined them, lending strength to the sons of Lot. Selah Do to them as You did to Midian, as to Sisera and Jabin at the River Kishon, who perished at Endor and became like dung on the ground. Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, and all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna, who said, "Let us possess for ourselves the pastures of God." Make them like tumbleweed, O my God, like chaff before the wind. As fire consumes a forest, as a flame sets the mountains ablaze, so pursue them with Your tempest, and terrify them with Your storm. Cover their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name, O LORD. May they be ever ashamed and terrified; may they perish in disgrace. May they know that You alone, whose name is the LORD, are Most High over all the earth.

For the choirmaster. According to Gittith. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

How lovely is Your dwelling place, O LORD of Hosts! My soul longs, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she places her young near Your altars, O LORD of Hosts, my King and my God. How blessed are those who dwell in Your house! They are ever praising You. Selah Blessed are those whose strength is in You, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; even the autumn rain covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength, until each appears before God in Zion. O LORD God of Hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah Take notice of our shield, O God, and look with favor on the face of Your anointed. For better is one day in Your courts than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. For the LORD God is a sun and a shield; the LORD gives grace and glory; He withholds no good thing from those who walk with integrity. O LORD of Hosts, how blessed is the man who trusts in You!

For the choirmaster. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

You showed favor to Your land, O LORD; You restored Jacob from captivity. You forgave the iniquity of Your people; You covered all their sin. Selah You withheld all Your fury; You turned from Your burning anger. Restore us, O God of our salvation, and put away Your displeasure toward us. Will You be angry with us forever? Will You draw out Your anger to all generations? Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You? Show us Your loving devotion, O LORD, and grant us Your salvation. I will listen to what God the LORD will say; for He will surely speak peace to His people and His saints; He will not let them return to folly. Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him, that His glory may dwell in our land. Loving devotion and faithfulness have joined together; righteousness and peace have kissed. Faithfulness sprouts from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. The LORD will indeed provide what is good, and our land will yield its increase. Righteous-

ness will go before Him to prepare the way for His steps.

A prayer of David.

Incline Your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Preserve my soul, for I am godly. You are my God; save Your servant who trusts in You. Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I call to You all day long. Bring joy to Your servant, for to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. For You, O Lord, are kind and forgiving, rich in loving devotion to all who call on You. Hear my prayer, O LORD, and attend to my plea for mercy. In the day of my distress I call on You, because You answer me. O Lord, there is none like You among the gods, nor any works like Yours. All the nations You have made will come and bow before You, O Lord, and they will glorify Your name. For You are great and perform wonders; You alone are God. Teach me Your way, O LORD, that I may walk in Your truth. Give me an undivided heart, that I may fear Your name. I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify Your name forever. For great is Your loving devotion to me; You have delivered me from the depths of Sheol. The arrogant rise against me, O God; a band of ruthless men seeks my life; they have no regard for You. But You, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in loving devotion and faithfulness. Turn to me and have mercy; grant Your strength to Your servant; save the son of Your maidservant. Show me a sign of Your goodness, that my enemies may see and be ashamed; for You, O LORD, have helped me and comforted me.

A Psalm of the sons of Korah. A song.

He has founded His city on the holy mountains. The LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are ascribed to you, O city of God. Selah "I will mention Rahab and Babylon among those who know Me — along with Philistia, Tyre, and Cush — when I say, 'This one was born in Zion.'" And it will be said of Zion: "This one and that one were born in her, and the Most High Himself will establish her." The LORD will record in the register of the peoples: "This one was born in Zion." Selah Singers and pipers will proclaim, "All my springs of joy are in You."

A song. A Psalm of the sons of Korah. For the choirmaster. According to Mahalath Leannoth. A Maskil of Heman the Ezrahite.

O LORD, the God of my salvation, day and night I cry out before You. May my prayer come before You; incline Your ear to my cry. For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to Sheol. I am counted among those descending to the Pit. I am like a man without strength. I am forsaken among the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom You remember no more, who are cut off from Your care. You have laid me in the lowest Pit, in the darkest of the depths. Your wrath weighs heavily upon me; all Your waves have submerged me. Selah You have removed my friends from me; You have made me repulsive to them; I am confined and cannot escape. My eyes grow dim with grief. I call to You daily, O LORD; I spread out my hands to You. Do You work wonders for the dead? Do departed spirits rise up to praise You? Selah Can Your loving devotion be proclaimed in the grave, Your faithfulness in Abaddon? Will Your wonders be known in the darkness, or Your righteousness in the land of oblivion? But to You, O LORD, I cry for help; in the morning my prayer comes before You. Why, O LORD, do You reject me? Why do You hide Your face from me? From my youth I was afflicted and near death. I have borne Your terrors; I am in despair. Your wrath has swept over me; Your terrors have destroyed me. All day long they engulf me like water; they enclose me on every side. You have removed my beloved and my friend; darkness is my closest companion.

A Maskil of Ethan the Ezrahite.

I will sing of the loving devotion of the LORD forever; with my mouth I will proclaim Your faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, "Loving devotion is built up forever; in the heavens You establish Your faithfulness." You said, "I have made a covenant with My chosen one, I have sworn to David My servant: 'I will establish your offspring forever and build up your throne for all generations.'" Selah The heavens praise Your wonders, O LORD — Your faithfulness as well — in the assembly of the holy ones. For who in the skies can compare with the LORD? Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD? In the council of the holy ones, God is greatly feared, and awesome above all who surround Him. O LORD God of Hosts, who is like You? O mighty LORD, Your faithfulness surrounds You. You rule the raging sea; when its waves mount up, You still them. You crushed Rahab like a carcass; You scattered Your enemies with Your mighty arm. The heavens are Yours, and also the earth. The earth and its fullness You founded. North and south You created; Tabor and Hermon shout for joy at Your name. Mighty is Your arm; strong is Your hand. Your right hand is exalted. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; loving devotion and faithfulness go before You. Blessed are those who know the joyful sound, who walk, O LORD, in the light of Your presence. They rejoice in Your name all day long, and in Your righteousness they exult. For You are the glory of their strength, and by Your favor our horn is exalted. Surely our shield belongs to the LORD, and our king to the Holy One of Israel. You once spoke in a vision; to Your godly ones You said, "I have bestowed help on a warrior; I have exalted one chosen from the people. I have found My servant David; with My sacred oil I

have anointed him. My hand will sustain him; surely My arm will strengthen him. No enemy will exact tribute; no wicked man will oppress him. I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him. My faithfulness and loving devotion will be with him, and through My name his horn will be exalted. I will set his hand over the sea, and his right hand upon the rivers. He will call to Me, 'You are my Father, my God, the Rock of my salvation.' I will indeed appoint him as My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. I will forever preserve My loving devotion for him, and My covenant with him will stand fast. I will establish his line forever, his throne as long as the heavens endure. If his sons forsake My law and do not walk in My judgments, if they violate My statutes and fail to keep My commandments, I will attend to their transgression with the rod, and to their iniquity with stripes. But I will not withdraw My loving devotion from him, nor ever betray My faithfulness. I will not violate My covenant or alter the utterance of My lips. Once and for all I have sworn by My holiness — I will not lie to David — his offspring shall endure forever, and his throne before Me like the sun, like the moon, established forever, a faithful witness in the sky." Selah Now, however, You have spurned and rejected him; You are enraged by Your anointed one. You have renounced the covenant with Your servant and sullied his crown in the dust. You have broken down all his walls; You have reduced his strongholds to rubble. All who pass by plunder him; he has become a reproach to his neighbors. You have exalted the right hand of his foes; You have made all his enemies rejoice. You have bent the edge of his sword and have not sustained him in battle. You have ended his splendor and cast his throne to the ground. You have cut short the days of his youth; You have covered him with shame. Selah How long, O LORD? Will You hide Yourself forever? Will Your wrath keep burning like fire? Remember the briefness of my lifespan! For what futility You have created all men! What man can live and never see death? Can he deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? Selah Where, O Lord, is Your loving devotion of old, which You faithfully swore to David? Remember, O Lord, the reproach of Your servants, which I bear in my heart from so many people — how Your enemies have taunted, O LORD, and have mocked every step of Your anointed one! Blessed be the LORD forever! Amen and amen.

Psalms 90–106

A prayer of Moses the man of God.

Lord, You have been our dwelling place through all generations. Before the mountains were born or You brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God. You return man to dust, saying, "Return, O sons of mortals." For in Your sight a thousand years are but a day that passes, or a watch of the night. You sweep them away in their sleep; they are like the new grass of the morning— in the morning it springs up new, but by evening it fades and withers. For we are consumed by Your anger and terrified by Your wrath. You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your presence. For all our days decline in Your fury; we finish our years with a sigh. The length of our days is seventy years — or eighty if we are strong — yet their pride is but labor and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away. Who knows the power of Your anger? Your wrath matches the fear You are due. So teach us to number our days, that we may present a heart of wisdom. Return, O LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on Your servants. Satisfy us in the morning with Your loving devotion, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. Make us glad for as many days as You have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen evil. May Your work be shown to Your servants, and Your splendor to their children. May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish for us the work of our hands— yes, establish the work of our hands!

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, "You are my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." Surely He will deliver you from the snare of the fowler, and from the deadly plague. He will cover you with His feathers; under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the calamity that destroys at noon. Though a thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand, no harm will come near you. You will only see it with your eyes and witness the punishment of the wicked. Because you have made the LORD your dwelling— my refuge, the Most High— no evil will befall you, no plague will approach your tent. For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. They will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and cobra; you will trample the young lion and serpent. "Because he loves Me, I will deliver him; because he knows My name, I will protect him. When he calls out to Me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble. I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him My salvation."

A Psalm. A song for the Sabbath day.

It is good to praise the LORD, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High, to proclaim Your loving devotion in the morning and Your faithfulness at night with the ten-stringed harp and the melody of the lyre. For You, O LORD,

have made me glad by Your deeds; I sing for joy at the works of Your hands. How great are Your works, O LORD, how deep are Your thoughts! A senseless man does not know, and a fool does not understand, that though the wicked sprout like grass, and all evildoers flourish, they will be forever destroyed. But You, O LORD, are exalted forever! For surely Your enemies, O LORD, surely Your enemies will perish; all evildoers will be scattered. But You have exalted my horn like that of a wild ox; with fine oil I have been anointed. My eyes see the downfall of my enemies; my ears hear the wailing of my wicked foes. The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. In old age they will still bear fruit; healthy and green they will remain, to proclaim, "The LORD is upright; He is my Rock, and in Him there is no unrighteousness."

The LORD reigns! He is robed in majesty; the LORD has clothed and armed Himself with strength. The world indeed is firmly established; it cannot be moved. Your throne was established long ago; You are from all eternity. The floodwaters have risen, O LORD; the rivers have raised their voice; the seas lift up their pounding waves. Above the roar of many waters— the mighty breakers of the sea— the LORD on high is majestic. Your testimonies are fully confirmed; holiness adorns Your house, O LORD, for all the days to come.

O LORD, God of vengeance, O God of vengeance, shine forth. Rise up, O Judge of the earth; render a reward to the proud. How long will the wicked, O LORD, how long will the wicked exult? They pour out arrogant words; all workers of iniquity boast. They crush Your people, O LORD; they oppress Your heritage. They kill the widow and the foreigner; they murder the fatherless. They say, "The LORD does not see; the God of Jacob pays no heed." Take notice, O senseless among the people! O fools, when will you be wise? He who affixed the ear, can He not hear? He who formed the eye, can He not see? He who admonishes the nations, does He not discipline? He who teaches man, does He lack knowledge? The LORD knows the thoughts of man, that they are futile. Blessed is the man You discipline, O LORD, and teach from Your law, to grant him relief from days of trouble, until a pit is dug for the wicked. For the LORD will not forsake His people; He will never abandon His heritage. Surely judgment will again be righteous, and all the upright in heart will follow it. Who will rise up for me against the wicked? Who will stand for me against the workers of iniquity? Unless the LORD had been my helper, I would soon have dwelt in the abode of silence. If I say, "My foot is slipping," Your loving devotion, O LORD, supports me. When anxiety overwhelms me, Your consolation delights my soul. Can a corrupt throne be Your ally — one devising mischief by decree? They band together against the righteous and condemn the innocent to death. But the LORD has been my stronghold, and my God is my rock of refuge. He will bring upon them their own iniquity and destroy them for their wickedness. The LORD our God will destroy them.

Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout to the Rock of our salvation! Let us enter His presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him in song. For the LORD is a great God, a great King above all gods. In His hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to Him. The sea is His, for He made it, and His hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, the sheep under His care. Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, in the day at Massah in the wilderness, where your fathers tested and tried Me, though they had seen My work. For forty years I was angry with that generation, and I said, "They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known My ways." So I swore on oath in My anger, "They shall never enter My rest."

Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, bless His name; proclaim His salvation day after day. Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples. For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but it is the LORD who made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before Him; strength and beauty fill His sanctuary. Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; bring an offering and enter His courts. Worship the LORD in the splendor of His holiness; tremble before Him, all the earth. Declare among the nations: "The LORD reigns!" The world is firmly established; it cannot be moved; He will judge the peoples with equity. Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice; let the sea resound, and all that fills it. Let the fields exult, and all that is in them. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy before the LORD, for He is coming— He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness.

The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; let the distant shores be glad. Clouds and darkness surround Him; righteousness and justice are His throne's foundation. Fire goes before Him and consumes His foes on every side. His lightning illuminates the world; the earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax

at the presence of the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth. The heavens proclaim His righteousness; all the peoples see His glory. All worshipers of images are put to shame — those who boast in idols. Worship Him, all you gods! Zion hears and rejoices, and the towns of Judah exult because of Your judgments, O LORD. For You, O LORD, are Most High over all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods. Hate evil, O you who love the LORD! He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked. Light shines on the righteous, gladness on the upright in heart. Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous ones, and praise His holy name.

A Psalm.

Sing to the LORD a new song, for He has done wonders; His right hand and holy arm have gained Him the victory. The LORD has proclaimed His salvation and revealed His righteousness to the nations. He has remembered His love and faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth — let your cry ring out, and sing praises! Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, in melodious song with the harp. With trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn shout for joy before the LORD, the King. Let the sea resound, and all that fills it, the world, and all who dwell in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy before the LORD, for He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with equity.

The LORD reigns; let the nations tremble! He is enthroned above the cherubim; let the earth quake! Great is the LORD in Zion; He is exalted above all the peoples. Let them praise Your great and awesome name — He is holy! The mighty King loves justice. You have established equity; You have exercised justice and righteousness in Jacob. Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at His footstool; He is holy! Moses and Aaron were among His priests; Samuel was among those who called on His name. They called to the LORD and He answered. He spoke to them from the pillar of cloud; they kept His decrees and the statutes He gave them. O LORD our God, You answered them. You were a forgiving God to them, yet an avenger of their misdeeds. Exalt the LORD our God and worship at His holy mountain, for the LORD our God is holy.

A Psalm of thanksgiving.

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth. Serve the LORD with gladness; come into His presence with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and bless His name. For the LORD is good, and His loving devotion endures forever; His faithfulness continues to all generations.

A Psalm of David.

I will sing of Your loving devotion and justice; to You, O LORD, I will sing praises. I will ponder the way that is blameless — when will You come to me? I will walk in my house with integrity of heart. I will set no worthless thing before my eyes. I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me. A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will know nothing of evil. Whoever slanders his neighbor in secret, I will put to silence; the one with haughty eyes and a proud heart, I will not endure. My eyes favor the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; he who walks in the way of integrity shall minister to me. No one who practices deceit shall dwell in my house; no one who tells lies shall stand in my presence. Every morning I will remove all the wicked of the land, that I may cut off every evildoer from the city of the LORD.

A prayer of one who is afflicted, when he grows faint and pours out his lament before the LORD.

Hear my prayer, O LORD; let my cry for help come before You. Do not hide Your face from me in my day of distress. Incline Your ear to me; answer me quickly when I call. For my days vanish like smoke, and my bones burn like glowing embers. My heart is afflicted, and withered like grass; I even forget to eat my bread. Through my loud groaning my skin hangs on my bones. I am like a desert owl, like an owl among the ruins. I lie awake; I am like a lone bird on a housetop. All day long my enemies taunt me; they ridicule me and curse me. For I have eaten ashes like bread and mixed my drink with tears because of Your indignation and wrath, for You have picked me up and cast me aside. My days are like lengthening shadows, and I wither away like grass. But You, O LORD, sit enthroned forever; Your renown endures to all generations. You will rise up and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show her favor — the appointed time has come. For Your servants delight in her stones and take pity on her dust. So the nations will fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth will fear Your glory. For the LORD will rebuild Zion; He has appeared in His glory. He will turn toward the prayer of the destitute; He will not despise their prayer. Let this be written for the generation to come, so that a people not yet created may praise the LORD. For He looked down from the heights of His sanctuary; the LORD gazed out from heaven to earth to hear a prisoner's groaning, to release those condemned to death, that they may proclaim the name of the LORD in Zion and praise Him in Jerusalem, when peoples and kingdoms assemble to serve the LORD. He has broken my strength on the way; He has cut short my days. I say: "O my God, do not

take me in the midst of my days! Your years go on through all generations. In the beginning You laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing You will change them, and they will be passed on. But You remain the same, and Your years will never end. The children of Your servants will dwell securely, and their descendants will be established before You."

Of David.

Bless the LORD, O my soul; all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all His kind deeds — He who forgives all your iniquities and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the Pit and crowns you with loving devotion and compassion, who satisfies you with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. The LORD executes righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. He made known His ways to Moses, His deeds to the people of Israel. The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in loving devotion. He will not always accuse us, nor harbor His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins or repaid us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His loving devotion for those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He is mindful that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass— he blooms like a flower of the field; when the wind passes over, it vanishes, and its place remembers it no more. But from everlasting to everlasting the loving devotion of the LORD extends to those who fear Him, and His righteousness to their children's children — to those who keep His covenant and remember to obey His precepts. The LORD has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all. Bless the LORD, all His angels mighty in strength who carry out His word, who hearken to the voice of His command. Bless the LORD, all His hosts, you servants who do His will. Bless the LORD, all His works in all places of His dominion. Bless the LORD, O my soul!

Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great; You are clothed with splendor and majesty. He wraps Himself in light as with a garment; He stretches out the heavens like a tent, laying the beams of His chambers in the waters above, making the clouds His chariot, walking on the wings of the wind. He makes the winds His messengers, flames of fire His servants. He set the earth on its foundations, never to be moved. You covered it with the deep like a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At Your rebuke the waters fled; at the sound of Your thunder they hurried away — the mountains rose and the valleys sank to the place You assigned for them — You set a boundary they cannot cross, that they may never again cover the earth. He sends forth springs in the valleys; they flow between the mountains. They give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. The birds of the air nest beside the springs; they sing among the branches. He waters the mountains from His chambers; the earth is satisfied by the fruit of His works. He makes the grass grow for the livestock and provides crops for man to cultivate, bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil that makes his face to shine, and bread that sustains his heart. The trees of the LORD have their fill, the cedars of Lebanon that He planted, where the birds build their nests; the stork makes her home in the cypresses. The high mountains are for the wild goats, the cliffs a refuge for the rock badgers. He made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows when to set. You bring darkness, and it becomes night, when all the beasts of the forest prowl. The young lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God. The sun rises, and they withdraw; they lie down in their dens. Man goes forth to his work and to his labor until evening. How many are Your works, O LORD! In wisdom You have made them all; the earth is full of Your creatures. Here is the sea, vast and wide, teeming with creatures beyond number, living things both great and small. There the ships pass, and Leviathan, which You formed to frolic there. All creatures look to You to give them their food in due season. When You give it to them, they gather it up; when You open Your hand, they are satisfied with good things. When You hide Your face, they are terrified; when You take away their breath, they die and return to dust. When You send Your Spirit, they are created, and You renew the face of the earth. May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in His works. He looks on the earth, and it trembles; He touches the mountains, and they smolder. I will sing to the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. May my meditation be pleasing to Him, for I rejoice in the LORD. May sinners vanish from the earth and the wicked be no more. Bless the LORD, O my soul. Hallelujah!

Give thanks to the LORD, call upon His name; make known His deeds among the nations. Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; tell of all His wonders. Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. Seek out the LORD and His strength; seek His face always. Remember the wonders He has done, His marvels, and the judgments He has pronounced, O offspring of His servant Abraham, O sons of Jacob, His chosen ones. He is the

LORD our God; His judgments carry throughout the earth. He remembers His covenant forever, the word He ordained for a thousand generations— the covenant He made with Abraham, and the oath He swore to Isaac. He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant: "I will give you the land of Canaan as the portion of your inheritance." When they were few in number, few indeed, and strangers in the land, they wandered from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another. He let no man oppress them; He rebuked kings on their behalf: "Do not touch My anointed ones! Do no harm to My prophets!" He called down famine on the land and cut off all their supplies of food. He sent a man before them — Joseph, sold as a slave. They bruised his feet with shackles and placed his neck in irons, until his prediction came true and the word of the LORD proved him right. The king sent and released him; the ruler of peoples set him free. He made him master of his household, ruler over all his substance, to instruct his princes as he pleased and teach his elders wisdom. Then Israel entered Egypt; Jacob dwelt in the land of Ham. And the LORD made His people very fruitful, more numerous than their foes, whose hearts He turned to hate His people, to conspire against His servants. He sent Moses His servant, and Aaron, whom He had chosen. They performed His miraculous signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. He sent darkness, and it became dark— yet they defied His words. He turned their waters to blood and caused their fish to die. Their land teemed with frogs, even in their royal chambers. He spoke, and insects swarmed— gnats throughout their country. He gave them hail for rain, with lightning throughout their land. He struck their vines and fig trees and shattered the trees of their country. He spoke, and the locusts came— young locusts without number. They devoured every plant in their land and consumed the produce of their soil. Then He struck all the firstborn in their land, the firstfruits of all their vigor. He brought Israel out with silver and gold, and none among His tribes stumbled. Egypt was glad when they departed, for the dread of Israel had fallen on them. He spread a cloud as a covering and a fire to light up the night. They asked, and He brought quail and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. He opened a rock, and water gushed out; it flowed like a river in the desert. For He remembered His holy promise to Abraham His servant. He brought forth His people with rejoicing, His chosen with shouts of joy. He gave them the lands of the nations, that they might inherit the fruit of others' labor, that they might keep His statutes and obey His laws. Hallelujah!

Hallelujah! Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His loving devotion endures forever. Who can describe the mighty acts of the LORD or fully proclaim His praise? Blessed are those who uphold justice, who practice righteousness at all times. Remember me, O LORD, in Your favor to Your people; visit me with Your salvation, that I may see the prosperity of Your chosen ones, and rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, and give glory with Your inheritance. We have sinned like our fathers; we have done wrong and acted wickedly. Our fathers in Egypt did not grasp Your wonders or remember Your abundant kindness; but they rebelled by the sea, there at the Red Sea. Yet He saved them for the sake of His name, to make His power known. He rebuked the Red Sea, and it dried up; He led them through the depths as through a desert. He saved them from the hand that hated them; He redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. The waters covered their foes; not one of them remained. Then they believed His promises and sang His praise. Yet they soon forgot His works and failed to wait for His counsel. They craved intensely in the wilderness and tested God in the desert. So He granted their request, but sent a wasting disease upon them. In the camp they envied Moses, as well as Aaron, the holy one of the LORD. The earth opened up and swallowed Dathan; it covered the assembly of Abiram. Then fire blazed through their company; flames consumed the wicked. At Horeb they made a calf and worshiped a molten image. They exchanged their Glory for the image of a grass-eating ox. They forgot God their Savior, who did great things in Egypt, wondrous works in the land of Ham, and awesome deeds by the Red Sea. So He said He would destroy them — had not Moses His chosen one stood before Him in the breach to divert His wrath from destroying them. They despised the pleasant land; they did not believe His promise. They grumbled in their tents and did not listen to the voice of the LORD. So He raised His hand and swore to cast them down in the wilderness, to disperse their offspring among the nations and scatter them throughout the lands. They yoked themselves to Baal of Peor and ate sacrifices offered to lifeless gods. So they provoked the LORD to anger with their deeds, and a plague broke out among them. But Phinehas stood and intervened, and the plague was restrained. It was credited to him as righteousness for endless generations to come. At the waters of Meribah they angered the LORD, and trouble came to Moses because of them. For they rebelled against His Spirit, and Moses spoke rashly with his lips. They did not destroy the peoples as the LORD had commanded them, but they mingled with the nations and adopted their customs. They worshiped their idols, which became a snare to them. They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons. They shed innocent blood— the blood of their sons

and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood. They defiled themselves by their actions and prostituted themselves by their deeds. So the anger of the LORD burned against His people, and He abhorred His own inheritance. He delivered them into the hand of the nations, and those who hated them ruled over them. Their enemies oppressed them and subdued them under their hand. Many times He rescued them, but they were bent on rebellion and sank down in their iniquity. Nevertheless He heard their cry; He took note of their distress. And He remembered His covenant with them, and relented by the abundance of His loving devotion. He made them objects of compassion to all who held them captive. Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from the nations, that we may give thanks to Your holy name, that we may glory in Your praise. Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Let all the people say, "Amen!" Hallelujah!

Psalms 107–150

Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His loving devotion endures forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy and gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south. Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no path to a city in which to dwell. They were hungry and thirsty; their soul fainted within them. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress. He led them on a straight path to reach a city where they could live. Let them give thanks to the LORD for His loving devotion and His wonders to the sons of men. For He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things. Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and chains, because they rebelled against the words of God and despised the counsel of the Most High. He humbled their hearts with hard labor; they stumbled, and there was no one to help. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He saved them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death and broke away their chains. Let them give thanks to the LORD for His loving devotion and His wonders to the sons of men. For He has broken down the gates of bronze and cut through the bars of iron. Fools, in their rebellious ways, and through their iniquities, suffered affliction. They loathed all food and drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He saved them from their distress. He sent forth His word and healed them; He rescued them from the Pit. Let them give thanks to the LORD for His loving devotion and His wonders to the sons of men. Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving and declare His works with rejoicing. Others went out to sea in ships, conducting trade on the mighty waters. They saw the works of the LORD, and His wonders in the deep. For He spoke and raised a tempest that lifted the waves of the sea. They mounted up to the heavens, then sunk to the depths; their courage melted in their anguish. They reeled and staggered like drunkards, and all their skill was useless. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He brought them out of their distress. He calmed the storm to a whisper, and the waves of the sea were hushed. They rejoiced in the silence, and He guided them to the harbor they desired. Let them give thanks to the LORD for His loving devotion and His wonders to the sons of men. Let them exalt Him in the assembly of the people and praise Him in the council of the elders. He turns rivers into deserts, springs of water into thirsty ground, and fruitful land into fields of salt, because of the wickedness of its dwellers. He turns a desert into pools of water and a dry land into flowing springs. He causes the hungry to settle there, that they may establish a city in which to dwell. They sow fields and plant vineyards that yield a fruitful harvest. He blesses them, and they multiply greatly; He does not let their herds diminish. When they are decreased and humbled by oppression, evil, and sorrow, He pours out contempt on the nobles and makes them wander in a trackless wasteland. But He lifts the needy from affliction and increases their families like flocks. The upright see and rejoice, and all iniquity shuts its mouth. Let him who is wise pay heed to these things and consider the loving devotion of the LORD.

A song. A Psalm of David.

My heart is steadfast, O God; I will sing and make music with all my being. Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn. I will praise You, O LORD, among the nations; I will sing Your praises among the peoples. For Your loving devotion extends beyond the heavens, and Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; may Your glory cover all the earth. Respond and save us with Your right hand, that Your beloved may be delivered. God has spoken from His sanctuary: "I will triumph! I will parcel out Shechem and apportion the Valley of Succoth. Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim is My helmet, Judah is My scepter. Moab is My washbasin; upon Edom I toss My sandal; over Philistia I shout in triumph." Who will bring me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom? Have You not rejected us, O God? Will You no longer march out, O God, with our armies? Give us aid against the enemy, for the help of man is worthless. With God we will perform with valor, and He will trample our enemies.

For the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

O God of my praise, be not silent. For wicked and deceitful mouths open against me; they

speak against me with lying tongues. They surround me with hateful words and attack me without cause. In return for my love they accuse me, but I am a man of prayer. They repay me evil for good, and hatred for my love. Set over him a wicked man; let an accuser stand at his right hand. When he is tried, let him be found guilty, and may his prayer be regarded as sin. May his days be few; may another take his position. May his children be fatherless and his wife a widow. May his children wander as beggars, seeking sustenance far from their ruined homes. May the creditor seize all he owns, and strangers plunder the fruits of his labor. May there be no one to extend kindness to him, and no one to favor his fatherless children. May his descendants be cut off; may their name be blotted out from the next generation. May the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the LORD, and the sin of his mother never be blotted out. May their sins always remain before the LORD, that He may cut off their memory from the earth. For he never thought to show kindness, but pursued the poor and needy and brokenhearted, even to their death. The cursing that he loved, may it fall on him; the blessing in which he refused to delight, may it be far from him. The cursing that he wore like a coat, may it soak into his body like water, and into his bones like oil. May it be like a robe wrapped about him, like a belt tied forever around him. May this be the LORD's reward to my accusers, to those who speak evil against me. But You, O GOD, the Lord, deal kindly with me for the sake of Your name; deliver me by the goodness of Your loving devotion. For I am poor and needy; my heart is wounded within me. I am fading away like a lengthening shadow; I am shaken off like a locust. My knees are weak from fasting, and my body grows lean and gaunt. I am an object of scorn to my accusers; when they see me, they shake their heads. Help me, O LORD my God; save me according to Your loving devotion. Let them know that this is Your hand, that You, O LORD, have done it. Though they curse, You will bless. When they rise up, they will be put to shame, but Your servant will rejoice. May my accusers be clothed with disgrace; may they wear their shame like a robe. With my mouth I will thank the LORD profusely; I will praise Him in the presence of many. For He stands at the right hand of the needy one, to save him from the condemners of his soul.

A Psalm of David.

The LORD said to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." The LORD extends Your mighty scepter from Zion: "Rule in the midst of Your enemies." Your people shall be willing on Your day of battle. Arrayed in holy splendor, from the womb of the dawn, to You belongs the dew of Your youth. The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind: "You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek." The Lord is at Your right hand; He will crush kings in the day of His wrath. He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead; He will crush the leaders far and wide. He will drink from the brook by the road; therefore He will lift up His head.

Hallelujah! I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly. Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them. Splendid and majestic is His work; His righteousness endures forever. He has caused His wonders to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and compassionate. He provides food for those who fear Him; He remembers His covenant forever. He has shown His people the power of His works by giving them the inheritance of the nations. The works of His hands are truth and justice; all His precepts are trustworthy. They are upheld forever and ever, enacted in truth and uprightness. He has sent redemption to His people; He has ordained His covenant forever; holy and awesome is His name. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow His precepts gain rich understanding. His praise endures forever!

Hallelujah! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in His commandments. His descendants will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever. Light dawns in the darkness for the upright — for the gracious, compassionate, and righteous. It is well with the man who is generous and lends freely, whose affairs are guided by justice. Surely he will never be shaken; the righteous man will be remembered forever. He does not fear bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD. His heart is assured; he does not fear, until he looks in triumph on his foes. He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn will be lifted high in honor. The wicked man will see and be grieved; he will gnash his teeth and waste away; the desires of the wicked will perish.

Hallelujah! Give praise, O servants of the LORD; praise the name of the LORD. Blessed be the name of the LORD both now and forevermore. From where the sun rises to where it sets, the name of the LORD is praised. The LORD is exalted over all the nations, His glory above the heavens. Who is like the LORD our God, the One enthroned on high? He humbles Himself to behold the heavens and the earth. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the dump to seat them with nobles, with the princes of His people. He settles the barren woman in her home as a joyful mother to her children. Hallelujah!

When Israel departed from Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of foreign tongue, Judah became God's sanctuary, Israel His dominion. The sea observed and fled; the Jordan turned back; the mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs. Why was it, O sea, that you fled, O Jordan, that you turned back, O mountains, that you skipped like rams, O hills, like lambs? Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, who turned the rock into a pool, the flint into a fountain of water!

Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to Your name be the glory, because of Your loving devotion, because of Your faithfulness. Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?" Our God is in heaven; He does as He pleases. Their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths, but cannot speak; they have eyes, but cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear; they have noses, but cannot smell; they have hands, but cannot feel; they have feet, but cannot walk; they cannot even clear their throats. Those who make them become like them, as do all who trust in them. O Israel, trust in the LORD! He is their help and shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD! He is their help and shield. You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD! He is their help and shield. The LORD is mindful of us; He will bless us. He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron; He will bless those who fear the LORD— small and great alike. May the LORD give you increase, both you and your children. May you be blessed by the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth He has given to mankind. It is not the dead who praise the LORD, nor any who descend into silence. But it is we who will bless the LORD, both now and forevermore. Hallelujah!

I love the LORD, for He has heard my voice — my appeal for mercy. Because He has inclined His ear to me, I will call on Him as long as I live. The ropes of death entangled me; the anguish of Sheol overcame me; I was confronted by trouble and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the LORD: "O LORD, deliver my soul!" The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. The LORD preserves the simplehearted; I was helpless, and He saved me. Return to your rest, O my soul, for the LORD has been good to you. For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living. I believed, therefore I said, "I am greatly afflicted." In my alarm I said, "All men are liars!" How can I repay the LORD for all His goodness to me? I will lift the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD. I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all His people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints. Truly, O LORD, I am Your servant; I am Your servant, the son of Your maidservant; You have broken my bonds. I will offer to You a sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD. I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all His people, in the courts of the LORD's house, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Hallelujah!

Praise the LORD, all you nations! Extol Him, all you peoples! For great is His loving devotion toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Hallelujah!

Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His loving devotion endures forever. Let Israel say, "His loving devotion endures forever." Let the house of Aaron say, "His loving devotion endures forever." Let those who fear the LORD say, "His loving devotion endures forever." In my distress I called to the LORD, and He answered and set me free. The LORD is on my side; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? The LORD is on my side; He is my helper. Therefore I will look in triumph on those who hate me. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes. All the nations surrounded me, but in the name of the LORD I cut them off. They surrounded me on every side, but in the name of the LORD I cut them off. They swarmed around me like bees, but they were extinguished like burning thorns; in the name of the LORD I cut them off. I was pushed so hard I was falling, but the LORD helped me. The LORD is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation. Shouts of joy and salvation resound in the tents of the righteous: "The right hand of the LORD performs with valor! The right hand of the LORD is exalted! The right hand of the LORD performs with valor!" I will not die, but I will live and proclaim what the LORD has done. The LORD disciplined me severely, but He has not given me over to death. Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter and give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it. I will give You thanks, for You have answered me, and You have become my salvation. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is from the LORD, and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. O LORD, save us, we pray. We beseech You, O LORD, cause us to prosper! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you. The LORD is God; He has made His light to shine upon us. Bind the festal sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will give You thanks. You are my God, and I will exalt You. Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His loving devotion endures forever.

Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the Law of the LORD. Blessed are those who keep His testimonies and seek Him with all their heart. They do no iniquity; they walk in His ways. You have ordained Your precepts, that we should keep them diligently. Oh, that my ways were committed to keeping Your statutes! Then I would not be ashamed when I consider all Your commandments. I will praise You with an upright heart when I learn Your righteous judgments. I will keep Your statutes; do not utterly forsake me.

How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; do not let me stray from Your commandments. I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You. Blessed are You, O LORD; teach me Your statutes. With my lips I proclaim all the judgments of Your mouth. I rejoice in the way of Your testimonies as much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts and regard Your ways. I will delight in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.

Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live and keep Your word. Open my eyes that I may see wondrous things from Your law. I am a stranger on the earth; do not hide Your commandments from me. My soul is consumed with longing for Your judgments at all times. You rebuke the arrogant — the cursed who stray from Your commandments. Remove my scorn and contempt, for I have kept Your testimonies. Though rulers sit and slander me, Your servant meditates on Your statutes. Your testimonies are indeed my delight; they are my counselors.

My soul cleaves to the dust; revive me according to Your word. I recounted my ways, and You answered me; teach me Your statutes. Make clear to me the way of Your precepts; then I will meditate on Your wonders. My soul melts with sorrow; strengthen me according to Your word. Remove me from the path of deceit and graciously grant me Your law. I have chosen the way of truth; I have set Your ordinances before me. I cling to Your testimonies, O LORD; let me not be put to shame. I run in the path of Your commandments, for You will enlarge my heart.

Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, and I will keep them to the end. Give me understanding that I may obey Your law, and follow it with all my heart. Direct me in the path of Your commandments, for there I find delight. Turn my heart to Your testimonies and not to covetous gain. Turn my eyes away from worthless things; revive me with Your word. Establish Your word to Your servant, to produce reverence for You. Turn away the disgrace I dread, for Your judgments are good. How I long for Your precepts! Revive me in Your righteousness.

May Your loving devotion come to me, O LORD, Your salvation, according to Your promise. Then I can answer him who taunts, for I trust in Your word. Never take Your word of truth from my mouth, for I hope in Your judgments. I will always obey Your law, forever and ever. And I will walk in freedom, for I have sought Your precepts. I will speak of Your testimonies before kings, and I will not be ashamed. I delight in Your commandments because I love them. I lift up my hands to Your commandments, which I love, and I meditate on Your statutes.

Remember Your word to Your servant, upon which You have given me hope. This is my comfort in affliction, that Your promise has given me life. The arrogant utterly deride me, but I do not turn from Your law. I remember Your judgments of old, O LORD, and in them I find comfort. Rage has taken hold of me because of the wicked who reject Your law. Your statutes are songs to me in the house of my pilgrimage. In the night, O LORD, I remember Your name, that I may keep Your law. This is my practice, for I obey Your precepts.

The LORD is my portion; I have promised to keep Your words. I have sought Your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according to Your promise. I considered my ways and turned my steps to Your testimonies. I hurried without hesitating to keep Your commandments. Though the ropes of the wicked bind me, I do not forget Your law. At midnight I rise to give You thanks for Your righteous judgments. I am a friend to all who fear You, and to those who keep Your precepts. The earth is filled with Your loving devotion, O LORD; teach me Your statutes.

You are good to Your servant, O LORD, according to Your word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in Your commandments. Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now I keep Your word. You are good, and You do what is good; teach me Your statutes. Though the arrogant have smeared me with lies, I keep Your precepts with all my heart. Their hearts are callous and insensitive, but I delight in Your law. It was good for me to be afflicted, that I might learn Your statutes. The law from Your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of gold and silver.

Your hands have made me and fashioned me; give me understanding to learn Your commandments. May those who fear You see me and rejoice, for I have hoped in Your word. I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are righteous, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me. May Your loving devotion comfort me, I pray, according to Your promise to Your servant. May Your compassion come to me, that I may live, for Your law is my delight. May the arrogant be put to shame for subverting me with a lie; I will meditate on Your precepts. May

those who fear You turn to me, those who know Your testimonies. May my heart be blameless in Your statutes, that I may not be put to shame.
My soul faints for Your salvation; I wait for Your word. My eyes fail, looking for Your promise; I ask, “When will You comfort me?” Though I am like a wineskin dried up by smoke, I do not forget Your statutes. How many days must Your servant wait? When will You execute judgment on my persecutors? The arrogant have dug pits for me in violation of Your law. All Your commandments are faithful; I am persecuted without cause— help me! They almost wiped me from the earth, but I have not forsaken Your precepts. Revive me according to Your loving devotion, that I may obey the testimony of Your mouth.
Your word, O LORD, is everlasting; it is firmly fixed in the heavens. Your faithfulness continues through all generations; You established the earth, and it endures. Your ordinances stand to this day, for all things are servants to You. If Your law had not been my delight, then I would have perished in my affliction. I will never forget Your precepts, for by them You have revived me. I am Yours; save me, for I have sought Your precepts. The wicked wait to destroy me, but I will ponder Your testimonies. I have seen a limit to all perfection, but Your commandment is without limit.
Oh, how I love Your law! All day long it is my meditation. Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are always with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I discern more than the elders, for I obey Your precepts. I have kept my feet from every evil path, that I may keep Your word. I have not departed from Your ordinances, for You Yourself have taught me. How sweet are Your words to my taste— sweeter than honey in my mouth! I gain understanding from Your precepts; therefore I hate every false way.
Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. I have sworn and confirmed that I will keep Your righteous judgments. I am severely afflicted, O LORD; revive me through Your word. Accept the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me Your judgments. I constantly take my life in my hands, yet I do not forget Your law. The wicked have set a snare for me, but I have not strayed from Your precepts. Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart. I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes, even to the very end.
The double-minded I despise, but Your law I love. You are my hiding place and my shield; I put my hope in Your word. Depart from me, you evildoers, that I may obey the commandments of my God. Sustain me as You promised, that I may live; let me not be ashamed of my hope. Uphold me, and I will be saved, that I may always regard Your statutes. You reject all who stray from Your statutes, for their deceitfulness is in vain. All the wicked on earth You discard like dross; therefore I love Your testimonies. My flesh trembles in awe of You; I stand in fear of Your judgments.
I have done what is just and right; do not leave me to my oppressors. Ensure Your servant’s well-being; do not let the arrogant oppress me. My eyes fail, looking for Your salvation, and for Your righteous promise. Deal with Your servant according to Your loving devotion, and teach me Your statutes. I am Your servant; give me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies. It is time for the LORD to act, for they have broken Your law. Therefore I love Your commandments more than gold, even the purest gold. Therefore I admire all Your precepts and hate every false way.
Wonderful are Your testimonies; therefore I obey them. The unfolding of Your words gives light; it informs the simple. I open my mouth and pant, longing for Your commandments. Turn to me and show me mercy, as You do to those who love Your name. Order my steps in Your word; let no sin rule over me. Redeem me from the oppression of man, that I may keep Your precepts. Make Your face shine upon Your servant, and teach me Your statutes. My eyes shed streams of tears because Your law is not obeyed.
Righteous are You, O LORD, and upright are Your judgments. The testimonies You have laid down are righteous and altogether faithful. My zeal has consumed me because my foes forget Your words. Your promise is completely pure; therefore Your servant loves it. I am lowly and despised, but I do not forget Your precepts. Your righteousness is everlasting and Your law is true. Trouble and distress have found me, but Your commandments are my delight. Your testimonies are righteous forever. Give me understanding, that I may live.
I call with all my heart; answer me, O LORD! I will obey Your statutes. I call to You; save me, that I may keep Your testimonies. I rise before dawn and cry for help; in Your word I have put my hope. My eyes anticipate the watches of night, that I may meditate on Your word. Hear my voice, O LORD, according to Your loving devotion; give me life according to Your justice. Those who follow after wickedness draw near; they are far from Your law. You are near, O LORD, and all Your commandments are true. Long ago I learned from Your testimonies that You have established them forever.
Look upon my affliction and rescue me, for I have not forgotten Your law. Defend my cause and redeem me; revive me according to Your word. Salvation is far from the wicked because they do not seek Your statutes. Great are Your mercies, O LORD; revive me according to Your ordinances. Though my persecutors and foes

are many, I have not turned from Your testimonies. I look on the faithless with loathing because they do not keep Your word. Consider how I love Your precepts, O LORD; give me life according to Your loving devotion. The entirety of Your word is truth, and all Your righteous judgments endure forever.

Rulers persecute me without cause, but my heart fears only Your word. I rejoice in Your promise like one who finds great spoil. I hate and abhor falsehood, but Your law I love. Seven times a day I praise You for Your righteous judgments. Abundant peace belongs to those who love Your law; nothing can make them stumble. I wait for Your salvation, O LORD, and I carry out Your commandments. I obey Your testimonies and love them greatly. I obey Your precepts and Your testimonies, for all my ways are before You.

May my cry come before You, O LORD; give me understanding according to Your word. May my plea come before You; rescue me according to Your promise. My lips pour forth praise, for You teach me Your statutes. My tongue sings of Your word, for all Your commandments are righteous. May Your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen Your precepts. I long for Your salvation, O LORD, and Your law is my delight. Let me live to praise You; may Your judgments sustain me. I have strayed like a lost sheep; seek Your servant, for I have not forgotten Your commandments.

A song of ascents.

In my distress I cried to the LORD, and He answered me. Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips and a deceitful tongue. What will He do to you, and what will be added to you, O deceitful tongue? Sharp arrows will come from the warrior, with burning coals of the broom tree! Woe to me that I dwell in Meshech, that I live among the tents of Kedar! Too long have I dwelt among those who hate peace. I am in favor of peace; but when I speak, they want war.

A song of ascents.

I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to slip; your Protector will not slumber. Behold, the Protector of Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is the shade on your right hand. The sun will not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will guard you from all evil; He will preserve your soul. The LORD will watch over your coming and going, both now and forevermore.

A song of ascents. Of David.

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD." Our feet are standing in your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is built up as a city united together, where the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, as a testimony for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD. For there the thrones of judgment stand, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May those who love you prosper. May there be peace within your walls, and prosperity inside your fortresses." For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say, "Peace be within you." For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your prosperity.

A song of ascents.

I lift up my eyes to You, the One enthroned in heaven. As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant look to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes are on the LORD our God until He shows us mercy. Have mercy on us, O LORD, have mercy, for we have endured much contempt. We have endured much scorn from the arrogant, much contempt from the proud.

A song of ascents. Of David.

If the LORD had not been on our side— let Israel now declare— if the LORD had not been on our side when men attacked us, when their anger flared against us, then they would have swallowed us alive, then the floods would have engulfed us, then the torrent would have overwhelmed us, then the raging waters would have swept us away. Blessed be the LORD, who has not given us as prey to their teeth. We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowler; the net is torn, and we have slipped away. Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

A song of ascents.

Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion. It cannot be moved; it abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds His people, both now and forevermore. For the scepter of the wicked will not rest upon the land allotted to the righteous, so that the righteous will not put forth their hands to injustice. Do good, O LORD, to those who are good, and to the upright in heart. But those who turn to crooked ways the LORD will banish with the evildoers. Peace be upon Israel.

A song of ascents.

When the LORD restored the captives of Zion, we were like dreamers. Then our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with shouts of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." The LORD has done great things for us; we are filled with joy. Restore our captives, O LORD, like streams in the Negev. Those who sow in tears will reap with shouts of joy. He who goes out weeping, bearing a trail of seed, will surely return with shouts of joy, carrying sheaves of grain.

A song of ascents. Of Solomon.

Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain; unless the LORD protects the city,

its watchmen stand guard in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for bread to eat — for He gives sleep to His beloved. Children are indeed a heritage from the LORD, and the fruit of the womb is His reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. He will not be put to shame when he confronts the enemies at the gate.

A song of ascents.

Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in His ways! For when you eat the fruit of your labor, blessings and prosperity will be yours. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine flourishing within your house, your sons like olive shoots sitting around your table. In this way indeed shall blessing come to the man who fears the LORD. May the LORD bless you from Zion, that you may see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life, that you may see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel!

A song of ascents.

Many a time they have persecuted me from my youth— let Israel now declare— many a time they have persecuted me from my youth, but they have not prevailed against me. The plowmen plowed over my back; they made their furrows long. The LORD is righteous; He has cut me from the cords of the wicked. May all who hate Zion be turned back in shame. May they be like grass on the rooftops, which withers before it can grow, unable to fill the hands of the reaper, or the arms of the binder of sheaves. May none who pass by say to them, "The blessing of the LORD be on you; we bless you in the name of the LORD."

A song of ascents.

Out of the depths I cry to You, O LORD! O Lord, hear my voice; let Your ears be attentive to my plea for mercy. If You, O LORD, kept track of iniquities, then who, O Lord, could stand? But with You there is forgiveness, so that You may be feared. I wait for the LORD; my soul does wait, and in His word I put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning— more than watchmen wait for the morning. O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is loving devotion, and with Him is redemption in abundance. And He will redeem Israel from all iniquity.

A song of ascents. Of David.

My heart is not proud, O LORD, my eyes are not haughty. I do not aspire to great things or matters too lofty for me. Surely I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with his mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, both now and forevermore.

A song of ascents.

O LORD, remember on behalf of David all the hardships he endured, how he swore an oath to the LORD, and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob: "I will not enter my house or get into my bed, I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the LORD, a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob." We heard that the ark was in Ephrathah; we found it in the fields of Jaar. Let us go to His dwelling place; let us worship at His footstool. Arise, O LORD, to Your resting place, You and the ark of Your strength. May Your priests be clothed with righteousness, and Your saints shout for joy. For the sake of Your servant David, do not reject Your anointed one. The LORD swore an oath to David, a promise He will not revoke: "One of your descendants I will place on your throne. If your sons keep My covenant and the testimony I will teach them, then their sons will also sit on your throne forever and ever." For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His home: "This is My resting place forever and ever; here I will dwell, for I have desired this home. I will bless her with abundant provisions; I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints will sing out in joy. There I will make a horn grow for David; I have prepared a lamp for My anointed one. I will clothe his enemies with shame, but the crown upon him will gleam."

A song of ascents. Of David.

Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony! It is like fine oil on the head, running down on the beard, running down Aaron's beard over the collar of his robes. It is like the dew of Hermon falling on the mountains of Zion. For there the LORD has bestowed the blessing of life forevermore.

A song of ascents.

Come, bless the LORD, all you servants of the LORD who serve by night in the house of the LORD! Lift up your hands to the sanctuary and bless the LORD! May the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth, bless you from Zion.

Hallelujah! Praise the name of the LORD. Give praise, O servants of the LORD, who stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God. Hallelujah, for the LORD is good; sing praises to His name, for it is lovely. For the LORD has chosen Jacob as His own, Israel as His treasured possession. For I know that the LORD is great; our Lord is above all gods. The LORD does all that pleases Him in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and in all their depths. He causes the clouds to rise from the ends of the earth. He generates the lightning with the rain and brings forth the wind from His storehouses. He struck down the firstborn of Egypt, of both man and beast. He sent signs and wonders into your midst, O Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants. He struck down many nations and slaughtered mighty kings: Sihon king of the Amorites, Og king of Bashan, and all the kings of Canaan. He

gave their land as an inheritance, as a heritage to His people Israel. Your name, O LORD, endures forever, Your renown, O LORD, through all generations. For the LORD will vindicate His people and will have compassion on His servants. The idols of the nations are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths, but cannot speak; they have eyes, but cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear; nor is there breath in their mouths. Those who make them become like them, as do all who trust in them. O house of Israel, bless the LORD; O house of Aaron, bless the LORD; O house of Levi, bless the LORD; you who fear the LORD, bless the LORD! Blessed be the LORD from Zion — He who dwells in Jerusalem. Hallelujah!

Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good. His loving devotion endures forever. Give thanks to the God of gods. His loving devotion endures forever. Give thanks to the Lord of lords. His loving devotion endures forever. He alone does great wonders. His loving devotion endures forever. By His insight He made the heavens. His loving devotion endures forever. He spread out the earth upon the waters. His loving devotion endures forever. He made the great lights — His loving devotion endures forever. the sun to rule the day, His loving devotion endures forever. the moon and stars to govern the night. His loving devotion endures forever. He struck down the firstborn of Egypt His loving devotion endures forever. and brought Israel out from among them His loving devotion endures forever. with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. His loving devotion endures forever. He divided the Red Sea in two His loving devotion endures forever. and led Israel through the midst, His loving devotion endures forever. but swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea. His loving devotion endures forever. He led His people through the wilderness. His loving devotion endures forever. He struck down great kings His loving devotion endures forever. and slaughtered mighty kings— His loving devotion endures forever. Sihon king of the Amorites His loving devotion endures forever. and Og king of Bashan— His loving devotion endures forever. and He gave their land as an inheritance, His loving devotion endures forever. a heritage to His servant Israel. His loving devotion endures forever. He remembered us in our low estate His loving devotion endures forever. and freed us from our enemies. His loving devotion endures forever. He gives food to every creature. His loving devotion endures forever. Give thanks to the God of heaven! His loving devotion endures forever.

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the willows we hung our harps, for there our captors requested a song; our tormentors demanded songs of joy: “Sing us a song of Zion.” How can we sing a song of the LORD in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand cease to function. May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not exalt Jerusalem as my greatest joy! Remember, O LORD, the sons of Edom on the day Jerusalem fell: “Destroy it,” they said, “tear it down to its foundations!” O Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction, blessed is he who repays you as you have done to us. Blessed is he who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks.

Of David.

I give You thanks with all my heart; before the gods I sing Your praises. I bow down toward Your holy temple and give thanks to Your name for Your loving devotion and Your faithfulness; You have exalted Your name and Your word above all else. On the day I called, You answered me; You emboldened me and strengthened my soul. All the kings of the earth will give You thanks, O LORD, when they hear the words of Your mouth. They will sing of the ways of the LORD, for the glory of the LORD is great. Though the LORD is on high, He attends to the lowly; but the proud He knows from afar. If I walk in the midst of trouble, You preserve me from the anger of my foes; You extend Your hand, and Your right hand saves me. The LORD will fulfill His purpose for me. O LORD, Your loving devotion endures forever — do not abandon the works of Your hands.

For the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit and when I rise; You understand my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down; You are aware of all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, You know all about it, O LORD. You hem me in behind and before; You have laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go to escape Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to the heavens, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, You are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle by the farthest sea, even there Your hand will guide me; Your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me, and the light become night around me”— even the darkness is not dark to You, but the night shines like the day, for darkness is as light to You. For You formed my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are Your works, and I know this very well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in secret, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all my days were written in Your book and ordained for me before one of them came to be. How precious to me are Your thoughts, O God, how vast is their sum! If I were to count them, they would out-

number the grains of sand; and when I awake, I am still with You. O God, that You would slay the wicked— away from me, you bloodthirsty men— who speak of You deceitfully; Your enemies take Your name in vain. Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD, and detest those who rise against You? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them as my enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the way everlasting.

For the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

Rescue me, O LORD, from evil men. Protect me from men of violence, who devise evil in their hearts and stir up war all day long. They sharpen their tongues like snakes; the venom of vipers is on their lips. Selah Guard me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked. Keep me safe from men of violence who scheme to make me stumble. The proud hide a snare for me; the cords of their net are spread along the path, and lures are set out for me. Selah I say to the LORD, "You are my God." Hear, O LORD, my cry for help. O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You shield my head in the day of battle. Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked; do not promote their evil plans, lest they be exalted. Selah May the heads of those who surround me be covered in the trouble their lips have caused. May burning coals fall on them; may they be thrown into the fire, into the miry pits, never to rise again. May no slanderer be established in the land; may calamity hunt down the man of violence. I know that the LORD upholds justice for the poor and defends the cause of the needy. Surely the righteous will praise Your name; the upright will dwell in Your presence.

A Psalm of David.

I call upon You, O LORD; come quickly to me. Hear my voice when I call to You. May my prayer be set before You like incense; my uplifted hands, like the evening offering. Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch at the door of my lips. Do not let my heart be drawn to any evil thing or take part in works of wickedness with men who do iniquity; let me not feast on their delicacies. Let the righteous man strike me; let his rebuke be an act of loving devotion. It is oil for my head; let me not refuse it. For my prayer is ever against the deeds of the wicked. When their rulers are thrown down from the cliffs, the people will listen to my words, for they are pleasant. As when one plows and breaks up the soil, so our bones have been scattered at the mouth of Sheol. But my eyes are fixed on You, O GOD the Lord. In You I seek refuge; do not leave my soul defenseless. Keep me from the snares they have laid for me, and from the lures of evildoers. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I pass by in safety.

A Maskil of David, when he was in the cave. A prayer.

I cry aloud to the LORD; I lift my voice to the LORD for mercy. I pour out my complaint before Him; I reveal my trouble to Him. Although my spirit grows faint within me, You know my way. Along the path I travel they have hidden a snare for me. Look to my right and see; no one attends to me. There is no refuge for me; no one cares for my soul. I cry to You, O LORD: "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living." Listen to my cry, for I am brought quite low. Rescue me from my pursuers, for they are too strong for me. Free my soul from prison, that I may praise Your name. The righteous will gather around me because of Your goodness to me.

A Psalm of David.

O LORD, hear my prayer. In Your faithfulness, give ear to my plea; in Your righteousness, answer me. Do not bring Your servant into judgment, for no one alive is righteous before You. For the enemy has pursued my soul, crushing my life to the ground, making me dwell in darkness like those long since dead. My spirit grows faint within me; my heart is dismayed inside me. I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works; I consider the work of Your hands. I stretch out my hands to You; my soul thirsts for You like a parched land. Selah Answer me quickly, O LORD; my spirit fails. Do not hide Your face from me, or I will be like those who descend to the Pit. Let me hear Your loving devotion in the morning, for I have put my trust in You. Teach me the way I should walk, for to You I lift up my soul. Deliver me from my enemies, O LORD; I flee to You for refuge. Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God. May Your good Spirit lead me on level ground. For the sake of Your name, O LORD, revive me. In Your righteousness, bring my soul out of trouble. And in Your loving devotion, cut off my enemies. Destroy all who afflict me, for I am Your servant.

Of David.

Blessed be the LORD, my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle. He is my steadfast love and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer. He is my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me. O LORD, what is man, that You regard him, the son of man that You think of him? Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow. Part Your heavens, O LORD, and come down; touch the mountains, that they may smoke. Flash forth Your lightning and scatter them; shoot Your arrows and rout them. Reach down from on high; set me free and rescue me from the deep waters, from the grasp of foreigners, whose mouths speak falsehood, whose right hands are deceitful. I will sing to You a new song, O God; on a harp of ten strings I will make music to You — to Him who gives victory to kings, who frees His servant David from the deadly sword. Set me free and rescue me from

the grasp of foreigners, whose mouths speak falsehood, whose right hands are deceitful. Then our sons will be like plants nurtured in their youth, our daughters like corner pillars carved to adorn a palace. Our storehouses will be full, supplying all manner of produce; our flocks will bring forth thousands, tens of thousands in our fields. Our oxen will bear great loads. There will be no breach in the walls, no going into captivity, and no cry of lament in our streets. Blessed are the people of whom this is so; blessed are the people whose God is the LORD.

A Psalm of praise. Of David.

I will exalt You, my God and King; I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever. Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised; His greatness is unsearchable. One generation will commend Your works to the next, and will proclaim Your mighty acts— the glorious splendor of Your majesty. And I will meditate on Your wondrous works. They will proclaim the power of Your awesome deeds, and I will declare Your greatness. They will extol the fame of Your abundant goodness and sing joyfully of Your righteousness. The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in loving devotion. The LORD is good to all; His compassion rests on all He has made. All You have made will give You thanks, O LORD, and Your saints will bless You. They will tell of the glory of Your kingdom and speak of Your might, to make known to men Your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of Your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures through all generations. The LORD is faithful in all His words and kind in all His actions. The LORD upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food in season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. The LORD is righteous in all His ways and kind in all His deeds. The LORD is near to all who call on Him, to all who call out to Him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear Him; He hears their cry and saves them. The LORD preserves all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy. My mouth will declare the praise of the LORD; let every creature bless His holy name forever and ever.

Hallelujah! Praise the LORD, O my soul. I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. Put not your trust in princes, in mortal man, who cannot save. When his spirit departs, he returns to the ground; on that very day his plans perish. Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. He remains faithful forever. He executes justice for the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free, the LORD opens the eyes of the blind, the LORD lifts those who are weighed down, the LORD loves the righteous. The LORD protects foreigners; He sustains the fatherless and the widow, but the ways of the wicked He frustrates. The LORD reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Hallelujah!

Hallelujah! How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and lovely to praise Him! The LORD builds up Jerusalem; He gathers the exiles of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars; He calls them each by name. Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding has no limit. The LORD sustains the humble, but casts the wicked to the ground. Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make music on the harp to our God, who covers the sky with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow on the hills. He provides food for the animals, and for the young ravens when they call. He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD is pleased with those who fear Him, who hope in His loving devotion. Exalt the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion! For He strengthens the bars of your gates and blesses the children within you. He makes peace at your borders; He fills you with the finest wheat. He sends forth His command to the earth; His word runs swiftly. He spreads the snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes; He casts forth His hail like pebbles. Who can withstand His icy blast? He sends forth His word and melts them; He unleashes His winds, and the waters flow. He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and judgments to Israel. He has done this for no other nation; they do not know His judgments. Hallelujah!

Hallelujah! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise Him in the highest places. Praise Him, all His angels; praise Him, all His heavenly hosts. Praise Him, O sun and moon; praise Him, all you shining stars. Praise Him, O highest heavens, and you waters above the skies. Let them praise the name of the LORD, for He gave the command and they were created. He established them forever and ever; He issued a decree that will never pass away. Praise the LORD from the earth, all great sea creatures and ocean depths, lightning and hail, snow and clouds, powerful wind fulfilling His word, mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all cattle, crawling creatures and flying birds, kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth, young men and maidens, old and young together. Let them praise the name of the LORD, for His name alone is exalted; His splendor is above the earth and the heavens. He has raised up a horn for His people, the praise of

all His saints, of Israel, a people near to Him. Hallelujah!
Hallelujah! Sing to the LORD a new song — His praise in the assembly of the godly. Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King. Let them praise His name with dancing, and make music to Him with tambourine and harp. For the LORD takes pleasure in His people; He adorns the afflicted with salvation. Let the saints exult in glory; let them shout for joy upon their beds. May the high praises of God be in their mouths, and a double-edged sword in their hands, to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with shackles of iron, to execute the judgment written against them. This honor is for all His saints. Hallelujah!
Hallelujah! Praise God in His sanctuary. Praise Him in His mighty heavens. Praise Him for His mighty acts; praise Him for His excellent greatness. Praise Him with the sound of the horn; praise Him with the harp and lyre. Praise Him with tambourine and dancing; praise Him with strings and flute. Praise Him with clashing cymbals; praise Him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Hallelujah!

Proverbs

Proverbs of Solomon

These are the proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel, for gaining wisdom and discipline, for comprehending words of insight, and for receiving instruction in wise living and in righteousness, justice, and equity. To impart prudence to the simple and knowledge and discretion to the young, let the wise listen and gain instruction, and the discerning acquire wise counsel by understanding the proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

Listen, my son, to your father's instruction, and do not forsake the teaching of your mother. For they are a garland of grace on your head and a pendant around your neck. My son, if sinners entice you, do not yield to them. If they say, "Come along, let us lie in wait for blood, let us ambush the innocent without cause, let us swallow them alive like Sheol, and whole like those descending into the Pit. We will find all manner of precious goods; we will fill our houses with plunder. Throw in your lot with us; let us all share one purse" — my son, do not walk the road with them or set foot upon their path. For their feet run to evil, and they are swift to shed blood. How futile it is to spread the net where any bird can see it! But they lie in wait for their own blood; they ambush their own lives. Such is the fate of all who are greedy, whose unjust gain takes the lives of its possessors.

Wisdom calls out in the street, she lifts her voice in the square; in the main concourse she cries aloud, at the city gates she makes her speech: "How long, O simple ones, will you love your simple ways? How long will scoffers delight in their scorn and fools hate knowledge? If you had repented at my rebuke, then surely I would have poured out my spirit on you; I would have made my words known to you. Because you refused my call, and no one took my outstretched hand, because you neglected all my counsel, and wanted none of my correction, in turn I will mock your calamity; I will sneer when terror strikes you, when your dread comes like a storm, and your destruction like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish overwhelm you. Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will earnestly seek me, but will not find me. For they hated knowledge and chose not to fear the LORD. They accepted none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof. So they will eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the waywardness of the simple will slay them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them. But whoever listens to me will dwell in safety, secure from the fear of evil."

My son, if you accept my words and hide my commandments within you, if you incline your ear to wisdom and direct your heart to understanding, if you truly call out to insight and lift your voice to understanding, if you seek it like silver and search it out like hidden treasure, then you will discern the fear of the LORD and discover the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk with integrity, to guard the paths of justice and protect the way of His saints. Then you will discern righteousness and justice and equity— every good path. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will delight your soul. Discretion will watch over you, and understanding will guard you, to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perversity, from those who leave the straight paths to walk in the ways of darkness, from those who enjoy doing evil and rejoice in the twistedness of evil, whose paths are crooked and whose ways are devious. It will rescue you from the forbidden woman, from the stranger with seductive words who abandons the partner of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God. For her house sinks down to death, and her tracks to the departed spirits. None who go to her return or negotiate the paths of life. So you will follow in the ways of the good, and keep to the paths of the righteous. For the upright will inhabit the land, and the blameless will remain in it; but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the unfaithful will be uprooted.

My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for they will add length to your days, years and peace to your life. Never let loving devotion or faithfulness leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will find favor and high regard in the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil. This will bring healing to your body and refreshment to your bones. Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine. My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD, and do not loathe His rebuke; for the LORD disciplines the one

He loves, as does a father the son in whom he delights.
Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who acquires understanding, for she is more profitable than silver, and her gain is better than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire compares with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. All her ways are pleasant, and all her paths are peaceful. She is a tree of life to those who embrace her, and those who lay hold of her are blessed. The LORD founded the earth by wisdom and established the heavens by understanding. By His knowledge the watery depths were broken open, and the clouds dripped with dew. My son, do not lose sight of this: Preserve sound judgment and discernment. They will be life to your soul and adornment to your neck. Then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble. When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you rest, your sleep will be sweet. Do not fear sudden danger or the ruin that overtakes the wicked, for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from the snare. Do not withhold good from the deserving when it is within your power to act. Do not tell your neighbor, "Come back tomorrow and I will provide"— when you already have the means. Do not devise evil against your neighbor, for he trustfully dwells beside you. Do not accuse a man without cause, when he has done you no harm. Do not envy a violent man or choose any of his ways; for the LORD detests the perverse, but He is a friend to the upright. The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked, but He blesses the home of the righteous. He mocks the mockers, but gives grace to the humble. The wise will inherit honor, but fools are held up to shame.
Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. For I give you sound teaching; do not abandon my directive. When I was a son to my father, tender and the only child of my mother, he taught me and said, "Let your heart lay hold of my words; keep my commands and you will live. Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or turn from them. Do not forsake wisdom, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will guard you. Wisdom is supreme; so acquire wisdom. And whatever you may acquire, gain understanding. Prize her, and she will exalt you; if you embrace her, she will honor you. She will set a garland of grace on your head; she will present you with a crown of beauty." Listen, my son, and receive my words, and the years of your life will be many. I will guide you in the way of wisdom; I will lead you on straight paths. When you walk, your steps will not be impeded; when you run, you will not stumble. Hold on to instruction; do not let go. Guard it, for it is your life. Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evildoers. Avoid it; do not travel on it. Turn from it and pass on by. For they cannot sleep unless they do evil; they are deprived of slumber until they make someone fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence. The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining brighter and brighter until midday. But the way of the wicked is like the darkest gloom; they do not know what makes them stumble. My son, pay attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not lose sight of them; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and health to the whole body. Guard your heart with all diligence, for from it flow springs of life. Put away deception from your mouth; keep your lips from perverse speech. Let your eyes look forward; fix your gaze straight ahead. Make a level path for your feet, and all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your feet away from evil.
My son, pay attention to my wisdom; incline your ear to my insight, that you may maintain discretion and your lips may preserve knowledge. Though the lips of the forbidden woman drip honey and her speech is smoother than oil, in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a double-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to Sheol. She does not consider the path of life; she does not know that her ways are unstable. So now, my sons, listen to me, and do not turn aside from the words of my mouth. Keep your path far from her; do not go near the door of her house, lest you concede your vigor to others, and your years to one who is cruel; lest strangers feast on your wealth, and your labors enrich the house of a foreigner. At the end of your life you will groan when your flesh and your body are spent, and you will say, "How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof! I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to my mentors. I am on the brink of utter ruin in the midst of the whole assembly." Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well. Why should your springs flow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth: A loving doe, a graceful fawn— may her breasts satisfy you always; may you be captivated by her love forever. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress, or embrace the bosom of a stranger? For a man's ways are before the eyes of the LORD, and the LORD examines all his paths. The iniquities of a wicked man entrap him; the cords of his sin entangle him. He dies for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly.

My son, if you have put up security for your
neighbor, if you have struck hands in pledge
with a stranger, if you have been trapped by the
words of your lips, ensnared by the words of
your mouth, then do this, my son, to free your-
self, for you have fallen into your neighbor's
hands: Go, humble yourself, and press your
plea with your neighbor. Allow no sleep to your
eyes or slumber to your eyelids. Free yourself,
like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, like
a bird from the snare of the fowler. Walk in
the manner of the ant, O slacker; observe its
ways and become wise. Without a commander,
without an overseer or ruler, it prepares its
provisions in summer; it gathers its food at
harvest. How long will you lie there, O slacker?
When will you get up from your sleep? A little
sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the
hands to rest, and poverty will come upon
you like a robber, and need like a bandit. A
worthless person, a wicked man, walks with
a perverse mouth, winking his eyes, speaking
with his feet, and pointing with his fingers.
With deceit in his heart he devises evil; he con-
tinually sows discord. Therefore calamity will
come upon him suddenly; in an instant he will
be shattered beyond recovery.

There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to Him:

haughty eyes,
a lying tongue,
hands that shed innocent blood,
a heart that devises wicked schemes,
feet that run swiftly to evil,
a false witness who gives false testimony,
and one who stirs up discord among brothers.

My son, keep your father's commandment, and
do not forsake your mother's teaching. Bind
them always upon your heart; tie them around
your neck. When you walk, they will guide you;
when you lie down, they will watch over you;
when you awake, they will speak to you. For
this commandment is a lamp, this teaching is
a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the
way to life, to keep you from the evil woman,
from the smooth tongue of the adulteress. Do
not lust in your heart for her beauty or let her
captivate you with her eyes. For the levy of the
prostitute is poverty, and the adulteress preys
upon your very life. Can a man embrace fire
and his clothes not be burned? Can a man walk
on hot coals without scorching his feet? So is
he who sleeps with another man's wife; no one
who touches her will go unpunished. Men do
not despise the thief if he steals to satisfy his
hunger. Yet if caught, he must pay sevenfold;
he must give up all the wealth of his house. He
who commits adultery lacks judgment; who-
ever does so destroys himself. Wounds and
dishonor will befall him, and his reproach will
never be wiped away. For jealousy enrages a
husband, and he will show no mercy in the day
of vengeance. He will not be appeased by any
ransom, or persuaded by lavish gifts.

My son, keep my words and treasure my com-
mandments within you. Keep my command-
ments and live; guard my teachings as the
apple of your eye. Tie them to your fingers;
write them on the tablet of your heart. Say
to wisdom, "You are my sister," and call under-
standing your kinsman, that they may keep
you from the adulteress, from the stranger
with seductive words. For at the window of
my house I looked through the lattice. I saw
among the simple, I noticed among the youths,
a young man lacking judgment, crossing the
street near her corner, strolling down the road
to her house, at twilight, as the day was fading
into the dark of the night. Then a woman came
out to meet him, with the attire of a harlot and
cunning of heart. She is loud and defiant; her
feet do not remain at home. Now in the street,
now in the squares, she lurks at every corner.
She seizes him and kisses him; she brazenly
says to him: "I have made my peace offerings;
today I have paid my vows. So I came out to
meet you; I sought you, and I have found you.
I have decked my bed with coverings, with
colored linen from Egypt. I have perfumed
my bed with myrrh, with aloes, and with cin-
namon. Come, let us take our fill of love till
morning. Let us delight in loving caresses! For
my husband is not at home; he has gone on a
long journey. He took with him a bag of money
and will not return till the moon is full." With
her great persuasion she entices him; with her
flattering lips she lures him. He follows her on
impulse, like an ox going to the slaughter, like
a deer bounding into a trap, until an arrow
pierces his liver, like a bird darting into a snare
— not knowing it will cost him his life. Now,
my sons, listen to me, and attend to the words
of my mouth. Do not let your heart turn aside
to her ways; do not stray into her paths. For
she has brought many down to death; her slain
are many in number. Her house is the road to
Sheol, descending to the chambers of death.

Does not wisdom call out, and understanding
raise her voice? On the heights overlooking the
road, at the crossroads she takes her stand.
Beside the gates to the city, at the entrances
she cries out: "To you, O men, I call out, and
my cry is to the sons of men. O simple ones,
learn to be shrewd; O fools, gain understand-
ing. Listen, for I speak of noble things, and
the opening of my lips will reveal right. For
my mouth will speak the truth, and wicked-
ness is detestable to my lips. All the words
of my mouth are righteous; none are crooked
or perverse. They are all plain to the discern-
ing, and upright to those who find knowledge.
Receive my instruction instead of silver, and
knowledge rather than pure gold. For wisdom
is more precious than rubies, and nothing you
desire compares with her. I, wisdom, dwell

together with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion. To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate arrogant pride, evil conduct, and perverse speech. Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have insight and strength. By me kings reign, and rulers enact just laws; By me princes rule, and all nobles who govern justly. I love those who love me, and those who seek me early shall find me. With me are riches and honor, enduring wealth and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, pure gold, and my harvest surpasses choice silver. I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice, bestowing wealth on those who love me and making their treasuries full. The LORD created me as His first course, before His works of old. From everlasting I was established, from the beginning, before the earth began. When there were no watery depths, I was brought forth, when no springs were overflowing with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, I was brought forth, before He made the land or fields, or any of the dust of the earth. I was there when He established the heavens, when He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep, when He established the clouds above, when the fountains of the deep gushed forth, when He set a boundary for the sea, so that the waters would not surpass His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth. Then I was a skilled craftsman at His side, and His delight day by day, rejoicing always in His presence. I was rejoicing in His whole world, delighting together in the sons of men. Now therefore, my sons, listen to me, for blessed are those who keep my ways. Listen to instruction and be wise; do not ignore it. Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at the posts of my doorway. For whoever finds me finds life and obtains the favor of the LORD. But he who fails to find me harms himself; all who hate me love death."

Wisdom has built her house; she has carved out her seven pillars. She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. She has sent out her maidservants; she calls out from the heights of the city. "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" she says to him who lacks judgment. "Come, eat my bread and drink the wine I have mixed. Leave your folly behind, and you will live; walk in the way of understanding." He who corrects a mocker brings shame on himself; he who rebukes a wicked man taints himself. Do not rebuke a mocker, or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man, and he will love you. Instruct a wise man, and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man, and he will increase his learning. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For through wisdom your days will be multiplied, and years will be added to your life. If you are wise, you are wise to your own advantage; but if you scoff, you alone will bear the consequences.

The woman named Folly is loud; she is naive and knows nothing. She sits at the door of her house, on a seat in the heights of the city, calling out to those who pass by, who make their paths straight. "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" she says to him who lacks judgment. "Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is tasty!" But they do not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

The proverbs of Solomon:

A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son grief to his mother. Ill-gotten treasures profit nothing, but righteousness brings deliverance from death. The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry, but He denies the craving of the wicked. Idle hands make one poor, but diligent hands bring wealth. He who gathers in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son. Blessings are on the head of the righteous, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence. The memory of the righteous is a blessing, but the name of the wicked will rot. A wise heart will receive commandments, but foolish lips will come to ruin. He who walks in integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will be found out. He who winks the eye causes grief, and foolish lips will come to ruin. The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence. Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers all transgressions. Wisdom is found on the lips of the discerning, but a rod is for the back of him who lacks judgment. The wise store up knowledge, but the mouth of the fool invites destruction. The wealth of the rich man is his fortified city, but poverty is the ruin of the poor. The labor of the righteous leads to life, but the gain of the wicked brings punishment. Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life, but he who ignores reproof goes astray. The one who conceals hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool. When words are many, sin is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise. The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked has little worth. The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of judgment. The blessing of the LORD enriches, and He adds no sorrow to it. The fool delights in shameful conduct, but a man of understanding has wisdom. What the wicked man dreads will overtake him, but the desire of the righteous will be granted. When the whirlwind passes, the wicked are no more, but the righteous are secure forever. Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the slacker to those who send him. The fear of the LORD prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be cut short. The hope of the righteous is joy, but the expectations of the wicked will perish. The

way of the LORD is a refuge to the upright, but destruction awaits those who do evil. The righteous will never be shaken, but the wicked will not inhabit the land. The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but a perverse tongue will be cut out. The lips of the righteous know what is fitting, but the mouth of the wicked is perverse.

Dishonest scales are an abomination to the LORD, but an accurate weight is His delight. When pride comes, disgrace follows, but with humility comes wisdom. The integrity of the upright guides them, but the perversity of the faithless destroys them. Riches are worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness brings deliverance from death. The righteousness of the blameless directs their path, but the wicked fall by their own wickedness. The righteousness of the upright delivers them, but the faithless are trapped by their own desires. When the wicked man dies, his hope perishes, and the hope of his strength vanishes. The righteous man is delivered from trouble; in his place the wicked man goes in. With his mouth the ungodly man destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous are rescued. When the righteous thrive, the city rejoices, and when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy. By the blessing of the upright a city is built up, but by the mouth of the wicked it is torn down. Whoever shows contempt for his neighbor lacks judgment, but a man of understanding remains silent. A gossip reveals a secret, but a trustworthy person keeps a confidence. For lack of guidance, a nation falls, but with many counselors comes deliverance. He who puts up security for a stranger will surely suffer, but the one who hates indebtedness is secure. A gracious woman attains honor, but ruthless men gain only wealth. A kind man benefits himself, but a cruel man brings trouble on himself. The wicked man earns an empty wage, but he who sows righteousness reaps a true reward. Genuine righteousness leads to life, but the pursuit of evil brings death. The perverse in heart are an abomination to the LORD, but the blameless in their walk are His delight. Be assured that the wicked will not go unpunished, but the offspring of the righteous will escape. Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion. The desire of the righteous leads only to good, but the hope of the wicked brings wrath. One gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds what is right, only to become poor. A generous soul will prosper, and he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed. The people will curse the hoarder of grain, but blessing will crown the one who sells it. He who searches out good finds favor, but evil will come to him who seeks it. He who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like foliage. He who brings trouble on his house will inherit the wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise of heart. The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise. If the righteous receive their due on earth, how much more the ungodly and the sinner!

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid. The good man obtains favor from the LORD, but the LORD condemns a man who devises evil. A man cannot be established through wickedness, but the righteous cannot be uprooted. A wife of noble character is her husband's crown, but she who causes shame is like decay in his bones. The plans of the righteous are just, but the counsel of the wicked leads to deceit. The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the speech of the upright rescues them. The wicked are overthrown and perish, but the house of the righteous will stand. A man is praised according to his wisdom, but a twisted mind is despised. Better to be lightly esteemed yet have a servant, than to be self-important but lack food. A righteous man regards the life of his animal, but the tender mercies of the wicked are only cruelty. The one who works his land will have plenty of food, but whoever chases fantasies lacks judgment. The wicked desire the plunder of evil men, but the root of the righteous flourishes. An evil man is trapped by his rebellious speech, but a righteous man escapes from trouble. By fruitful speech a man is filled with good things, and the work of his hands returns to him. The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to counsel. A fool's anger is known at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult. He who speaks the truth declares what is right, but a false witness speaks deceit. Speaking rashly is like a piercing sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment. Deceit is in the hearts of those who devise evil, but the counselors of peace have joy. No harm befalls the righteous, but the wicked are filled with trouble. Lying lips are detestable to the LORD, but those who deal faithfully are His delight. A shrewd man keeps his knowledge to himself, but a foolish heart proclaims its folly. The hand of the diligent will rule, but laziness ends in forced labor. Anxiety weighs down the heart of a man, but a good word cheers it up. A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the ways of the wicked lead them astray. A lazy man does not roast his game, but a diligent man prizes his possession. There is life in the path of righteousness, but another path leads to death.

A wise son heeds his father's discipline, but a mocker does not listen to rebuke. From the fruit of his lips a man enjoys good things, but the desire of the faithless is violence. He who guards his mouth protects his life, but the one

who opens his lips invites his own ruin. The slacker craves yet has nothing, but the soul of the diligent is fully satisfied. The righteous hate falsehood, but the wicked bring shame and disgrace. Righteousness guards the man of integrity, but wickedness undermines the sinner. One pretends to be rich, but has nothing; another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth. Riches may ransom a man's life, but a poor man hears no threat. The light of the righteous shines brightly, but the lamp of the wicked is extinguished. Arrogance leads only to strife, but wisdom is with the well-advised. Dishonest wealth will dwindle, but what is earned through hard work will be multiplied. Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life. He who despises instruction will pay the penalty, but the one who respects a command will be rewarded. The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, turning one from the snares of death. Good understanding wins favor, but the way of the faithless is difficult. Every prudent man acts with knowledge, but a fool displays his folly. A wicked messenger falls into trouble, but a faithful envoy brings healing. Poverty and shame come to him who ignores discipline, but whoever heeds correction is honored. Desire fulfilled is sweet to the soul, but turning from evil is detestable to fools. He who walks with the wise will become wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed. Disaster pursues sinners, but prosperity is the reward of the righteous. A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the sinner's wealth is passed to the righteous. Abundant food is in the fallow ground of the poor, but without justice it is swept away. He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently. A righteous man eats to his heart's content, but the stomach of the wicked is empty.

Every wise woman builds her house, but a foolish one tears it down with her own hands. He who walks in uprightness fears the LORD, but the one who is devious in his ways despises Him. The proud speech of a fool brings a rod to his back, but the lips of the wise protect them. Where there are no oxen, the manger is empty, but an abundant harvest comes through the strength of the ox. An honest witness does not deceive, but a dishonest witness pours forth lies. A mocker seeks wisdom and finds none, but knowledge comes easily to the discerning. Stay away from a foolish man; you will gain no knowledge from his speech. The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way, but the folly of fools deceives them. Fools mock the making of amends, but goodwill is found among the upright. The heart knows its own bitterness, and no stranger shares in its joy. The house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright will flourish. There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. Even in laughter the heart may ache, and joy may end in sorrow. The backslider in heart receives the fill of his own ways, but a good man is rewarded for his ways. The simple man believes every word, but the prudent man watches his steps. A wise man fears and turns from evil, but a fool is careless and reckless. A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, and a devious man is hated. The simple inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge. The evil bow before the good, and the wicked at the gates of the righteous. The poor man is hated even by his neighbor, but many are those who love the rich. He who despises his neighbor sins, but blessed is he who shows kindness to the poor. Do not those who contrive evil go astray? But those who plan goodness find loving devotion and faithfulness. There is profit in all labor, but mere talk leads only to poverty. The crown of the wise is their wealth, but the effort of fools is folly. A truthful witness saves lives, but one who utters lies is deceitful. He who fears the LORD is secure in confidence, and his children shall have a place of refuge. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death. A large population is a king's splendor, but a lack of subjects is a prince's ruin. A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man promotes folly. A tranquil heart is life to the body, but envy rots the bones. Whoever oppresses the poor taunts their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors Him. The wicked man is thrown down by his own sin, but the righteous man has a refuge even in death. Wisdom rests in the heart of the discerning; even among fools she is known. Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people. A king delights in a wise servant, but his anger falls on the shameful.

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool spouts folly. The eyes of the LORD are in every place, observing the evil and the good. A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit. A fool rejects his father's discipline, but whoever heeds correction is prudent. The house of the righteous has great treasure, but the income of the wicked is trouble. The lips of the wise spread knowledge, but not so the hearts of fools. The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is His delight. The LORD detests the way of the wicked, but He loves those who pursue righteousness. Discipline is harsh for him who leaves the path; he who hates correction will die. Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD— how much more the hearts of men! A mocker does not love to be reproved, nor will he consult the wise. A joyful heart makes a cheerful countenance,

but sorrow of the heart crushes the spirit. A discerning heart seeks knowledge, but the mouth of a fool feeds on folly. All the days of the oppressed are bad, but a cheerful heart has a continual feast. Better a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure with turmoil. Better a dish of vegetables where there is love than a fattened ox with hatred. A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger calms dispute. The way of the slacker is like a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway. A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish man despises his mother. Folly is joy to one who lacks judgment, but a man of understanding walks a straight path. Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed. A man takes joy in a fitting reply — and how good is a timely word! The path of life leads upward for the wise, that he may avoid going down to Sheol. The LORD tears down the house of the proud, but He protects the boundaries of the widow. The LORD detests the thoughts of the wicked, but the words of the pure are pleasant to Him. He who is greedy for unjust gain brings trouble on his household, but he who hates bribes will live. The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked blurts out evil. The LORD is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous. The light of the eyes cheers the heart, and good news nourishes the bones. He who listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise. He who ignores discipline despises himself, but whoever heeds correction gains understanding. The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, and humility comes before honor.

The plans of the heart belong to man, but the reply of the tongue is from the LORD. All a man's ways are pure in his own eyes, but his motives are weighed out by the LORD. Commit your works to the LORD and your plans will be achieved. The LORD has made everything for His purpose— even the wicked for the day of disaster. Everyone who is proud in heart is detestable to the LORD; be assured that he will not go unpunished. By loving devotion and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one turns aside from evil. When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even the man's enemies live at peace with him. Better a little with righteousness than great gain with injustice. A man's heart plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps. A divine verdict is on the lips of a king; his mouth must not betray justice. Honest scales and balances are from the LORD; all the weights in the bag are His concern. Wicked behavior is detestable for kings, for a throne is established through righteousness. Righteous lips are a king's delight, and he who speaks honestly is beloved. The wrath of a king is a messenger of death, but a wise man will pacify it. When a king's face brightens, there is life; his favor is like a rain cloud in spring. How much better to acquire wisdom than gold! To gain understanding is more desirable than silver. The highway of the upright leads away from evil; he who guards his way protects his life. Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. It is better to be lowly in spirit among the humble than to divide the spoil with the proud. Whoever heeds instruction will find success, and blessed is he who trusts in the LORD. The wise in heart are called discerning, and pleasant speech promotes instruction. Understanding is a fountain of life to its possessor, but the discipline of fools is folly. The heart of the wise man instructs his mouth and adds persuasiveness to his lips. Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. A worker's appetite works for him because his hunger drives him onward. A worthless man digs up evil, and his speech is like a scorching fire. A perverse man spreads dissension, and a gossip divides close friends. A violent man entices his neighbor and leads him down a path that is not good. He who winks his eye devises perversity; he who purses his lips is bent on evil. Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is attained along the path of righteousness. He who is slow to anger is better than a warrior, and he who controls his temper is greater than one who captures a city. The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.

Better a dry morsel in quietness than a house full of feasting with strife. A wise servant will rule over a disgraceful son and share his inheritance as one of the brothers. A crucible for silver and a furnace for gold, but the LORD is the tester of hearts. A wicked man listens to evil lips; a liar gives ear to a destructive tongue. He who mocks the poor insults their Maker; whoever gloats over calamity will not go unpunished. Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of a son is his father. Eloquent words are unfit for a fool; how much worse are lying lips to a ruler! A bribe is a charm to its giver; wherever he turns, he succeeds. Whoever conceals an offense promotes love, but he who brings it up separates friends. A rebuke cuts into a man of discernment deeper than a hundred lashes cut into a fool. An evil man seeks only rebellion; a cruel messenger will be sent against him. It is better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs than a fool in his folly. If anyone returns evil for good, evil will never leave his house. To start a quarrel is to release a flood; so abandon the dispute before it breaks out. Acquitting the guilty and condemning the righteous— both are detestable to the LORD. Why should the fool have money in his hand with no intention of buying wisdom? A friend loves at all times,

and a brother is born for adversity. A man lacking judgment strikes hands in pledge and puts up security for his neighbor. He who loves transgression loves strife; he who builds his gate high invites destruction. The one with a perverse heart finds no good, and he whose tongue is deceitful falls into trouble. A man fathers a fool to his own grief; the father of a fool has no joy. A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones. A wicked man takes a covert bribe to subvert the course of justice. Wisdom is the focus of the discerning, but the eyes of a fool wander to the ends of the earth. A foolish son brings grief to his father and bitterness to her who bore him. It is surely not good to punish the innocent or to flog a noble for his honesty. A man of knowledge restrains his words, and a man of understanding maintains a calm spirit. Even a fool is considered wise if he keeps silent, and discerning when he holds his tongue.

He who isolates himself pursues selfish desires; he rebels against all sound judgment. A fool does not delight in understanding, but only in airing his opinions. With a wicked man comes contempt as well, and shame is accompanied by disgrace. The words of a man's mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook. Showing partiality to the wicked is not good, nor is depriving the innocent of justice. A fool's lips bring him strife, and his mouth invites a beating. A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are a snare to his soul. The words of a gossip are like choice morsels that go down into the inmost being. Whoever is slothful in his work is brother to him who destroys. The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe. A rich man's wealth is his fortified city; it is like a high wall in his imagination. Before his downfall a man's heart is proud, but humility comes before honor. He who answers a matter before he hears it— this is folly and disgrace to him. The spirit of a man can endure his sickness, but who can survive a broken spirit? The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks it out. A man's gift opens doors for him, and brings him before great men. The first to state his case seems right until another comes and cross-examines him. Casting the lot ends quarrels and separates strong opponents. An offended brother is harder to win than a fortified city, and disputes are like the bars of a castle. From the fruit of his mouth a man's belly is filled; with the harvest from his lips he is satisfied. Life and death are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit. He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD. The poor man pleads for mercy, but the rich man answers harshly. A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who stays closer than a brother.

Better a poor man who walks with integrity than a fool whose lips are perverse. Even zeal is no good without knowledge, and he who hurries his footsteps misses the mark. A man's own folly subverts his way, yet his heart rages against the LORD. Wealth attracts many friends, but a poor man is deserted by his friend. A false witness will not go unpunished, and one who utters lies will not escape. Many seek the favor of the prince, and everyone is a friend of the gift giver. All the brothers of a poor man hate him — how much more do his friends avoid him! He may pursue them with pleading, but they are nowhere to be found. He who acquires wisdom loves himself; one who safeguards understanding will find success. A false witness will not go unpunished, and one who pours out lies will perish. Luxury is unseemly for a fool— how much worse for a slave to rule over princes! A man's insight gives him patience, and his virtue is to overlook an offense. A king's rage is like the roar of a lion, but his favor is like dew on the grass. A foolish son is his father's ruin, and a quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping. Houses and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the LORD. Laziness brings on deep sleep, and an idle soul will suffer hunger. He who keeps a commandment preserves his soul, but he who is careless in his ways will die. Kindness to the poor is a loan to the LORD, and He will repay the lender. Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be party to his death. A man of great anger must pay the penalty; if you rescue him, you will have to do so again. Listen to counsel and accept discipline, that you may be wise the rest of your days. Many plans are in a man's heart, but the purpose of the LORD will prevail. The desire of a man is loving devotion; better to be poor than a liar. The fear of the LORD leads to life, that one may rest content, without visitation from harm. The slacker buries his hand in the dish; he will not even bring it back to his mouth. Strike a mocker, and the simple will beware; rebuke the discerning man, and he will gain knowledge. He who assaults his father or evicts his mother is a son who brings shame and disgrace. If you cease to hear instruction, my son, you will stray from the words of knowledge. A corrupt witness mocks justice, and a wicked mouth swallows iniquity. Judgments are prepared for mockers, and beatings for the backs of fools.

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by them is not wise. The terror of a king is like the roar of a lion; whoever provokes him forfeits his own life. It is honorable for a man to resolve a dispute, but any fool will quarrel. The slacker does not plow in season; at harvest time he looks, but nothing is there. The intentions of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding

draws them out. Many a man proclaims his loving devotion, but who can find a trustworthy man? The righteous man walks with integrity; blessed are his children after him. A king who sits on a throne to judge sifts out all evil with his eyes. Who can say, “I have kept my heart pure; I am cleansed from my sin”? Differing weights and unequal measures— both are detestable to the LORD. Even a young man is known by his actions— whether his conduct is pure and upright. Ears that hear and eyes that see— the LORD has made them both. Do not love sleep, or you will grow poor; open your eyes, and you will have plenty of food. “Worthless, worthless!” says the buyer, but on the way out, he gloats. There is an abundance of gold and rubies, but lips of knowledge are a rare treasure. Take the garment of the one who posts security for a stranger; get collateral if it is for a foreigner. Food gained by fraud is sweet to a man, but later his mouth is full of gravel. Set plans by consultation, and wage war under sound guidance. He who reveals secrets is a constant gossip; avoid the one who babbles with his lips. Whoever curses his father or mother, his lamp will be extinguished in deepest darkness. An inheritance gained quickly will not be blessed in the end. Do not say, “I will avenge this evil!” Wait on the LORD, and He will save you. Unequal weights are detestable to the LORD, and dishonest scales are no good. A man’s steps are from the LORD, so how can anyone understand his own way? It is a trap for a man to dedicate something rashly, only later to reconsider his vows. A wise king separates out the wicked and drives the threshing wheel over them. The spirit of a man is the lamp of the LORD, searching out his inmost being. Loving devotion and faithfulness preserve a king; by these he maintains his throne. The glory of young men is their strength, and gray hair is the splendor of the old. Lashes and wounds scour evil, and beatings cleanse the inmost parts.

The king’s heart is a waterway in the hand of the LORD; He directs it where He pleases. All a man’s ways seem right to him, but the LORD weighs the heart. To do righteousness and justice is more desirable to the LORD than sacrifice. Haughty eyes and a proud heart— the guides of the wicked— are sin. The plans of the diligent bring plenty, as surely as haste leads to poverty. Making a fortune by a lying tongue is a vanishing mist, a deadly pursuit. The violence of the wicked will sweep them away because they refuse to do what is just. The way of a guilty man is crooked, but the conduct of the innocent is upright. Better to live on a corner of the roof than to share a house with a quarrelsome wife. The soul of the wicked man craves evil; his neighbor finds no favor in his eyes. When a mocker is punished, the simple gain wisdom; and when a wise man is instructed, he acquires knowledge. The Righteous One considers the house of the wicked and brings the wicked to ruin. Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too shall cry out and receive no answer. A gift in secret soothes anger, and a covert bribe pacifies great wrath. Justice executed is a joy to the righteous, but a terror to the workers of iniquity. The man who strays from the path of understanding will rest in the assembly of the dead. He who loves pleasure will become poor; the one who loves wine and oil will never be rich. The wicked become a ransom for the righteous, and the faithless for the upright. Better to live in the desert than with a contentious and ill-tempered wife. Precious treasures and oil are in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man consumes them. He who pursues righteousness and loving devotion finds life, righteousness, and honor. A wise man scales the city of the mighty and pulls down the stronghold in which they trust. He who guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from distress. Mocker is the name of the proud and arrogant man — of him who acts with excessive pride. The craving of the slacker kills him because his hands refuse to work. All day long he covets more, but the righteous give without restraint. The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable— how much more so when brought with ill intent! A lying witness will perish, but the man who listens to truth will speak forever. A wicked man hardens his face, but the upright man makes his way sure. There is no wisdom, no understanding, no counsel that can prevail against the LORD. A horse is prepared for the day of battle, but victory is of the LORD.

A good name is more desirable than great riches; favor is better than silver and gold. The rich and the poor have this in common: The LORD is Maker of them all. The prudent see danger and take cover, but the simple keep going and suffer the consequences. The rewards of humility and the fear of the LORD are wealth and honor and life. Thorns and snares lie on the path of the perverse; he who guards his soul stays far from them. Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is slave to the lender. He who sows injustice will reap disaster, and the rod of his fury will be destroyed. A generous man will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor. Drive out the mocker, and conflict will depart; even quarreling and insults will cease. He who loves a pure heart and gracious lips will have the king for a friend. The LORD’s eyes keep watch over knowledge, but He frustrates the words of the faithless. The slacker says, “There is a lion outside! I will be slain in the streets!” The mouth of an adulteress is a deep pit; he who is under the wrath of the LORD will fall into it. Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives

it far from him. Oppressing the poor to enrich oneself or giving gifts to the rich will surely lead to poverty.
Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise — apply your mind to my knowledge — for it is pleasing when you keep them within you and they are constantly on your lips. So that your trust may be in the LORD, I instruct you today — yes, you. Have I not written for you thirty sayings about counsel and knowledge, to show you true and reliable words, that you may soundly answer those who sent you?
Do not rob a poor man because he is poor, and do not crush the afflicted at the gate, for the LORD will take up their case and will plunder those who rob them.
Do not make friends with an angry man, and do not associate with a hot-tempered man, or you may learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.
Do not be one who gives pledges, who puts up security for debts. If you have nothing with which to pay, why should your bed be taken from under you?
Do not move an ancient boundary stone which your fathers have placed.
Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will be stationed in the presence of kings; he will not stand before obscure men.
When you sit down to dine with a ruler, consider carefully what is set before you, and put a knife to your throat if you possess a great appetite. Do not crave his delicacies, for that food is deceptive.
Do not wear yourself out to get rich; be wise enough to restrain yourself. When you glance at wealth, it disappears, for it makes wings for itself and flies like an eagle to the sky.
Do not eat the bread of a stingy man, and do not crave his delicacies; for he is keeping track, inwardly counting the cost. “Eat and drink,” he says to you, but his heart is not with you. You will vomit up what little you have eaten and waste your pleasant words.
Do not speak to a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of your words.
Do not move an ancient boundary stone or encroach on the fields of the fatherless, for their Redeemer is strong; He will take up their case against you.
Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge.
Do not withhold discipline from a child; although you strike him with a rod, he will not die. Strike him with a rod, and you will deliver his soul from Sheol.
My son, if your heart is wise, my own heart will indeed rejoice. My inmost being will rejoice when your lips speak what is right.
Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always continue in the fear of the LORD. For surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.
Listen, my son, and be wise, and guide your heart on the right course. Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat. For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe them in rags.
Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old. Invest in truth and never sell it— in wisdom and instruction and understanding. The father of a righteous man will greatly rejoice, and he who fathers a wise son will delight in him. May your father and mother be glad, and may she who gave you birth rejoice!
My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes delight in my ways. For a prostitute is a deep pit, and an adulteress is a narrow well. Like a robber she lies in wait and multiplies the faithless among men.
Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has needless wounds? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who linger over wine, who go to taste mixed drinks. Do not gaze at wine while it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a snake and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your mind will utter perversities. You will be like one sleeping on the high seas or lying on the top of a mast: “They struck me, but I feel no pain! They beat me, but I did not know it! When can I wake up to search for another drink?”
Do not envy wicked men or desire their company; for their hearts devise violence, and their lips declare trouble.
By wisdom a house is built and by understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with every precious and beautiful treasure.
A wise man is strong, and a man of knowledge enhances his strength. Only with sound guidance should you wage war, and victory lies in a multitude of counselors.
Wisdom is too high for a fool; he does not open his mouth in the meeting place.
He who plots evil will be called a schemer. A foolish scheme is sin, and a mocker is detestable to men.
If you faint in the day of distress, how small is your strength! Rescue those being led away to death, and restrain those stumbling toward the slaughter. If you say, “Behold, we did not know about this,” does not He who weighs hearts consider it? Does not the One who guards your life know? Will He not repay a man according to his deeds?
Eat honey, my son, for it is good, and the honeycomb is sweet to your taste. Know therefore that wisdom is sweet to your soul. If you find it, there is a future for you, and your hope will never be cut off.

Do not lie in wait, O wicked man, near the dwelling of the righteous; do not destroy his resting place. For though a righteous man may fall seven times, he still gets up; but the wicked stumble in bad times.

Do not gloat when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart rejoice when he stumbles, or the LORD will see and disapprove, and turn His wrath away from him.

Do not fret over evildoers, and do not be envious of the wicked. For the evil man has no future; the lamp of the wicked will be extinguished.

My son, fear the LORD and the king, and do not associate with the rebellious. For they will bring sudden destruction. Who knows what ruin they can bring?

These also are sayings of the wise:

To show partiality in judgment is not good. Whoever tells the guilty, "You are innocent"—peoples will curse him, and nations will denounce him; but it will go well with those who convict the guilty, and rich blessing will come upon them. An honest answer given is like a kiss on the lips. Complete your outdoor work and prepare your field; after that, you may build your house. Do not testify against your neighbor without cause, and do not deceive with your lips. Do not say, "I will do to him as he has done to me; I will repay the man according to his work." I went past the field of a slacker and by the vineyard of a man lacking judgment. Thorns had grown up everywhere, thistles had covered the ground, and the stone wall was broken down. I observed and took it to heart; I looked and received instruction: A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and need like a bandit.

These are additional proverbs of Solomon, which were copied by the men of Hezekiah king of Judah:

It is the glory of God to conceal a matter and the glory of kings to search it out. As the heavens are high and the earth is deep, so the hearts of kings cannot be searched. Remove the dross from the silver, and a vessel for a silversmith will come forth. Remove the wicked from the king's presence, and his throne will be established in righteousness. Do not exalt yourself in the presence of the king, and do not stand in the place of great men; for it is better to be told, "Come up here!" than to be demoted in the presence of the prince. Even what you have seen with your own eyes, do not bring hastily to court. Otherwise, what will you do in the end when your neighbor puts you to shame? Argue your case with your neighbor without betraying another's confidence, lest he who hears you bring shame upon you, and your infamy never go away. A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is a wise man's rebuke to a listening ear. Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest is a trustworthy messenger to those who send him; he refreshes the soul of his masters. Like clouds and wind without rain is the man who boasts of gifts never given. Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone. If you find honey, eat just what you need, lest you have too much and vomit it up. Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house, lest he grow weary and hate you. Like a club or sword or sharp arrow is a man who bears false witness against his neighbor. Like a broken tooth or a foot out of joint is confidence in a faithless man in time of trouble. Like one who removes a garment on a cold day or vinegar poured on a wound is one who sings songs to a heavy heart. If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. For in so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you. As the north wind brings forth rain, so a backbiting tongue brings angry looks. Better to live on a corner of the roof than to share a house with a quarrelsome wife. Like cold water to a weary soul is good news from a distant land. Like a muddied spring or a polluted well is a righteous man who gives way to the wicked. It is not good to eat too much honey or to search out one's own glory. Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who does not control his temper.

Like snow in summer and rain at harvest, honor does not befit a fool. Like a fluttering sparrow or darting swallow, an undeserved curse does not come to rest. A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the backs of fools! Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you yourself will be like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he become wise in his own eyes. Like cutting off one's own feet or drinking violence is the sending of a message by the hand of a fool. Like lame legs hanging limp is a proverb in the mouth of a fool. Like binding a stone into a sling is the giving of honor to a fool. Like a thorn that goes into the hand of a drunkard is a proverb in the mouth of a fool. Like an archer who wounds at random is he who hires a fool or passerby. As a dog returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats his folly. Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him. The slacker says, "A lion is in the road! A fierce lion roams the public square!" As a door turns on its hinges, so the slacker turns on his bed. The slacker buries his hand in the dish; it wearies him to bring it back to his mouth. The slacker is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who answer discreetly. Like one who grabs a dog by the ears is a passerby who meddles in a quarrel not his own. Like a madman shooting firebrands and deadly arrows, so is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, "I was only joking!" Without wood, a fire goes out; without gossip,

a conflict ceases. Like charcoal for embers and wood for fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife. The words of a gossip are like choice morsels that go down into the inmost being. Like glaze covering an earthen vessel are burning lips and a wicked heart. A hateful man disguises himself with his speech, but he lays up deceit in his heart. When he speaks graciously, do not believe him, for seven abominations fill his heart. Though his hatred is concealed by deception, his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly. He who digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him. A lying tongue hates those it crushes, and a flattering mouth causes ruin.

Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring. Let another praise you, and not your own mouth— a stranger, and not your own lips. A stone is heavy and sand is a burden, but aggravation from a fool outweighs them both. Wrath is cruel and anger is like a flood, but who can withstand jealousy? Better an open rebuke than love that is concealed. The wounds of a friend are faithful, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful. The soul that is full loathes honey, but to a hungry soul, any bitter thing is sweet. Like a bird that strays from its nest is a man who wanders from his home. Oil and incense bring joy to the heart, and the counsel of a friend is sweetness to the soul. Do not forsake your friend or your father's friend, and do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity; better a neighbor nearby than a brother far away. Be wise, my son, and bring joy to my heart, so that I can answer him who taunts me. The prudent see danger and take cover, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty. Take the garment of him who posts security for a stranger; get collateral if it is for a foreigner. If one blesses his neighbor with a loud voice early in the morning, it will be counted to him as a curse. A constant dripping on a rainy day and a contentious woman are alike — restraining her is like holding back the wind or grasping oil with one's right hand. As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. Whoever tends a fig tree will eat its fruit, and he who looks after his master will be honored. As water reflects the face, so the heart reflects the true man. Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied; so the eyes of man are never satisfied. A crucible for silver and a furnace for gold, but a man is tested by the praise accorded him. Though you grind a fool like grain with mortar and a pestle, yet his folly will not depart from him. Be sure to know the state of your flocks, and pay close attention to your herds; for riches are not forever, nor does a crown endure to every generation. When hay is removed and new growth appears and the grass from the hills is gathered, the lambs will provide you with clothing, and the goats with the price of a field. You will have plenty of goats' milk to feed you — food for your household and nourishment for your maidservants.

The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion. A land in rebellion has many rulers, but a man of understanding and knowledge maintains order. A destitute leader who oppresses the poor is like a driving rain that leaves no food. Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, but those who keep the law resist them. Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the LORD comprehend fully. Better a poor man who walks with integrity than a rich man whose ways are perverse. A discerning son keeps the law, but a companion of gluttons disgraces his father. He who increases his wealth by interest and usury lays it up for one who is kind to the poor. Whoever turns his ear away from hearing the law, even his prayer is detestable. He who leads the upright along the path of evil will fall into his own pit, but the blameless will inherit what is good. A rich man is wise in his own eyes, but a poor man with discernment sees through him. When the righteous triumph, there is great glory, but when the wicked rise, men hide themselves. He who conceals his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them will find mercy. Blessed is the man who is always reverent, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble. Like a roaring lion or a charging bear is a wicked ruler over a helpless people. A leader who lacks judgment is also a great oppressor, but he who hates dishonest profit will prolong his days. A man burdened by bloodguilt will flee into the Pit; let no one support him. He who walks with integrity will be kept safe, but whoever is perverse in his ways will suddenly fall. The one who works his land will have plenty of food, but whoever chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty. A faithful man will abound with blessings, but one eager to be rich will not go unpunished. To show partiality is not good, yet a man will do wrong for a piece of bread. A stingy man hastens after wealth and does not know that poverty awaits him. He who rebukes a man will later find more favor than one who flatters with his tongue. He who robs his father or mother, saying, "It is not wrong," is a companion to the man who destroys. A greedy man stirs up strife, but he who trusts in the LORD will prosper. He who trusts in himself is a fool, but one who walks in wisdom will be safe. Whoever gives to the poor will not be in need, but he who hides his eyes will receive many curses. When the wicked come to power, people hide themselves; but when they perish, the righteous flourish.

A man who remains stiff-necked after much reproof will suddenly be shattered beyond recovery. When the righteous flourish, the

people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan. A man who loves wisdom brings joy to his father, but a companion of prostitutes squanders his wealth. By justice a king brings stability to the land, but a man who exacts tribute demolishes it. A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet. An evil man is caught by his own sin, but a righteous one sings and rejoices. The righteous consider the cause of the poor, but the wicked have no regard for such concerns. Mockers inflame a city, but the wise turn away anger. If a wise man goes to court with a fool, there will be raving and laughing with no resolution. Men of bloodshed hate a blameless man, but the upright care for his life. A fool vents all his anger, but a wise man holds it back. If a ruler listens to lies, all his officials will be wicked. The poor man and the oppressor have this in common: The LORD gives light to the eyes of both. A king who judges the poor with fairness— his throne will be established forever. A rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother. When the wicked thrive, rebellion increases; but the righteous will see their downfall. Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will bring delight to your soul. Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the Law. A servant cannot be corrected by words alone; though he understands, he will not respond. Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him. A servant pampered from his youth will bring grief in the end. An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression. A man's pride will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor. A partner to a thief hates his own soul; he receives the oath but does not testify. The fear of man is a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is set securely on high. Many seek the ruler's favor, but a man receives justice from the LORD. An unjust man is detestable to the righteous, and one whose way is upright is detestable to the wicked.

These are the words of Agur son of Jakeh — the burden that this man declared to Ithiel:

"I am weary, O God, and worn out. Surely I am the most ignorant of men, and I lack the understanding of a man. I have not learned wisdom, and I have no knowledge of the Holy One. Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in His hands? Who has bound up the waters in His cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is the name of His Son— surely you know! Every word of God is flawless; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you and prove you a liar. Two things I ask of You — do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and deceitful words far from me. Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the bread that is my portion. Otherwise, I may have too much and deny You, saying, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, profaning the name of my God. Do not slander a servant to his master, or he will curse you, and you will bear the guilt. There is a generation of those who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers. There is a generation of those who are pure in their own eyes and yet unwashed of their filth. There is a generation — how haughty are their eyes and pretentious are their glances — there is a generation whose teeth are swords and whose jaws are knives, devouring the oppressed from the earth and the needy from among men. The leech has two daughters: Give and Give.

There are three things that are never satisfied, four that never say, 'Enough!':

Sheol,
the barren womb,
land never satisfied with water,
and fire that never says, 'Enough!'

As for the eye that mocks a father and scorns obedience to a mother, may the ravens of the valley pluck it out and young vultures devour it.

There are three things too wonderful for me, four that I cannot understand:

the way of an eagle in the sky,
the way of a snake on a rock,
the way of a ship at sea,
and the way of a man with a maiden.

This is the way of an adulteress: She eats and wipes her mouth and says, 'I have done nothing wrong.'

Under three things the earth trembles, under four it cannot bear up:

a servant who becomes king,
a fool who is filled with food,
an unloved woman who marries,
and a maidservant who supplants her mistress.

Four things on earth are small, yet they are exceedingly wise:

The ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer;
the rock badgers are creatures of little power, yet they make their homes in the rocks;
the locusts have no king, yet they all advance in formation;
and the lizard can be caught in one's hands, yet it is found in the palaces of kings.

There are three things that are stately in their stride, and four that are impressive in their walk:

a lion, mighty among beasts, refusing to retreat before anything;
a strutting rooster;
a he-goat;
and a king with his army around him.

If you have foolishly exalted yourself or if you have plotted evil, put your hand over your mouth. For as the churning of milk yields butter, and the twisting of the nose draws blood, so the stirring of anger brings forth strife."

These are the words of King Lemuel — the burden that his mother taught him:

What shall I say, O my son? What, O son of my womb? What, O son of my vows? Do not spend your strength on women or your vigor on those who ruin kings. It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to crave strong drink, lest they drink and forget what is decreed, depriving all the oppressed of justice. Give strong drink to one who is perishing, and wine to the bitter in soul. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more. Open your mouth for those with no voice, for the cause of all the dispossessed. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and defend the cause of the poor and needy.

A wife of noble character, who can find? She is far more precious than rubies. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he lacks nothing of value. She brings him good and not harm all the days of her life. She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands. She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar. She rises while it is still night to provide food for her household and portions for her maidservants. She appraises a field and buys it; from her earnings she plants a vineyard. She girds herself with strength and shows that her arms are strong. She sees that her gain is good, and her lamp is not extinguished at night. She stretches out her hands to the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers. She opens her arms to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy. When it snows, she has no fear for her household, for they are all clothed in scarlet. She makes coverings for her bed; her clothing is fine linen and purple. Her husband is known at the city gates, where he sits among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to the merchants. Strength and honor are her clothing, and she can laugh at the days to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband praises her as well: “Many daughters have done noble things, but you surpass them all!” Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her at the gates.

Ecclesiastes

These are the words of the Teacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem:

> "Futility of futilities," says the Teacher, "futility of futilities! Everything is futile!" What does a man gain from all his labor, at which he toils under the sun? Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises and the sun sets; it hurries back to where it rises. The wind blows southward, then turns northward; round and round it swirls, ever returning on its course. All the rivers flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full; to the place from which the streams come, there again they flow. All things are wearisome, more than one can describe; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear content with hearing. What has been will be again, and what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a case where one can say, "Look, this is new"? It has already existed in the ages before us. There is no remembrance of those who came before, and those yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow after.

I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. What a miserable task God has laid upon the sons of men to occupy them!

I have seen all the things that are done under the sun, and have found them all to be futile, a pursuit of the wind.

> What is crooked cannot be straightened, and what is lacking cannot be counted.

I said to myself, "Behold, I have grown and increased in wisdom beyond all those before me who were over Jerusalem, and my mind has observed a wealth of wisdom and knowledge."

So I set my mind to know wisdom and madness and folly; I learned that this, too, is a pursuit of the wind.

> For with much wisdom comes much sorrow, and as knowledge grows, grief increases.

I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy what is good!"

But it proved to be futile.

I said of laughter, "It is folly," and of pleasure, "What does it accomplish?"

I sought to cheer my body with wine and to embrace folly— my mind still guiding me with wisdom— until I could see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives.

I expanded my pursuits. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. I made gardens and parks for myself, where I planted all kinds of fruit trees. I built reservoirs to water my groves of flourishing trees.

I acquired menservants and maidservants, and servants were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me, and I accumulated for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I gathered to myself male and female singers, and the delights of the sons of men — many concubines.

So I became great and surpassed all in Jerusalem who had preceded me; and my wisdom remained with me. Anything my eyes desired, I did not deny myself. I refused my heart no pleasure. For my heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor.

Yet when I considered all the works that my hands had accomplished and what I had toiled to achieve, I found everything to be futile, a pursuit of the wind; there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

Then I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly; for what more can the king's successor do than what has already been accomplished? And I saw that wisdom exceeds folly, just as light exceeds darkness:

> The wise man has eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness.

Yet I also came to realize that one fate overcomes them both. So I said to myself, "The fate of the fool will also befall me. What then have I gained by being wise?"

And I said to myself that this too is futile.

For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise, just as with the fool, seeing that both will be forgotten in the days to come. Alas, the wise man will die just like the fool! So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. For everything is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

I hated all for which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who comes after me. And who knows whether that man will be wise or foolish? Yet he will take over all the labor at which I have worked skillfully under the sun. This too is futile.

So my heart began to despair over all the labor that I had done under the sun. When there is a man who has labored with wisdom, knowledge, and skill, and he must give his portion to a man who has not worked for it, this too is futile and a great evil. For what does a man get for all the toil and striving with which he labors under the sun? Indeed, all his days are filled with grief, and his task is sorrowful; even at night, his mind does not rest. This too is futile.

Nothing is better for a man than to eat and drink and enjoy his work. I have also seen that this is from the hand of God. For apart from Him, who can eat and who can find enjoyment? To the man who is pleasing in His sight, He gives wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner He assigns the task of gathering and accumulating that which he will hand over to one who pleases God. This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

> To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to break down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones together, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to search and a time to count as lost, a time to keep and a time to discard, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and

a time to speak, a time to love and a time to
hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

What does the worker gain from his toil? I have seen the burden that God has laid upon the sons of men to occupy them. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men, yet they cannot fathom the work that God has done from beginning to end.

I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and do good while they live, and also that every man should eat and drink and find satisfaction in all his labor — this is the gift of God. I know that everything God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it or taken from it. God does it so that they should fear Him. What exists has already been, and what will be has already been, for God will call to account what has passed.

Furthermore, I saw under the sun that in the place of judgment there is wickedness, and in the place of righteousness there is wickedness. I said in my heart, "God will judge the righteous and the wicked, since there is a time for every activity and every deed."

I said to myself, "As for the sons of men, God tests them so that they may see for themselves that they are but beasts." For the fates of both men and beasts are the same: As one dies, so dies the other — they all have the same breath. Man has no advantage over the animals, since everything is futile. All go to one place; all come from dust, and all return to dust.

Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and the spirit of the animal descends into the earth? I have seen that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work, because that is his lot. For who can bring him to see what will come after him?

Again I looked, and I considered all the oppression taking place under the sun. I saw the tears of the oppressed, and they had no comforter; the power lay in the hands of their oppressors, and there was no comforter. So I admired the dead, who had already died, above the living, who are still alive. But better than both is he who has not yet existed, who has not seen the evil that is done under the sun.

I saw that all labor and success spring from a man's envy of his neighbor. This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

The fool folds his hands and consumes his own
flesh. Better one handful with tranquility than
two handfuls with toil and pursuit of the wind.

Again, I saw futility under the sun. There is a man all alone, without even a son or brother. And though there is no end to his labor, his eyes are still not content with his wealth: "For whom do I toil and bereave my soul of enjoyment?" This too is futile — a miserable task.

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor. For if one falls down, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to help him up! Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone? And though one may be overpowered, two can resist. Moreover, a cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Better is a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king who no longer knows how to take a warning. For the youth has come from the prison to the kingship, though he was born poor in his own kingdom.

I saw that all who lived and walked under the sun followed this second one, the youth who succeeded the king. There is no limit to all the people who were before them. Yet the successor will not be celebrated by those who come even later. This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong. Do not be quick to speak, and do not be hasty in your heart to utter a word before God. For God is in heaven and you are on earth. So let your words be few.

As a dream comes through many cares, so the
speech of a fool comes with many words.

When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it, because He takes no pleasure in fools. Fulfill your vow. It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it.

Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, and do not tell the messenger that your vow was a mistake. Why should God be angry with your words and destroy the work of your hands? For as many dreams bring futility, so do many words. Therefore, fear God.

If you see the oppression of the poor and the denial of justice and righteousness in the province, do not be astonished at the matter; for one official is watched by a superior, and others higher still are over them. The produce of the earth is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields.

He who loves money is never satisfied by money, and he who loves wealth is never satisfied by income. This too is futile. When good things increase, so do those who consume them; what then is the profit to the owner, except to behold them with his eyes?

The sleep of the worker is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of the rich man permits him no sleep.

There is a grievous evil I have seen under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner, or wealth lost in a failed venture, so when that man has a son there is nothing to pass on.

As a man came from his mother's womb, so he will depart again, naked as he arrived. He takes nothing for his labor to carry in his hands. This too is a grievous affliction: Exactly as a man is born, so he will depart. What does he gain as he toils for the wind? Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness, with much sorrow, sickness, and anger.

Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in all the labor one does under the sun during the few days of life that God has given him — for this is his lot.

Furthermore, God has given riches and wealth to every man, and He has enabled him to enjoy them, to accept his lot, and to rejoice in his labor. This is a gift from God. For a man seldom considers the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with the joy of his heart.

There is another evil I have seen under the sun, and it weighs heavily upon mankind: God gives a man

riches, wealth, and honor, so that he lacks nothing his heart desires; but God does not allow him to enjoy them. Instead, a stranger will enjoy them. This is futile and a grievous affliction.

A man may father a hundred children and live for many years; yet no matter how long he lives, if he is unsatisfied with his prosperity and does not even receive a proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he. For a stillborn child enters in futility and departs in darkness, and his name is shrouded in obscurity. The child, though neither seeing the sun nor knowing anything, has more rest than that man, even if he lives a thousand years twice over but fails to enjoy his prosperity. Do not all go to the same place?

> All a man's labor is for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied.

What advantage, then, has the wise man over the fool? What gain comes to the poor man who knows how to conduct himself before others? Better what the eye can see than the wandering of desire. This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

Whatever exists was named long ago, and it is known what man is; but he cannot contend with one stronger than he. For the more words, the more futility — and how does that profit anyone? For who knows what is good for a man during the few days in which he passes through his fleeting life like a shadow? Who can tell a man what will come after him under the sun?

> A good name is better than fine perfume, and one's day of death is better than his day of birth. It is better to enter a house of mourning than a house of feasting, since death is the end of every man, and the living should take this to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for a sad countenance is good for the heart. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure. It is better to heed a wise man's rebuke than to listen to the song of fools. For like the crackling of thorns under the pot, so is the laughter of the fool. This too is futile. Surely extortion turns a wise man into a fool, and a bribe corrupts the heart. The end of a matter is better than the beginning, and a patient spirit is better than a proud one. Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger settles in the lap of a fool. Do not say, "Why were the old days better than these?" For it is unwise of you to ask about this. Wisdom, like an inheritance, is good, and it benefits those who see the sun. For wisdom, like money, is a shelter, and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of its owner. Consider the work of God: Who can straighten what He has bent? In the day of prosperity, be joyful, but in the day of adversity, consider this: God has made one of these along with the other, so that a man cannot discover anything that will come after him.

In my futile life I have seen both of these:
A righteous man perishing in his righteousness,
and a wicked man living long in his wickedness.

Do not be overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise. Why should you destroy yourself? Do not be excessively wicked, and do not be a fool. Why should you die before your time? It is good to grasp the one and not let the other slip from your hand. For he who fears God will follow both warnings.

> Wisdom makes the wise man stronger than ten rulers in a city. Surely there is no righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.

Do not pay attention to every word that is spoken, or you may hear your servant cursing you. For you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others.

All this I tested by wisdom, saying, "I resolve to be wise." But it was beyond me. What exists is out of reach and very deep. Who can fathom it?

I directed my mind to understand, to explore, to search out wisdom and explanations, and to understand the stupidity of wickedness and the folly of madness. And I find more bitter than death the woman who is a snare, whose heart is a net, and whose hands are chains. The man who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is ensnared.

"Behold," says the Teacher, "I have discovered this by adding one thing to another to find an explanation. While my soul was still searching but not finding, among a thousand I have found one upright man, but among all these I have not found one such woman. Only this have I found: I have discovered that God made mankind upright, but they have sought out many schemes."

Who is like the wise man? Who knows the interpretation of a matter? A man's wisdom brightens his face, and the sternness of his face is changed.

Keep the king's command, I say, because of your oath before God. Do not hasten to leave his presence, and do not persist in a bad cause, for he will do whatever he pleases. For the king's word is supreme, and who can say to him, "What are you doing?"

Whoever keeps his command will come to no harm, and a wise heart knows the right time and procedure. For there is a right time and procedure to every purpose, though a man's misery weighs heavily upon him. Since no one knows what will happen, who can tell him what is to come?

As no man has power over the wind to contain it, so no one has authority over his day of death. As no one can be discharged in wartime, so wickedness will not release those who practice it. All this I have seen, applying my mind to every deed that is done under the sun; there is a time when one man lords it over another to his own detriment.

Then too, I saw the burial of the wicked who used to go in and out of the holy place, and they were praised in the city where they had done so. This too is futile. When the sentence for a crime is not speedily executed, the hearts of men become fully set on doing evil.

Although a sinner does evil a hundred times and still lives long, yet I also know that it will go well with those who fear God, who are reverent in His presence. Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow.

There is a futility that is done on the earth: There are righteous men who get what the actions of the

wicked deserve, and there are wicked men who get what the actions of the righteous deserve. I say that this too is futile.

So I commended the enjoyment of life, because there is nothing better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be merry. For this joy will accompany him in his labor during the days of his life that God gives him under the sun.

When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe the task that one performs on the earth — though his eyes do not see sleep in the day or even in the night — I saw every work of God, and that a man is unable to comprehend the work that is done under the sun. Despite his efforts to search it out, he cannot find its meaning; even if the wise man claims to know, he is unable to comprehend.

So I took all this to heart and concluded that the righteous and the wise, as well as their deeds, are in God's hands. Man does not know what lies ahead, whether love or hate.

It is the same for all: There is a common fate for the righteous and the wicked, for the good and the bad, for the clean and the unclean, for the one who sacrifices and the one who does not. As it is for the good, so it is for the sinner; as it is for the one who makes a vow, so it is for the one who refuses to take a vow.

This is an evil in everything that is done under the sun: There is one fate for everyone. Furthermore, the hearts of men are full of evil and madness while they are alive, and afterward they join the dead.

There is hope, however, for anyone who is among the living; for even a live dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing. They have no further reward, because the memory of them is forgotten. Their love, their hate, and their envy have already vanished, and they will never again have a share in all that is done under the sun.

Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a cheerful heart, for God has already approved your works:

> Let your garments always be white, and never spare the oil for your head.

Enjoy life with your beloved wife all the days of the fleeting life that God has given you under the sun — all your fleeting days. For this is your portion in life and in your labor under the sun. Whatever you find to do with your hands, do it with all your might, for in Sheol, where you are going, there is no work or planning or knowledge or wisdom.

I saw something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; neither is the bread to the wise, nor the wealth to the intelligent, nor the favor to the skillful. For time and chance happen to all. For surely no man knows his time: Like fish caught in a cruel net or birds trapped in a snare, so men are ensnared in an evil time that suddenly falls upon them.

I have also seen this wisdom under the sun, and it was great to me: There was a small city with few men. A mighty king came against it, surrounded it, and built large siege ramps against it.

Now a poor wise man was found in the city, and he saved the city by his wisdom. Yet no one remembered that poor man. And I said, "Wisdom is better than strength, but the wisdom of the poor man is despised, and his words are not heeded."

> The calm words of the wise are heeded over the shouts of a ruler among fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.
>
> As dead flies bring a stench to the perfumer's oil, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor. A wise man's heart inclines to the right, but the heart of a fool to the left. Even as the fool walks along the road, his sense is lacking, and he shows everyone that he is a fool. If the ruler's temper flares against you, do not abandon your post, for calmness lays great offenses to rest. There is an evil I have seen under the sun — an error that proceeds from the ruler: Folly is appointed to great heights, but the rich sit in lowly positions. I have seen slaves on horseback, while princes go on foot like slaves. He who digs a pit may fall into it, and he who breaches a wall may be bitten by a snake. The one who quarries stones may be injured by them, and he who splits logs endangers himself. If the axe is dull and the blade unsharpened, more strength must be exerted, but skill produces success. If the snake bites before it is charmed, there is no profit for the charmer. The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious, but the lips of a fool consume him. The beginning of his talk is folly, and the end of his speech is evil madness. Yet the fool multiplies words. No one knows what is coming, and who can tell him what will come after him? The toil of a fool wearies him, for he does not know the way to the city. Woe to you, O land whose king is a youth, and whose princes feast in the morning. Blessed are you, O land whose king is a son of nobles, and whose princes feast at the proper time— for strength and not for drunkenness. Through laziness the roof caves in, and in the hands of the idle, the house leaks. A feast is prepared for laughter, and wine makes life merry, but money is the answer for everything. Do not curse the king even in your thoughts, or curse the rich even in your bedroom, for a bird of the air may carry your words, and a winged creature may report your speech.
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> Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again. Divide your portion among seven, or even eight, for you do not know what disaster may befall the land. If the clouds are full, they will pour out rain upon the earth; whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where it falls, there it will lie. He who watches the wind will fail to sow, and he who observes the clouds will fail to reap. As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the bones are formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things. Sow your seed in the morning, and do not rest your hands in the evening, for you do not know which will

succeed, whether this or that, or if both will equally prosper.

Light is sweet, and it pleases the eyes to see the sun. So if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all. But let him remember the days of darkness, for they will be many. Everything to come is futile. Rejoice, O young man, while you are young, and let your heart be glad in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment. So banish sorrow from your heart, and cast off pain from your body, for youth and vigor are fleeting.

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of adversity come and the years approach of which you will say, “I find no pleasure in them,” before the light of the sun, moon, and stars is darkened, and the clouds return after the rain, on the day the keepers of the house tremble and the strong men stoop, when those grinding cease because they are few and those watching through windows see dimly, when the doors to the street are shut and the sound of the mill fades away, when one rises at the sound of a bird and all the daughters of song grow faint, when men fear the heights and dangers of the road, when the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper loses its spring, and the caper berry shrivels — for then man goes to his eternal home and mourners walk the streets. Remember Him before the silver cord is snapped and the golden bowl is crushed, before the pitcher is shattered at the spring and the wheel is broken at the well, before the dust returns to the ground from which it came and the spirit returns to God who gave it. “Futility of futilities,” says the Teacher. “Everything is futile!”

Not only was the Teacher wise, but he also taught the people knowledge; he pondered, searched out, and arranged many proverbs. The Teacher searched to find delightful sayings and to record accurate words of truth.

The words of the wise are like goads, and the anthologies of the masters are like firmly embedded nails driven by a single Shepherd. And by these, my son, be further warned: There is no end to the making of many books, and much study wearies the body.

When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is this: Fear God and keep His commandments, because this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, along with every hidden thing, whether good or evil.

Song of Solomon

This is Solomon's Song of Songs.

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!
For your love is more delightful than wine. The fragrance of your perfume is pleasing; your name is like perfume poured out. No wonder the maidens adore you. Take me away with you— let us hurry! May the king bring me to his chambers.

We will rejoice and delight in you; we will praise your love more than wine.

It is only right that they adore you. I am dark, yet lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. Do not stare because I am dark, for the sun has gazed upon me. My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me a keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have neglected. Tell me, O one I love, where do you pasture your sheep? Where do you rest them at midday? Why should I be like a veiled woman beside the flocks of your companions?

If you do not know, O fairest of women, follow the tracks of the flock, and graze your young goats near the tents of the shepherds.

I compare you, my darling, to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots. Your cheeks are beautiful with ornaments, your neck with strings of jewels.

We will make you ornaments of gold, studded with beads of silver.

While the king was at his table, my perfume spread its fragrance. My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh resting between my breasts. My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of En-gedi.

How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how very beautiful! Your eyes are like doves.

How handsome you are, my beloved! Oh, how delightful! The soft grass is our bed.

The beams of our house are cedars; our rafters are fragrant firs.

I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valley.

Like a lily among the thorns is my darling among the maidens.

Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest is my beloved among the young men. I delight to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to my taste. He has brought me to the house of wine, and his banner over me is love. Sustain me with raisins; refresh me with apples, for I am faint with love. His left hand is under my head, and his right arm embraces me. O daughters of Jerusalem, I adjure you by the gazelles and does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until the time is right. Listen! My beloved approaches. Look! Here he comes, leaping across the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look, he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, peering through the lattice. My beloved calls to me, "Arise, my darling. Come away with me, my beautiful one. For now the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in the countryside; the season of singing has come, and the cooing of turtledoves is heard in our land. The fig tree ripens its figs; the blossoming vines spread their fragrance. Arise, come away, my darling; come away with me, my beautiful one."

O my dove in the clefts of the rock, in the crevices of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your countenance is lovely.

Catch for us the foxes— the little foxes that ruin the vineyards— for our vineyards are in bloom.

My beloved is mine and I am his; he pastures his flock among the lilies. Before the day breaks and shadows flee, turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of Bether.

On my bed at night I sought the one I love; I sought him, but did not find him. I will arise now and go about the city, through the streets and squares. I will seek the one I love. So I sought him but did not find him. I encountered the watchmen on their rounds of the city: "Have you seen the one I love?" I had just passed them when I found the one I love. I held him and would not let go until I had brought him to my mother's house, to the chamber of the one who conceived me. O daughters of Jerusalem, I adjure you by the gazelles and does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until the time is right.

Who is this coming up from the wilderness like a column of smoke, scented with myrrh and frankincense from all the spices of the merchant? Behold, it is Solomon's carriage, escorted by sixty of the mightiest men of Israel. All are skilled with the sword, experienced in warfare. Each has his sword at his side prepared for the terror of the night. King Solomon has made his carriage out of the timber of Lebanon. He has made its posts of silver, its base of gold, its seat of purple fabric. Its interior is inlaid with love by the daughters of Jerusalem. Come out, O daughters of Zion, and gaze at King Solomon, wearing the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding— the day of his heart's rejoicing.

How beautiful you are, my darling— how very beautiful! Your eyes are like doves behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats streaming down Mount Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of newly shorn sheep coming up from the washing; each has its twin, and not one of them is lost. Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon, and your mouth is lovely. Your brow behind your veil is like a slice of pomegranate. Your neck is like the tower of David, built with rows

of stones; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors. Your breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle grazing among the lilies. Before the day breaks and the shadows flee, I will make my way to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense. You are altogether beautiful, my darling; in you there is no flaw. Come with me from Lebanon, my bride, come with me from Lebanon! Descend from the peak of Amana, from the summits of Senir and Hermon, from the dens of the lions, from the mountains of the leopards. You have captured my heart, my sister, my bride; you have stolen my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your neck. How delightful is your love, my sister, my bride! Your love is much better than wine, and the fragrance of your perfume than all spices. Your lips, my bride, drip sweetness like the honeycomb; honey and milk are under your tongue, and the fragrance of your garments is like the aroma of Lebanon. My sister, my bride, you are a garden locked up, a spring enclosed, a fountain sealed. Your branches are an orchard of pomegranates with the choicest of fruits, with henna and nard, with nard and saffron, with calamus and cinnamon, with every kind of frankincense tree, with myrrh and aloes, with all the finest spices. You are a garden spring, a well of fresh water flowing down from Lebanon.

Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind. Breathe on my garden and spread the fragrance of its spices. Let my beloved come into his garden and taste its choicest fruits.

I have come to my garden, my sister, my bride; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk.

Eat, O friends, and drink; drink freely, O beloved.

I sleep, but my heart is awake. A sound! My beloved is knocking: “Open to me, my sister, my darling, my dove, my flawless one. My head is drenched with dew, my hair with the dampness of the night.” I have taken off my robe — must I put it back on? I have washed my feet — must I soil them again? My beloved put his hand to the latch; my heart pounded for him. I rose up to open for my beloved. My hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with flowing myrrh on the handles of the bolt. I opened for my beloved, but he had turned and gone. My heart sank at his departure. I sought him but did not find him. I called, but he did not answer. I encountered the watchmen on their rounds of the city. They beat me and bruised me; they took away my cloak, those guardians of the walls. O daughters of Jerusalem, I adjure you, if you find my beloved, tell him I am sick with love.

How is your beloved better than others, O most beautiful among women? How is your beloved better than another, that you charge us so?

My beloved is dazzling and ruddy, outstanding among ten thousand. His head is purest gold; his hair is wavy and black as a raven. His eyes are like doves beside the streams of water, bathed in milk and mounted like jewels. His cheeks are like beds of spice, towers of perfume. His lips are like lilies, dripping with flowing myrrh. His arms are rods of gold set with beryl. His body is polished ivory bedecked with sapphires. His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, as majestic as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet; he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

Where has your beloved gone, O most beautiful among women? Which way has he turned? We will seek him with you.

My beloved has gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices, to pasture his flock in the gardens and to gather lilies. I belong to my beloved and he belongs to me; he pastures his flock among the lilies.

You are as beautiful, my darling, as Tirzah, as lovely as Jerusalem, as majestic as troops with banners. Turn your eyes away from me, for they have overcome me. Your hair is like a flock of goats streaming down from Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of sheep coming up from the washing; each has its twin, and not one of them is lost. Your brow behind your veil is like a slice of pomegranate. There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and maidens without number, but my dove, my perfect one, is unique, the favorite of the mother who bore her. The maidens see her and call her blessed; the queens and concubines sing her praises.

Who is this who shines like the dawn, as fair as the moon, as bright as the sun, as majestic as the stars in procession?

I went down to the walnut grove to see the blossoms of the valley, to see if the vines were budding or the pomegranates were in bloom. Before I realized it, my desire had set me among the royal chariots of my people.

Come back, come back, O Shulammite! Come back, come back, that we may gaze upon you.

Why do you look at the Shulammite, as on the dance of Mahanaim?

How beautiful are your sandaled feet, O daughter of the prince! The curves of your thighs are like jewels, the handiwork of a master. Your navel is a rounded goblet; it never lacks blended wine. Your waist is a mound of wheat encircled by the lilies. Your breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle. Your neck is like a tower made of ivory; your eyes are like the pools of Heshbon by the gate of Bath-rabbim; your nose is like the tower of Lebanon, facing toward Damascus. Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel, the hair of your head like purple threads; the king is captured in your tresses. How fair and pleasant you are, O

love, with your delights! Your stature is like a palm tree; your breasts are clusters of fruit. I said, “I will climb the palm tree; I will take hold of its fruit.” May your breasts be like clusters of the vine, the fragrance of your breath like apples, and your mouth like the finest wine.
May it flow smoothly to my beloved, gliding gently over lips and teeth. I belong to my beloved, and his desire is for me. Come, my beloved, let us go to the countryside; let us spend the night among the wildflowers. Let us go early to the vineyards to see if the vine has budded, if the blossom has opened, if the pomegranates are in bloom — there I will give you my love. The mandrakes send forth a fragrance, and at our door is every delicacy, new as well as old, that I have treasured up for you, my beloved.
O that you were to me like a brother who nursed at my mother’s breasts! If I found you outdoors, I would kiss you, and no one would despise me. I would lead you and bring you to the house of my mother who taught me. I would give you spiced wine to drink, the nectar of my pomegranates. His left hand is under my head, and his right arm embraces me. O daughters of Jerusalem, I adjure you: Do not arouse or awaken love until the time is right.
Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?
I roused you under the apple tree; there your mother conceived you; there she travailed and brought you forth. Set me as a seal over your heart, as a seal upon your arm. For love is as strong as death, its jealousy as unrelenting as Sheol. Its sparks are fiery flames, the fiercest blaze of all. Mighty waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot sweep it away. If a man were to give all the wealth of his house for love, his offer would be utterly scorned.
We have a little sister, and her breasts are not yet grown. What shall we do for our sister on the day she is spoken for? If she is a wall, we will build a tower of silver upon her. If she is a door, we will enclose her with panels of cedar.
I am a wall, and my breasts are like towers. So I have become in his eyes like one who brings peace. Solomon had a vineyard in Baal-hamon. He leased it to the tenants. For its fruit, each was to bring a thousand shekels of silver. But my own vineyard is mine to give; the thousand shekels are for you, O Solomon, and two hundred are for those who tend its fruit.
You who dwell in the gardens, my companions are listening for your voice. Let me hear it!
Come away, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices.

Isaiah

Book of Isaiah

This is the vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Listen, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the LORD has spoken: “I have raised children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s manger, but Israel does not know; My people do not understand.” Alas, O sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who act corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD; they have despised the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on Him. Why do you want more beatings? Why do you keep rebelling? Your head has a massive wound, and your whole heart is afflicted. From the sole of your foot to the top of your head, there is no soundness— only wounds and welts and festering sores neither cleansed nor bandaged nor soothed with oil. Your land is desolate; your cities are burned with fire. Foreigners devour your fields before you — a desolation demolished by strangers. And the Daughter of Zion is abandoned like a shelter in a vineyard, like a shack in a cucumber field, like a city besieged. Unless the LORD of Hosts had left us a few survivors, we would have become like Sodom, we would have resembled Gomorrah.

Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the instruction of our God, you people of Gomorrah! “What good to Me is your multitude of sacrifices?” says the LORD. “I am full from the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed cattle; I take no delight in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has required this of you— this trampling of My courts? Bring your worthless offerings no more; your incense is detestable to Me. New Moons, Sabbaths, and convocations— I cannot endure iniquity in a solemn assembly. I hate your New Moons and your appointed feasts. They have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you multiply your prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. Wash and cleanse yourselves. Remove your evil deeds from My sight. Stop doing evil! Learn to do right; seek justice and correct the oppressor. Defend the fatherless and plead the case of the widow.” “Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are as red as crimson, they will become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best of the land. But if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.” For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

See how the faithful city has become a harlot! She once was full of justice; righteousness resided within her, but now only murderers! Your silver has become dross; your fine wine is diluted with water. Your rulers are rebels, friends of thieves. They all love bribes and chasing after rewards. They do not defend the fatherless, and the plea of the widow never comes before them. Therefore the Lord GOD of Hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, declares: “Ah, I will be relieved of My foes and avenge Myself on My enemies. I will turn My hand against you; I will thoroughly purge your dross; I will remove all your impurities. I will restore your judges as at first, and your counselors as at the beginning. After that you will be called the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City.” Zion will be redeemed with justice, her repentant ones with righteousness. But rebels and sinners will together be shattered, and those who forsake the LORD will perish. Surely you will be ashamed of the sacred oaks in which you have delighted; you will be embarrassed by the gardens that you have chosen. For you will become like an oak whose leaves are withered, like a garden without water. The strong man will become tinder and his work will be a spark; both will burn together, with no one to quench the flames.

This is the message that was revealed to Isaiah son of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

In the last days the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways so that we may walk in His paths.” For the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. Then He will judge between the nations and arbitrate for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer take up the sword against nation, nor train anymore for war.

Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD. For You have abandoned Your people, the house of Jacob, because they are filled with influences from the east; they are soothsayers like the Philistines; they strike hands with the children of foreigners. Their land is full of silver and gold, with no limit to their treasures; their land is full of horses, with no limit to their chariots. Their land is full of idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their fingers have made. So

mankind is brought low, and man is humbled — do not forgive them! Go into the rocks and hide in the dust from the terror of the LORD and the splendor of His majesty. The proud look of man will be humbled, and the loftiness of men brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. For the Day of the LORD of Hosts will come against all the proud and lofty, against all that is exalted— it will be humbled — against all the cedars of Lebanon, lofty and lifted up, against all the oaks of Bashan, against all the tall mountains, against all the high hills, against every high tower, against every fortified wall, against every ship of Tarshish, and against every stately vessel. So the pride of man will be brought low, and the loftiness of men will be humbled; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day, and the idols will vanish completely. Men will flee to caves in the rocks and holes in the ground, away from the terror of the LORD and from the splendor of His majesty, when He rises to shake the earth. In that day men will cast away to the moles and bats their idols of silver and gold — the idols they made to worship. They will flee to caverns in the rocks and crevices in the cliffs, away from the terror of the LORD and from the splendor of His majesty, when He rises to shake the earth. Put no more trust in man, who has only the breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he?

For behold, the Lord GOD of Hosts is about to remove from Jerusalem and Judah both supply and support: the whole supply of food and water, the mighty man and the warrior, the judge and the prophet, the soothsayer and the elder, the commander of fifty and the dignitary, the counselor, the cunning magician, and the clever enchanter. “I will make mere lads their leaders, and children will rule over them.” The people will oppress one another, man against man, neighbor against neighbor; the young will rise up against the old, and the base against the honorable. A man will seize his brother within his father’s house: “You have a cloak— you be our leader! Take charge of this heap of rubble.” On that day he will cry aloud: “I am not a healer. I have no food or clothing in my house. Do not make me leader of the people!” For Jerusalem has stumbled and Judah has fallen because they spoke and acted against the LORD, defying His glorious presence. The expression on their faces testifies against them, and like Sodom they flaunt their sin; they do not conceal it. Woe to them, for they have brought disaster upon themselves. Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their labor. Woe to the wicked; disaster is upon them! For they will be repaid with what their hands have done. Youths oppress My people, and women rule over them. O My people, your guides mislead you; they turn you from your paths. The LORD arises to contend; He stands to judge the people. The LORD brings this charge against the elders and leaders of His people: “You have devoured the vineyard; the plunder of the poor is in your houses. Why do you crush My people and grind the faces of the poor?” declares the Lord GOD of Hosts.

The LORD also says: “Because the daughters of Zion are haughty — walking with heads held high and wanton eyes, prancing and skipping as they go, jingling the bracelets on their ankles — the Lord will bring sores on the heads of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will make their foreheads bare.” In that day the Lord will take away their finery: their anklets and headbands and crescents; their pendants, bracelets, and veils; their headdresses, ankle chains, and sashes; their perfume bottles and charms; their signet rings and nose rings; their festive robes, capes, cloaks, and purses; and their mirrors, linen garments, tiaras, and shawls. Instead of fragrance there will be a stench; instead of a belt, a rope; instead of styled hair, baldness; instead of fine clothing, sackcloth; instead of beauty, shame. Your men will fall by the sword, and your warriors in battle. And the gates of Zion will lament and mourn; destitute, she will sit on the ground.

In that day seven women will take hold of one man and say, “We will eat our own bread and provide our own clothes. Just let us be called by your name. Take away our disgrace!” On that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of Israel’s survivors. Whoever remains in Zion and whoever is left in Jerusalem will be called holy— all in Jerusalem who are recorded among the living— when the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains from the heart of Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire. Then the LORD will create over all of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud of smoke by day and a glowing flame of fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a canopy, a shelter to give shade from the heat by day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and the rain.

I will sing for my beloved a song of his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it up and cleared the stones and planted the finest vines. He built a watchtower in the middle and dug out a winepress as well. He waited for the vineyard to yield good grapes, but the fruit it produced was sour! “And now, O dwellers of Jerusalem and men of Judah, I exhort you to judge between Me and My vineyard. What more could have been done for My vineyard than I have done for it? Why, when I expected sweet grapes, did it bring forth sour fruit? Now I will tell you what I am about to do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be consumed; I

will tear down its wall, and it will be trampled. I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and thorns and briers will grow up. I will command the clouds that rain shall not fall on it." For the vineyard of the LORD of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the plant of His delight. He looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard a cry of distress.

Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field until no place is left and you live alone in the land. I heard the LORD of Hosts declare: "Surely many houses will become desolate, great mansions left unoccupied. For ten acres of vineyard will yield but a bath of wine, and a homer of seed only an ephah of grain."

Woe to those who rise early in the morning in pursuit of strong drink, who linger into the evening, to be inflamed by wine. At their feasts are the lyre and harp, tambourines and flutes and wine. They disregard the actions of the LORD and fail to see the work of His hands. Therefore My people will go into exile for their lack of understanding; their dignitaries are starving and their masses are parched with thirst. Therefore Sheol enlarges its throat and opens wide its enormous jaws, and down go Zion's nobles and masses, her revelers and carousers! So mankind will be brought low, and each man humbled; the arrogant will lower their eyes. But the LORD of Hosts will be exalted by His justice, and the holy God will show Himself holy in righteousness. Lambs will graze as in their own pastures, and strangers will feed in the ruins of the wealthy.

Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of deceit and pull sin along with cart ropes, to those who say, "Let Him hurry and hasten His work so that we may see it! Let the plan of the Holy One of Israel come so that we may know it!" Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who turn darkness to light and light to darkness, who replace bitter with sweet and sweet with bitter. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.

Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine and champions in mixing strong drink, who acquit the guilty for a bribe and deprive the innocent of justice. Therefore, as a tongue of fire consumes the straw, and as dry grass shrivels in the flame, so their roots will decay and their blossoms will blow away like dust; for they have rejected the instruction of the LORD of Hosts and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. Therefore the anger of the LORD burns against His people; His hand is raised against them to strike them down. The mountains quake, and the corpses lie like refuse in the streets. Despite all this, His anger is not turned away; His hand is still upraised. He lifts a banner for the distant nations and whistles for those at the ends of the earth. Behold— how speedily and swiftly they come! None of them grows weary or stumbles; no one slumbers or sleeps. No belt is loose and no sandal strap is broken. Their arrows are sharpened, and all their bows are strung. The hooves of their horses are like flint; their chariot wheels are like a whirlwind. Their roaring is like that of a lion; they roar like young lions. They growl and seize their prey; they carry it away, and no one can rescue it. In that day they will roar over it, like the roaring of the sea. If one looks over the land, he will see darkness and distress; even the light will be obscured by clouds.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted; and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above Him stood seraphim, each having six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling out to one another:

> "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Hosts; all the earth is full of His glory."

At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook, and the temple was filled with smoke.

Then I said:

> "Woe is me, for I am ruined, because I am a man of unclean lips dwelling among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Hosts."

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, and in his hand was a glowing coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And with it he touched my mouth and said:

> "Now that this has touched your lips, your iniquity is removed and your sin is atoned for."

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying:

> "Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us?"

And I said:

> "Here am I. Send me!"

And He replied:

> "Go and tell this people, 'Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.' Make the hearts of this people calloused; deafen their ears and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

Then I asked:

> "How long, O Lord?"

And He replied:

> "Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left unoccupied and the land is desolate and ravaged, until the LORD has driven men far away and the land is utterly forsaken. And though a tenth remains in the land, it will be burned again. As the terebinth and oak leave stumps when felled, so the holy seed will be a stump in the land."

Now in the days that Ahaz son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, was king of Judah, Rezin king of Aram marched up to wage war against Jerusalem. He was accompanied by Pekah son of Remaliah the king of Israel, but he could not overpower the city.

When it was reported to the house of David that Aram was in league with Ephraim, the hearts of Ahaz

and his people trembled like trees in the forest shaken by the wind.

Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out with your son Shear-jashub to meet Ahaz at the end of the aqueduct that feeds the upper pool, on the road to the Launderer's Field, and say to him: Calm down and be quiet. Do not be afraid or disheartened over these two smoldering stubs of firewood— over the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and of the son of Remaliah. For Aram, along with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has plotted your ruin, saying: 'Let us invade Judah, terrorize it, and divide it among ourselves. Then we can install the son of Tabeal over it as king.' But this is what the Lord GOD says:

> 'It will not arise; it will not happen. For the head of Aram is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered as a people. The head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you do not stand firm in your faith, then you will not stand at all.'"

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, "Ask for a sign from the LORD your God, whether from the depths of Sheol or the heights of heaven."

But Ahaz replied, "I will not ask; I will not test the LORD."

Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, O house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God as well? Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin will be with child and give birth to a son, and will call Him Immanuel. By the time He knows enough to reject evil and choose good, He will be eating curds and honey. For before the boy knows enough to reject evil and choose good, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.

The LORD will bring on you and on your people and on the house of your father a time unlike any since the day Ephraim separated from Judah— He will bring the king of Assyria."

On that day the LORD will whistle to the flies at the farthest streams of the Nile and to the bees in the land of Assyria.

> And they will all come and settle in the steep ravines and clefts of the rocks, in all the thornbushes and watering holes.

On that day the Lord will use a razor hired from beyond the Euphrates— the king of Assyria— to shave your head and the hair of your legs, and to remove your beard as well. On that day a man will raise a young cow and two sheep, and from the abundance of milk they give, he will eat curds; for all who remain in the land will eat curds and honey.

And on that day, in every place that had a thousand vines worth a thousand shekels of silver, only briers and thorns will be found. Men will go there with bow and arrow, for the land will be covered with briers and thorns. For fear of the briers and thorns, you will no longer traverse the hills once tilled by the hoe; they will become places for oxen to graze and sheep to trample.

Then the LORD said to me, "Take a large scroll and write on it with an ordinary stylus: Maher-shalal-hash-baz. And I will appoint for Myself trustworthy witnesses— Uriah the priest and Zechariah son of Jeberekiah."

And I had relations with the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. The LORD said to me, "Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz. For before the boy knows how to cry 'Father' or 'Mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria."

And the LORD spoke to me further:

> "Because this people has rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah and rejoiced in Rezin and the son of Remaliah, the Lord will surely bring against them the mighty floodwaters of the Euphrates— the king of Assyria and all his pomp. It will overflow its channels and overrun its banks. It will pour into Judah, swirling and sweeping over it, reaching up to the neck; its spreading streams will cover your entire land, O Immanuel! Huddle together, O peoples, and be shattered; pay attention, all you distant lands; prepare for battle, and be shattered; prepare for battle, and be shattered! Devise a plan, but it will be thwarted; state a proposal, but it will not happen. For God is with us."

For this is what the LORD has spoken to me with a strong hand, instructing me not to walk in the way of this people:

> "Do not call conspiracy everything these people regard as conspiracy. Do not fear what they fear; do not live in dread. The LORD of Hosts is the One you shall regard as holy. Only He should be feared; only He should be dreaded. And He will be a sanctuary — but to both houses of Israel a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, to the dwellers of Jerusalem a trap and a snare. Many will stumble over these; they will fall and be broken; they will be ensnared and captured." Bind up the testimony and seal the law among my disciples. I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob. I will put my trust in Him.

Here am I, and the children the LORD has given me as signs and symbols in Israel from the LORD of Hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.

When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists who whisper and mutter, shouldn't a people consult their God instead? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.

They will roam the land, dejected and hungry. When they are famished, they will become enraged; and looking upward, they will curse their king and their God. Then they will look to the earth and see only distress and darkness and the gloom of anguish. And they will be driven into utter darkness.

Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those in distress. In the past He humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future He will honor the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations:

> The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the

shadow of death, a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased its joy. The people rejoice before You as they rejoice at harvest time, as men rejoice in dividing the plunder. For as in the day of Midian You have shattered the yoke of their burden, the bar across their shoulders, and the rod of their oppressor. For every trampling boot of battle and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish and sustain it with justice and righteousness from that time and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will accomplish this.

The Lord has sent a message against Jacob, and it has fallen upon Israel. All the people will know it — Ephraim and the dwellers of Samaria. With pride and arrogance of heart they will say: "The bricks have fallen, but we will rebuild with finished stone; the sycamores have been felled, but we will replace them with cedars." The LORD has raised up the foes of Rezin against him and joined his enemies together. Aram from the east and Philistia from the west have devoured Israel with open mouths. Despite all this, His anger is not turned away; His hand is still upraised.

But the people did not return to Him who struck them; they did not seek the LORD of Hosts. So the LORD will cut off Israel's head and tail, both palm branch and reed in a single day. The head is the elder and honorable man, and the tail is the prophet who teaches lies. For those who guide this people mislead them, and those they mislead are swallowed up. Therefore the Lord takes no pleasure in their young men; He has no compassion on their fatherless and widows. For every one of them is godless and wicked, and every mouth speaks folly. Despite all this, His anger is not turned away; His hand is still upraised.

For wickedness burns like a fire that consumes the thorns and briers and kindles the forest thickets, which roll upward in billows of smoke. By the wrath of the LORD of Hosts the land is scorched, and the people are fuel for the fire. No man even spares his brother. They carve out what is on the right, but they are still hungry; they eat what is on the left, but they are still not satisfied. Each one devours the flesh of his own offspring. Manasseh devours Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh; together they turn against Judah. Despite all this, His anger is not turned away; His hand is still upraised.

Woe to those who enact unjust statutes and issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of fair treatment and withhold justice from the oppressed of My people, to make widows their prey and orphans their plunder. What will you do on the day of reckoning when devastation comes from afar? To whom will you flee for help? Where will you leave your wealth? Nothing will remain but to crouch among the captives or fall among the slain. Despite all this, His anger is not turned away; His hand is still upraised.

Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger; the staff in their hands is My wrath. I will send him against a godless nation; I will dispatch him against a people destined for My rage, to take spoils and seize plunder, and to trample them down like clay in the streets. But this is not his intention; this is not his plan. For it is in his heart to destroy and cut off many nations. "Are not all my commanders kings?" he says. "Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad? Is not Samaria like Damascus? As my hand seized the idolatrous kingdoms whose images surpassed those of Jerusalem and Samaria, and as I have done to Samaria and its idols, will I not also do to Jerusalem and her idols?"

So when the Lord has completed all His work against Mount Zion and Jerusalem, He will say, "I will punish the king of Assyria for the fruit of his arrogant heart and the proud look in his eyes. For he says:

'By the strength of my hand I have done this, and by my wisdom, for I am clever. I have removed the boundaries of nations and plundered their treasures; like a mighty one I subdued their rulers. My hand reached as into a nest to seize the wealth of the nations. Like one gathering abandoned eggs, I gathered all the earth. No wing fluttered, no beak opened or chirped.'" Does an axe raise itself above the one who swings it? Does a saw boast over him who saws with it? It would be like a rod waving the one who lifts it, or a staff lifting him who is not wood! Therefore the Lord GOD of Hosts will send a wasting disease among Assyria's stout warriors, and under his pomp will be kindled a fire like a burning flame. And the Light of Israel will become a fire, and its Holy One a flame. In a single day it will burn and devour Assyria's thorns and thistles. The splendor of its forests and orchards, both soul and body, it will completely destroy, as a sickness consumes a man. The remaining trees of its forests will be so few that a child could count them.

On that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no longer depend on him who struck them, but they will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. A remnant will return — a remnant of Jacob — to the Mighty God. Though your people, O Israel, be like the sand of the sea, only a remnant will return. Destruction has been decreed, overflowing with righteousness. For the Lord GOD

of Hosts will carry out the destruction decreed upon the whole land.

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD of Hosts says:

"O My people who dwell in Zion, do not fear Assyria, who strikes you with a rod and lifts his staff against you as the Egyptians did. For in just a little while My fury against you will subside, and My anger will turn to their destruction." And the LORD of Hosts will brandish a whip against them, as when He struck Midian at the rock of Oreb. He will raise His staff over the sea, as He did in Egypt. On that day the burden will be lifted from your shoulders, and the yoke from your neck. The yoke will be broken because your neck will be too large. Assyria has entered Aiath and passed through Migron, storing their supplies at Michmash. They have crossed at the ford: "We will spend the night at Geba." Ramah trembles; Gibeah of Saul flees. Cry aloud, O Daughter of Gallim! Listen, O Laishah! O wretched Anathoth! Madmenah flees; the people of Gebim take refuge. Yet today they will halt at Nob, shaking a fist at the mount of Daughter Zion, at the hill of Jerusalem. Behold, the Lord GOD of Hosts will lop off the branches with terrifying power. The tall trees will be cut down, the lofty ones will be felled. He will clear the forest thickets with an axe, and Lebanon will fall before the Mighty One.

Then a shoot will spring up from the stump of Jesse, and a Branch from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him — the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and strength, the Spirit of knowledge and fear of the LORD. And He will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what His eyes see, and He will not decide by what His ears hear, but with righteousness He will judge the poor, and with equity He will decide for the lowly of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth and slay the wicked with the breath of His lips. Righteousness will be the belt around His hips, and faithfulness the sash around His waist. The wolf will live with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the goat; the calf and young lion and fatling will be together, and a little child will lead them. The cow will graze with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play by the cobra's den, and the toddler will reach into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the sea is full of water.

On that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples. The nations will seek Him, and His place of rest will be glorious. On that day the Lord will extend His hand a second time to recover the remnant of His people from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; He will collect the scattered of Judah from the four corners of the earth. Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart, and the adversaries of Judah will be cut off. Ephraim will no longer envy Judah, nor will Judah harass Ephraim. They will swoop down on the slopes of the Philistines to the west; together they will plunder the sons of the east. They will lay their hands on Edom and Moab, and the Ammonites will be subject to them. The LORD will devote to destruction the gulf of the Sea of Egypt; with a scorching wind He will sweep His hand over the Euphrates. He will split it into seven streams for men to cross with dry sandals. There will be a highway for the remnant of His people who remain from Assyria, as there was for Israel when they came up from the land of Egypt.

In that day you will say:

"O LORD, I will praise You. Although You were angry with me, Your anger has turned away, and You have comforted me. Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. For the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and He also has become my salvation."

With joy you will draw water from the springs of salvation, and on that day you will say:

"Give praise to the LORD; proclaim His name! Make His works known among the peoples; declare that His name is exalted. Sing to the LORD, for He has done glorious things. Let this be known in all the earth. Cry out and sing, O citizen of Zion, for great among you is the Holy One of Israel."

This is the burden against Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz received:

Raise a banner on a barren hilltop; call aloud to them. Wave your hand, that they may enter the gates of the nobles. I have commanded My sanctified ones; I have even summoned My warriors to execute My wrath and exult in My triumph. Listen, a tumult on the mountains, like that of a great multitude! Listen, an uproar among the kingdoms, like nations gathered together! The LORD of Hosts is mobilizing an army for war. They are coming from faraway lands, from the ends of the heavens— the LORD and the weapons of His wrath— to destroy the whole country. Wail, for the Day of the LORD is near; it will come as destruction from the Almighty. Therefore all hands will fall limp, and every man's heart will melt. Terror, pain, and anguish will seize them; they will writhe like a woman in labor. They will look at one another, their faces flushed with fear. Behold, the Day of the LORD is coming— cruel, with fury and burning anger— to make the earth a desolation and to destroy the sinners within it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light. The rising sun will be

darkened, and the moon will not give its light. I will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity. I will end the haughtiness of the arrogant and lay low the pride of the ruthless. I will make man scarcer than pure gold, and mankind rarer than the gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken from its place at the wrath of the LORD of Hosts on the day of His burning anger. Like a hunted gazelle, like a sheep without a shepherd, each will return to his own people, each will flee to his native land. Whoever is caught will be stabbed, and whoever is captured will die by the sword. Their infants will be dashed to pieces before their eyes, their houses will be looted, and their wives will be ravished. Behold, I will stir up against them the Medes, who have no regard for silver and no desire for gold. Their bows will dash young men to pieces; they will have no mercy on the fruit of the womb; they will not look with pity on the children. And Babylon, the jewel of the kingdoms, the glory of the pride of the Chaldeans, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah. She will never be inhabited or settled from generation to generation; no nomad will pitch his tent there, no shepherd will rest his flock there. But desert creatures will lie down there, and howling creatures will fill her houses. Ostriches will dwell there, and wild goats will leap about. Hyenas will howl in her fortresses and jackals in her luxurious palaces. Babylon's time is at hand, and her days will not be prolonged.

For the LORD will have compassion on Jacob; once again He will choose Israel and settle them in their own land. The foreigner will join them and unite with the house of Jacob. The nations will escort Israel and bring it to its homeland.

Then the house of Israel will possess the nations as menservants and maidservants in the LORD's land. They will make captives of their captors and rule over their oppressors.

On the day that the LORD gives you rest from your pain and torment, and from the hard labor into which you were forced, you will sing this song of contempt against the king of Babylon:

How the oppressor has ceased, and how his fury has ended! The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers. It struck the peoples in anger with unceasing blows; it subdued the nations in rage with relentless persecution. All the earth is at peace and at rest; they break out in song. Even the cypresses and cedars of Lebanon exult over you: "Since you have been laid low, no woodcutter comes against us." Sheol beneath is eager to meet you upon your arrival. It stirs the spirits of the dead to greet you— all the rulers of the earth. It makes all the kings of the nations rise from their thrones. They will all respond to you, saying, "You too have become weak, as we are; you have become like us!" Your pomp has been brought down to Sheol, along with the music of your harps. Maggots are your bed and worms your blanket. How you have fallen from heaven, O day star, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the ground, O destroyer of nations. You said in your heart: "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God. I will sit on the mount of assembly, in the far reaches of the north. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." But you will be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit. Those who see you will stare; they will ponder your fate: "Is this the man who shook the earth and made the kingdoms tremble, who turned the world into a desert and destroyed its cities, who refused to let the captives return to their homes?" All the kings of the nations lie in state, each in his own tomb. But you are cast out of your grave like a rejected branch, covered by those slain with the sword, and dumped into a rocky pit like a carcass trampled underfoot. You will not join them in burial, since you have destroyed your land and slaughtered your own people. The offspring of the wicked will never again be mentioned. Prepare a place to slaughter his sons for the iniquities of their forefathers. They will never rise up to possess a land or cover the earth with their cities. "I will rise up against them," declares the LORD of Hosts. "I will cut off from Babylon her name and her remnant, her offspring and her posterity," declares the LORD. "I will make her a place for owls and for swamplands; I will sweep her away with the broom of destruction," declares the LORD of Hosts.

The LORD of Hosts has sworn:

"Surely, as I have planned, so will it be; as I have purposed, so will it stand. I will break Assyria in My land; I will trample him on My mountain. His yoke will be taken off My people, and his burden removed from their shoulders." This is the plan devised for the whole earth, and this is the hand stretched out over all the nations. The LORD of Hosts has purposed, and who can thwart Him? His hand is outstretched, so who can turn it back?

In the year that King Ahaz died, this burden was received:

Do not rejoice, all you Philistines, that the rod that struck you is broken. For a viper will spring from the root of the snake, and a flying serpent from its egg. Then the firstborn of the poor will find pasture, and the needy will lie down in safety, but I will kill your root by famine, and your remnant will be slain. Wail, O gate! Cry out, O city! Melt away, all you Philistines! For a cloud of smoke comes from the north, and there are no stragglers in its ranks. What answer will be given to the envoys of that nation? "The LORD has founded Zion, where His afflicted people will find refuge."

This is the burden against Moab:

Ar in Moab is ruined, destroyed in a night! Kir in Moab is devastated, destroyed in a night! Dibon goes up to its temple to weep at its high places. Moab wails over Nebo, as well as over Medeba. Every head is shaved, every beard is cut off. In its streets they wear sackcloth; on the rooftops and in the public squares they all wail, falling down weeping. Heshbon and Elealeh cry out; their voices are heard as far as Jahaz. Therefore the soldiers of Moab cry out; their souls tremble within. My heart cries out over Moab; her fugitives flee as far as Zoar, as far as Eglath-shelishiyah. With weeping they ascend the slope of Luhith; they lament their destruction on the road to Horonaim. The waters of Nimrim are dried up, and the grass is withered; the vegetation is gone, and the greenery is no more. So they carry their wealth and belongings over the Brook of the Willows. For their outcry echoes to the border of Moab. Their wailing reaches Eglaim; it is heard in Beer-elim. The waters of Dimon are full of blood, but I will bring more upon Dimon — a lion upon the fugitives of Moab and upon the remnant of the land.

Send the tribute lambs to the ruler of the land, from Sela in the desert to the mount of Daughter Zion. Like fluttering birds pushed out of the nest, so are the daughters of Moab at the fords of the Arnon: "Give us counsel; render a decision. Shelter us at noonday with shade as dark as night. Hide the refugees; do not betray the one who flees. Let my fugitives stay with you; be a refuge for Moab from the destroyer." When the oppressor has gone, destruction has ceased, and the oppressors have vanished from the land, in loving devotion a throne will be established in the tent of David. A judge seeking justice and hastening righteousness will sit on it in faithfulness. We have heard of Moab's pomposity, his exceeding pride and conceit, his overflowing arrogance. But his boasting is empty. Therefore let Moab wail; let them wail together for Moab. Moan for the raisin cakes of Kir-hareseth, you who are utterly stricken. For the fields of Heshbon have withered, along with the grapevines of Sibmah. The rulers of the nations have trampled its choicest vines, which had reached as far as Jazer and spread toward the desert. Their shoots had spread out and passed over the sea. So I weep with Jazer for the vines of Sibmah; I drench Heshbon and Elealeh with my tears. Triumphant shouts have fallen silent over your summer fruit and your harvest. Joy and gladness are removed from the orchard; no one sings or shouts in the vineyards. No one tramples the grapes in the winepresses; I have put an end to the cheering. Therefore my heart laments for Moab like a harp, my inmost being for Kir-heres. When Moab appears on the high place, when he wearies himself and enters his sanctuary to pray, it will do him no good.

This is the message that the LORD spoke earlier concerning Moab. And now the LORD says, "In three years, as a hired worker counts the years, Moab's splendor will become an object of contempt, with all her many people. And those who are left will be few and feeble."

This is the burden against Damascus:

"Behold, Damascus is no longer a city; it has become a heap of ruins. The cities of Aroer are forsaken; they will be left to the flocks, which will lie down with no one to fear. The fortress will disappear from Ephraim, and the sovereignty from Damascus. The remnant of Aram will be like the splendor of the Israelites," declares the LORD of Hosts. "In that day the splendor of Jacob will fade, and the fat of his body will waste away, as the reaper gathers the standing grain and harvests the ears with his arm, as one gleans heads of grain in the Valley of Rephaim. Yet gleanings will remain, like an olive tree that has been beaten— two or three berries atop the tree, four or five on its fruitful branches," declares the LORD, the God of Israel. In that day men will look to their Maker and turn their eyes to the Holy One of Israel. They will not look to the altars they have fashioned with their hands or to the Asherahs and incense altars they have made with their fingers. In that day their strong cities will be like forsaken thickets and summits, abandoned to the Israelites and to utter desolation. For you have forgotten the God of your salvation and failed to remember the Rock of your refuge. Therefore, though you cultivate delightful plots and set out cuttings from exotic vines — though on the day you plant you make them grow, and on that morning you help your seed sprout — yet the harvest will vanish on the day of disease and incurable pain. Alas, the tumult of many peoples; they rage like the roaring seas and clamoring nations; they rumble like the crashing of mighty waters. The nations rage like the rush of many waters. He rebukes them, and they flee far away, driven before the wind like chaff on the hills, like tumbleweeds before a gale. In the evening, there is sudden terror! Before morning, they are no more! This is the portion of those who loot us and the lot of those who plunder us.

Woe to the land of whirring wings, along the rivers of Cush, which sends couriers by sea, in papyrus vessels on the waters. Go, swift messengers, to a people tall and smooth-skinned, to a people widely feared, to a powerful nation of strange speech, whose land is divided by rivers. All you people of the world and dwellers of the earth, when a banner is raised on the mountains, you will see it; when a ram's horn sounds, you will hear it.

For this is what the LORD has told me:

"I will quietly look on from My dwelling place,
like shimmering heat in the sunshine, like a
cloud of dew in the heat of harvest." For before
the harvest, when the blossom is gone and the
flower becomes a ripening grape, He will cut
off the shoots with a pruning knife and remove
and discard the branches. They will all be left
to the mountain birds of prey, and to the beasts
of the land. The birds will feed on them in
summer, and all the wild animals in winter.

At that time gifts will be brought to the LORD of Hosts—

from a people tall and smooth-skinned, from a
people widely feared, from a powerful nation
of strange speech, whose land is divided by
rivers—

to Mount Zion, the place of the Name of the LORD of Hosts.

This is the burden against Egypt:

Behold, the LORD rides on a swift cloud; He
is coming to Egypt. The idols of Egypt will
tremble before Him, and the hearts of the
Egyptians will melt within them. "So I will
incite Egyptian against Egyptian; brother will
fight against brother, neighbor against neigh-
bor, city against city, and kingdom against
kingdom. Then the spirit of the Egyptians will
be emptied out from among them, and I will
frustrate their plans, so that they will resort
to idols and spirits of the dead, to mediums
and spiritists. I will deliver the Egyptians into
the hands of a harsh master, and a fierce king
will rule over them," declares the Lord GOD
of Hosts. The waters of the Nile will dry up,
and the riverbed will be parched and empty.
The canals will stink; the streams of Egypt
will trickle and dry up; the reeds and rushes
will wither. The bulrushes by the Nile, by the
mouth of the river, and all the fields sown
along the Nile, will wither, blow away, and be
no more. Then the fishermen will mourn, all
who cast a hook into the Nile will lament, and
those who spread nets on the waters will pine
away. The workers in flax will be dismayed,
and the weavers of fine linen will turn pale.
The workers in cloth will be dejected, and all
the hired workers will be sick at heart. The
princes of Zoan are mere fools; Pharaoh's wise
counselors give senseless advice. How can you
say to Pharaoh, "I am one of the wise, a son
of eastern kings"? Where are your wise men
now? Let them tell you and reveal what the
LORD of Hosts has planned against Egypt. The
princes of Zoan have become fools; the princes
of Memphis are deceived. The cornerstones of
her tribes have led Egypt astray. The LORD has
poured into her a spirit of confusion. Egypt has
been led astray in all she does, as a drunkard
staggers through his own vomit. There is noth-
ing Egypt can do — head or tail, palm or reed.

In that day the Egyptians will be like women. They will tremble with fear beneath the uplifted hand of the LORD of Hosts, when He brandishes it against them. The land of Judah will bring terror to Egypt; whenever Judah is mentioned, Egypt will tremble over what the LORD of Hosts has planned against it.

In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the LORD of Hosts. One of them will be called the City of the Sun.

In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the center of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD near her border. It will be a sign and a witness to the LORD of Hosts in the land of Egypt. When they cry out to the LORD because of their oppressors, He will send them a savior and defender to rescue them. The LORD will make Himself known to Egypt, and on that day Egypt will acknowledge the LORD. They will worship with sacrifices and offerings; they will make vows to the LORD and fulfill them.

And the LORD will strike Egypt with a plague; He will strike them but heal them. They will turn to the LORD, and He will hear their prayers and heal them.

In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt, and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together.

In that day Israel will join a three-party alliance with Egypt and Assyria— a blessing upon the earth. The LORD of Hosts will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt My people, Assyria My handiwork, and Israel My inheritance."

Before the year that the chief commander, sent by Sargon king of Assyria, came to Ashdod and attacked and captured it, the LORD had already spoken through Isaiah son of Amoz, saying, "Go, remove the sackcloth from your waist and the sandals from your feet."

And Isaiah did so, walking around naked and barefoot.

Then the LORD said, "Just as My servant Isaiah has gone naked and barefoot for three years as a sign and omen against Egypt and Cush, so the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Cush, young and old alike, naked and barefoot, with bared buttocks— to Egypt's shame.

Those who made Cush their hope and Egypt their boast will be dismayed and ashamed. And on that day the dwellers of this coastland will say, 'See what has happened to our source of hope, those to whom we fled for help and deliverance from the king of Assyria! How then can we escape?'"

This is the burden against the Desert by the Sea:

Like whirlwinds sweeping through the Negev,
an invader comes from the desert, from a land
of terror. A dire vision is declared to me: "The
traitor still betrays, and the destroyer still de-
stroys. Go up, O Elam! Lay siege, O Media! I
will put an end to all her groaning." Therefore
my body is filled with anguish. Pain grips me,
like the pains of a woman in labor. I am bewil-
dered to hear, I am dismayed to see. My heart
falters; fear makes me tremble. The twilight I
desired has turned to horror. They prepare a
table, they lay out a carpet, they eat, they drink!
Rise up, O princes, oil the shields! For this is
what the Lord says to me: "Go, post a lookout

and have him report what he sees. When he sees chariots with teams of horsemen, riders on donkeys, riders on camels, he must be alert, fully alert." Then the lookout shouted: "Day after day, my lord, I stand on the watchtower; night after night I stay at my post. Look, here come the riders, horsemen in pairs." And one answered, saying: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon! All the images of her gods lie shattered on the ground!" O my people, crushed on the threshing floor, I tell you what I have heard from the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel.

This is the burden against Dumah:

One calls to me from Seir, "Watchman, what is left of the night? Watchman, what is left of the night?" The watchman replies, "Morning has come, but also the night. If you would inquire, then inquire. Come back yet again."

This is the burden against Arabia:

In the thickets of Arabia you must lodge, O caravans of Dedanites. Bring water for the thirsty, O dwellers of Tema; meet the refugees with food. For they flee from the sword— the sword that is drawn— from the bow that is bent, and from the stress of battle.

For this is what the Lord says to me: "Within one year, as a hired worker would count it, all the glory of Kedar will be gone. The remaining archers, the warriors of Kedar, will be few."

For the LORD, the God of Israel, has spoken.

This is the burden against the Valley of Vision:

What ails you now, that you have all gone up to the rooftops, O city of commotion, O town of revelry? Your slain did not die by the sword, nor were they killed in battle. All your rulers have fled together, captured without a bow. All your fugitives were captured together, having fled to a distant place. Therefore I said, "Turn away from me, let me weep bitterly! Do not try to console me over the destruction of the daughter of my people." For the Lord GOD of Hosts has set a day of tumult and trampling and confusion in the Valley of Vision— of breaking down the walls and crying to the mountains. Elam takes up a quiver, with chariots and horsemen, and Kir uncovers the shield. Your choicest valleys are full of chariots, and horsemen are posted at the gates. He has uncovered the defenses of Judah.

On that day you looked to the weapons in the House of the Forest. You saw that there were many breaches in the walls of the City of David. You collected water from the lower pool. You counted the houses of Jerusalem and tore them down to strengthen the wall. You built a reservoir between the walls for the waters of the ancient pool, but you did not look to the One who made it, or consider Him who planned it long ago.

On that day the Lord GOD of Hosts called for weeping and wailing, for shaven heads and the wearing of sackcloth. But look, there is joy and gladness, butchering of cattle and slaughtering of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"

The LORD of Hosts has revealed in my hearing:

"Until your dying day, this sin of yours will never be atoned for," says the Lord GOD of Hosts.

This is what the Lord GOD of Hosts says: "Go, say to Shebna, the steward in charge of the palace: What are you doing here, and who authorized you to carve out a tomb for yourself here — to chisel your tomb in the height and cut your resting place in the rock?

Look, O mighty man! The LORD is about to shake you violently. He will take hold of you, roll you into a ball, and sling you into a wide land. There you will die, and there your glorious chariots will remain— a disgrace to the house of your master. I will remove you from office, and you will be ousted from your position.

On that day I will summon My servant, Eliakim son of Hilkiah. I will clothe him with your robe and tie your sash around him. I will put your authority in his hand, and he will be a father to the dwellers of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. I will drive him like a peg into a firm place, and he will be a throne of glory for the house of his father.

So they will hang on him all the glory of his father's house: the descendants and the offshoots— all the lesser vessels, from bowls to every kind of jar.

In that day, declares the LORD of Hosts, the peg driven into a firm place will give way; it will be sheared off and fall, and the load upon it will be cut down."

Indeed, the LORD has spoken.

This is the burden against Tyre:

Wail, O ships of Tarshish, for Tyre is laid waste, without house or harbor. Word has reached them from the land of Cyprus. Be silent, O dwellers of the coastland, you merchants of Sidon, whose traders have crossed the sea. On the great waters came the grain of Shihor; the harvest of the Nile was the revenue of Tyre; she was the merchant of the nations. Be ashamed, O Sidon, the stronghold of the sea, for the sea has spoken: "I have not been in labor or given birth. I have not raised young men or brought up young women." When the report reaches Egypt, they will writhe in agony over the news of Tyre. Cross over to Tarshish; wail, O inhabitants of the coastland! Is this your jubilant city, whose origin is from antiquity, whose feet have taken her to settle far away? Who planned this against Tyre, the bestower of crowns, whose traders are princes, whose merchants are renowned on the earth? The LORD of Hosts planned it, to defile all its glorious beauty, to disgrace all the renowned of the earth. Cultivate your land like the Nile, O Daughter of Tarshish; there is no longer a harbor. The LORD has stretched out His hand over the sea; He has made kingdoms tremble. He has given a command that the strongholds of Canaan be destroyed. He said, "You shall rejoice no more, O oppressed Virgin Daughter of Sidon. Get up and cross over to Cyprus— even there you will find no rest." Look at the

land of the Chaldeans— a people now of no account. The Assyrians destined it for the desert creatures; they set up their siege towers and stripped its palaces. They brought it to ruin. Wail, O ships of Tarshish, for your harbor has been destroyed!

At that time Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years — the span of a king's life. But at the end of seventy years, it will happen to Tyre as in the song of the harlot:

"Take up your harp, stroll through the city, O forgotten harlot. Make sweet melody, sing many a song, so you will be remembered."

And at the end of seventy years, the LORD will restore Tyre. Then she will return to hire as a prostitute and sell herself to all the kingdoms on the face of the earth. Yet her profits and wages will be set apart to the LORD; they will not be stored or saved, for her profit will go to those who live before the LORD, for abundant food and fine clothing.

Behold, the LORD lays waste the earth and leaves it in ruins. He will twist its surface and scatter its inhabitants— people and priest alike, servant and master, maid and mistress, buyer and seller, lender and borrower, creditor and debtor. The earth will be utterly laid waste and thoroughly plundered. For the LORD has spoken this word. The earth mourns and withers; the world languishes and fades; the exalted of the earth waste away. The earth is defiled by its people; they have transgressed the laws; they have overstepped the decrees and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse has consumed the earth, and its inhabitants must bear the guilt; the earth's dwellers have been burned, and only a few survive. The new wine dries up, the vine withers. All the merrymakers now groan. The joyful tambourines have ceased; the noise of revelers has stopped; the joyful harp is silent. They no longer sing and drink wine; strong drink is bitter to those who consume it. The city of chaos is shattered; every house is closed to entry. In the streets they cry out for wine. All joy turns to gloom; rejoicing is exiled from the land. The city is left in ruins; its gate is reduced to rubble. So will it be on the earth and among the nations, like a harvested olive tree, like a gleaning after a grape harvest. They raise their voices, they shout for joy; from the west they proclaim the majesty of the LORD. Therefore glorify the LORD in the east. Extol the name of the LORD, the God of Israel in the islands of the sea. From the ends of the earth we hear singing: "Glory to the Righteous One." But I said, "I am wasting away! I am wasting away! Woe is me." The treacherous betray; the treacherous deal in treachery. Terror and pit and snare await you, O dweller of the earth. Whoever flees the sound of panic will fall into the pit, and whoever climbs from the pit will be caught in the snare. For the windows of heaven are open, and the foundations of the earth are shaken. The earth is utterly broken apart, the earth is split open, the earth is shaken violently. The earth staggers like a drunkard and sways like a shack. Earth's rebellion weighs it down, and it falls, never to rise again. In that day the LORD will punish the host of heaven above and the kings of the earth below. They will be gathered together like prisoners in a pit. They will be confined to a dungeon and punished after many days. The moon will be confounded and the sun will be ashamed; for the LORD of Hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before His elders with great glory.

O LORD, You are my God! I will exalt You; I will praise Your name. For You have worked wonders — plans formed long ago — in perfect faithfulness. Indeed, You have made the city a heap of rubble, the fortified town a ruin. The fortress of strangers is a city no more; it will never be rebuilt. Therefore, a strong people will honor You. The cities of ruthless nations will revere You. For You have been a refuge for the poor, a stronghold for the needy in distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat. For the breath of the ruthless is like rain against a wall, like heat in a dry land. You subdue the uproar of foreigners. As the shade of a cloud cools the heat, so the song of the ruthless is silenced. On this mountain the LORD of Hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all the peoples, a feast of aged wine, of choice meat, of finely aged wine. On this mountain He will swallow up the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; He will swallow up death forever. The Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from every face and remove the disgrace of His people from the whole earth. For the LORD has spoken. And in that day it will be said, "Surely this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He has saved us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited. Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation." For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain. But Moab will be trampled in his place as straw is trodden into the dung pile. He will spread out his hands within it, as a swimmer spreads his arms to swim. His pride will be brought low, despite the skill of his hands. The high-walled fortress will be brought down, cast to the ground, into the dust.

In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah:

We have a strong city; salvation is established as its walls and ramparts. Open the gates so a righteous nation may enter— one that remains faithful. You will keep in perfect peace the steadfast of mind, because he trusts in You. Trust in the LORD forever, because GOD the LORD is the Rock eternal. For He has humbled those who dwell on high; He lays the lofty city low. He brings it down to the ground; He casts it into the dust. Feet trample it down — the feet of the oppressed, the steps of the poor. The path of

the righteous is level; You clear a straight path for the upright. Yes, we wait for You, O LORD; we walk in the path of Your judgments. Your name and renown are the desire of our souls. My soul longs for You in the night; indeed, my spirit seeks You at dawn. For when Your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness. Though grace is shown to the wicked man, he does not learn righteousness. In the land of righteousness he acts unjustly and fails to see the majesty of the LORD. O LORD, Your hand is upraised, but they do not see it. They will see Your zeal for Your people and be put to shame. The fire set for Your enemies will consume them! O LORD, You will establish peace for us. For all that we have accomplished, You have done for us. O LORD our God, other lords besides You have ruled over us, but Your name alone do we confess. The dead will not live; the departed spirits will not rise. Therefore You have punished and destroyed them; You have wiped out all memory of them. You have enlarged the nation, O LORD; You have enlarged the nation. You have gained glory for Yourself; You have extended all the borders of the land. O LORD, they sought You in their distress; when You disciplined them, they poured out a quiet prayer. As a woman with child about to give birth writhes and cries out in pain, so were we in Your presence, O LORD. We were with child; we writhed in pain; but we gave birth to wind. We have given no salvation to the earth, nor brought any life into the world. Your dead will live; their bodies will rise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in the dust! For your dew is like the dew of the morning, and the earth will bring forth her dead. Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut your doors behind you. Hide yourselves a little while until the wrath has passed. For behold, the LORD is coming out of His dwelling to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. The earth will reveal her bloodshed and will no longer conceal her slain.

In that day the LORD will take His sharp, great, and mighty sword, and bring judgment on Leviathan the fleeing serpent— Leviathan the coiling serpent— and He will slay the dragon of the sea. In that day:

"Sing about a fruitful vineyard. I, the LORD, am its keeper; I water it continually. I guard it night and day so no one can disturb it; I am not angry. If only thorns and briers confronted Me, I would march and trample them, I would burn them to the ground. Or let them lay claim to My protection; let them make peace with Me— yes, let them make peace with Me." In the days to come, Jacob will take root. Israel will bud and blossom and fill the whole world with fruit. Has the LORD struck Israel as He struck her oppressors? Was she killed like those who slayed her? By warfare and exile You contended with her and removed her with a fierce wind, as on the day the east wind blows. Therefore Jacob's guilt will be atoned for, and the full fruit of the removal of his sin will be this: When he makes all the altar stones like crushed bits of chalk, no Asherah poles or incense altars will remain standing. For the fortified city lies deserted — a homestead abandoned, a wilderness forsaken. There the calves graze, and there they lie down; they strip its branches bare. When its limbs are dry, they are broken off. Women come and use them for kindling; for this is a people without understanding. Therefore their Maker has no compassion on them, and their Creator shows them no favor.

In that day the LORD will thresh from the flowing Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt, and you, O Israelites, will be gathered one by one. And in that day a great ram's horn will sound, and those who were perishing in Assyria will come forth with those who were exiles in Egypt. And they will worship the LORD on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.

Woe to the majestic crown of Ephraim's drunkards, to the fading flower of his glorious splendor, set on the summit above the fertile valley, the pride of those overcome by wine. Behold, the Lord has one who is strong and mighty. Like a hailstorm or destructive tempest, like a driving rain or flooding downpour, he will smash that crown to the ground. The majestic crown of Ephraim's drunkards will be trampled underfoot. The fading flower of his beautiful splendor, set on the summit above the fertile valley, will be like a ripe fig before the summer harvest: Whoever sees it will take it in his hand and swallow it. On that day the LORD of Hosts will be a crown of glory, a diadem of splendor to the remnant of His people, a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, and a strength to those who repel the onslaught at the gate. These also stagger from wine and stumble from strong drink: Priests and prophets reel from strong drink and are befuddled by wine. They stumble because of strong drink, muddled in their visions and stumbling in their judgments. For all their tables are covered with vomit; there is not a place without filth. Whom is He trying to teach? To whom is He explaining His message? To infants just weaned from milk? To babies removed from the breast? For they hear: "Order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line; a little here, a little there." Indeed, with mocking lips and foreign tongues, He will speak to this people to whom He has said: "This is the place of rest, let the weary rest; this is the place of repose." But they would not listen. Then the word of the LORD to them will become: "Order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line; a little here, a little there," so that they will go stumbling backward and will be injured, ensnared, and captured.

Therefore hear the word of the LORD, O scoffers who rule this people in Jerusalem. For you said, "We have made a covenant with

death; we have fashioned an agreement with Sheol. When the overwhelming scourge passes through it will not touch us, because we have made lies our refuge and falsehood our hiding place."

So this is what the Lord GOD says:

"See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; the one who believes will never be shaken. I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the level. Hail will sweep away your refuge of lies, and water will flood your hiding place. Your covenant with death will be dissolved, and your agreement with Sheol will not stand. When the overwhelming scourge passes through, you will be trampled by it. As often as it passes through, it will carry you away; it will sweep through morning after morning, by day and by night." The understanding of this message will bring sheer terror. Indeed, the bed is too short to stretch out on, and the blanket too small to wrap around you. For the LORD will rise up as at Mount Perazim. He will rouse Himself as in the Valley of Gibeon, to do His work, His strange work, and to perform His task, His disturbing task. So now, do not mock, or your shackles will become heavier. Indeed, I have heard from the Lord GOD of Hosts a decree of destruction against the whole land.

Listen and hear my voice. Pay attention and hear what I say. Does the plowman plow for planting every day? Does he continuously loosen and harrow the soil? When he has leveled its surface, does he not sow caraway and scatter cumin? He plants wheat in rows and barley in plots, and rye within its border. For his God instructs and teaches him properly. Surely caraway is not threshed with a sledge, and the wheel of a cart is not rolled over the cumin. But caraway is beaten out with a stick, and cumin with a rod. Grain for bread must be ground, but it is not endlessly threshed. Though the wheels of the cart roll over it, the horses do not crush it. This also comes from the LORD of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom.

Woe to you, O Ariel, the city of Ariel where David camped! Year upon year let your festivals recur. And I will constrain Ariel, and there will be mourning and lamentation; she will be like an altar hearth before Me. I will camp in a circle around you; I will besiege you with towers and set up siege works against you. You will be brought low, you will speak from the ground, and out of the dust your words will be muffled. Your voice will be like a spirit from the ground; your speech will whisper out of the dust. But your many foes will be like fine dust, the multitude of the ruthless like blowing chaff. Then suddenly, in an instant, you will be visited by the LORD of Hosts with thunder and earthquake and loud noise, with windstorm and tempest and consuming flame of fire. All the many nations going out to battle against Ariel— even all who war against her, laying siege and attacking her— will be like a dream, like a vision in the night, as when a hungry man dreams he is eating, then awakens still hungry; as when a thirsty man dreams he is drinking, then awakens faint and parched. So will it be for all the many nations who go to battle against Mount Zion. Stop and be astonished; blind yourselves and be sightless; be drunk, but not with wine; stagger, but not from strong drink. For the LORD has poured out on you a spirit of deep sleep. He has shut your eyes, O prophets; He has covered your heads, O seers.

And the entire vision will be to you like the words sealed in a scroll. If it is handed to someone to read, he will say, "I cannot, because it is sealed." Or if the scroll is handed to one unable to read, he will say, "I cannot read."

Therefore the Lord said:

"These people draw near to Me with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. Their worship of Me is but rules taught by men. Therefore I will again confound these people with wonder upon wonder. The wisdom of the wise will vanish, and the intelligence of the intelligent will be hidden." Woe to those who dig deep to hide their plans from the LORD. In darkness they do their works and say, "Who sees us, and who will know?" You have turned things upside down, as if the potter were regarded as clay. Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, "He did not make me"? Can the pottery say of the potter, "He has no understanding"?

In a very short time, will not Lebanon become an orchard, and the orchard seem like a forest? On that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of the deep darkness the eyes of the blind will see. The humble will increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. For the ruthless will vanish, the mockers will disappear, and all who look for evil will be cut down — those who indict a man with a word, who ensnare the mediator at the gate, and who with false charges deprive the innocent of justice.

Therefore the LORD who redeemed Abraham says of the house of Jacob:

"No longer will Jacob be ashamed and no more will his face grow pale. For when he sees his children around him, the work of My hands, they will honor My name, they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and they will stand in awe of the God of Israel. Then the wayward in spirit will come to understanding, and those who grumble will accept instruction."

"Woe to the rebellious children," declares the LORD, "to those who carry out a plan that is not Mine, who form an alliance, but against My will, heaping up sin upon sin. They set out to go down to Egypt without asking My

advice, to seek shelter under Pharaoh's protection and take refuge in Egypt's shade. But Pharaoh's protection will become your shame, and the refuge of Egypt's shade your disgrace. For though their princes are at Zoan and their envoys have arrived in Hanes, everyone will be put to shame because of a people useless to them. They bring neither help nor benefit, but only shame and disgrace."

This is the burden against the beasts of the Negev:

Through a land of hardship and distress, of lioness and lion, of viper and flying serpent, they carry their wealth on the backs of donkeys and their treasures on the humps of camels, to a people of no profit to them. Egypt's help is futile and empty; therefore I have called her Rahab Who Sits Still. Go now, write it on a tablet in their presence and inscribe it on a scroll; it will be for the days to come, a witness forever and ever. These are rebellious people, deceitful children, children unwilling to obey the LORD's instruction. They say to the seers, "Stop seeing visions!" and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us the truth! Speak to us pleasant words; prophesy illusions. Get out of the way; turn off the road. Rid us of the Holy One of Israel!"

Therefore this is what the Holy One of Israel says:

"Because you have rejected this message, trusting in oppression and relying on deceit, this iniquity of yours is like a breach about to fail, a bulge in a high wall, whose collapse will come suddenly — in an instant! It will break in pieces like a potter's jar, shattered so that no fragment can be found. Not a shard will be found in the dust large enough to scoop the coals from a hearth or to skim the water from a cistern."

For the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said:

"By repentance and rest you would be saved; your strength would lie in quiet confidence — but you were not willing." "No," you say, "we will flee on horses." Therefore you will flee! "We will ride swift horses," but your pursuers will be faster. A thousand will flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five you will all flee, until you are left alone like a pole on a mountaintop, like a banner on a hill.

Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore He rises to show you compassion, for the LORD is a just God. Blessed are all who wait for Him.

O people in Zion who dwell in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. He will surely be gracious when you cry for help; when He hears, He will answer you. The Lord will give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, but your Teacher will no longer hide Himself — with your own eyes you will see Him.

And whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear this command behind you: "This is the way. Walk in it." So you will desecrate your silver-plated idols and your gold-plated images. You will throw them away like menstrual cloths, saying to them, "Be gone!"

Then He will send rain for the seed that you have sown in the ground, and the food that comes from your land will be rich and plentiful. On that day your cattle will graze in open pastures. The oxen and donkeys that work the ground will eat salted fodder, winnowed with shovel and pitchfork.

And from every high mountain and every raised hill, streams of water will flow in the day of great slaughter, when the towers fall. The light of the moon will be as bright as the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter— like the light of seven days— on the day that the LORD binds up the brokenness of His people and heals the wounds He has inflicted.

Behold, the Name of the LORD comes from afar, with burning anger and dense smoke. His lips are full of fury, and His tongue is like a consuming fire. His breath is like a rushing torrent that rises to the neck. He comes to sift the nations in a sieve of destruction; He bridles the jaws of the peoples to lead them astray. You will sing as on the night of a holy festival, and your heart will rejoice like one who walks to the music of a flute, going up to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel. And the LORD will cause His majestic voice to be heard and His mighty arm to be revealed, striking in angry wrath with a flame of consuming fire, and with cloudburst, storm, and hailstones. For Assyria will be shattered at the voice of the LORD; He will strike them with His scepter. And with every stroke of the rod of punishment that the LORD brings down on them, the tambourines and lyres will sound as He battles with weapons brandished. For Topheth has long been prepared; it has been made ready for the king. Its funeral pyre is deep and wide, with plenty of fire and wood. The breath of the LORD, like a torrent of burning sulfur, sets it ablaze.

Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in their abundance of chariots and in their multitude of horsemen. They do not look to the Holy One of Israel; they do not seek the LORD. Yet He too is wise and brings disaster; He does not call back His words. He will rise up against the house of the wicked and against the allies of evildoers. But the Egyptians are men, not God; their horses are flesh, not spirit. When the LORD stretches out His hand, the helper will stumble, and the one he helps will fall; both will perish together.

For this is what the LORD has said to me:

"Like a lion roaring or a young lion over its prey — and though a band of shepherds is called out against it, it is not terrified by their shouting or subdued by their clamor — so the LORD of Hosts will come down to do battle on Mount Zion and its heights. Like birds hovering overhead, so the LORD of Hosts will protect Jerusalem. He will shield it and deliver it; He will pass over it and preserve it."

Return to the One against whom you have so blatantly rebelled, O children of Israel. For on that day, every one of you will reject the idols of silver and gold that your own hands have sinfully made.

> "Then Assyria will fall, but not by the sword of man; a sword will devour them, but not one made by mortals. They will flee before the sword, and their young men will be put to forced labor. Their rock will pass away for fear, and their princes will panic at the sight of the battle standard," declares the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, whose furnace is in Jerusalem.
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> Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice. Each will be like a shelter from the wind, a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in a dry land, like the shadow of a great rock in an arid land. Then the eyes of those who see will no longer be closed, and the ears of those who hear will listen. The mind of the rash will know and understand, and the stammering tongue will speak clearly and fluently. No longer will a fool be called noble, nor a scoundrel be respected. For a fool speaks foolishness; his mind plots iniquity. He practices ungodliness and speaks falsely about the LORD; he leaves the hungry empty and deprives the thirsty of drink. The weapons of the scoundrel are destructive; he hatches plots to destroy the poor with lies, even when the plea of the needy is just. But a noble man makes honorable plans; he stands up for worthy causes.
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> Stand up, you complacent women; listen to me. Give ear to my word, you overconfident daughters. In a little more than a year you will tremble, O secure ones. For the grape harvest will fail and the fruit harvest will not arrive. Shudder, you ladies of leisure; tremble, you daughters of complacency. Strip yourselves bare and put sackcloth around your waists. Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vines, and for the land of my people, overgrown with thorns and briers — even for every house of merriment in this city of revelry. For the palace will be forsaken, the busy city abandoned. The hill and the watchtower will become caves forever — the delight of wild donkeys and a pasture for flocks — until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high. Then the desert will be an orchard, and the orchard will seem like a forest. Then justice will inhabit the wilderness, and righteousness will dwell in the fertile field. The work of righteousness will be peace; the service of righteousness will be quiet confidence forever. Then my people will dwell in a peaceful place, in safe and secure places of rest. But hail will level the forest, and the city will sink to the depths. Blessed are those who sow beside abundant waters, who let the ox and donkey range freely.
>
> Woe to you, O destroyer never destroyed, O traitor never betrayed! When you have finished destroying, you will be destroyed. When you have finished betraying, you will be betrayed. O LORD, be gracious to us! We wait for You. Be our strength every morning and our salvation in time of trouble. The peoples flee the thunder of Your voice; the nations scatter when You rise. Your spoil, O nations, is gathered as by locusts; like a swarm of locusts men sweep over it. The LORD is exalted, for He dwells on high; He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness. He will be the sure foundation for your times, a storehouse of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge. The fear of the LORD is Zion's treasure. Behold, their valiant ones cry aloud in the streets; the envoys of peace weep bitterly. The highways are deserted; travel has ceased. The treaty has been broken, the witnesses are despised, and human life is disregarded. The land mourns and languishes; Lebanon is ashamed and decayed. Sharon is like a desert; Bashan and Carmel shake off their leaves. "Now I will arise," says the LORD. "Now I will lift Myself up. Now I will be exalted. You conceive chaff; you give birth to stubble. Your breath is a fire that will consume you. The peoples will be burned to ashes, like thorns cut down and set ablaze. You who are far off, hear what I have done; you who are near, acknowledge My might." The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling grips the ungodly: "Who of us can dwell with a consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting flames?" He who walks righteously and speaks with sincerity, who refuses gain from extortion, whose hand never takes a bribe, who stops his ears against murderous plots and shuts his eyes tightly against evil— he will dwell on the heights; the mountain fortress will be his refuge; his food will be provided and his water assured. Your eyes will see the King in His beauty and behold a land that stretches afar. Your mind will ponder the former terror: "Where is he who tallies? Where is he who weighs? Where is he who counts the towers?" You will no longer see the insolent, a people whose speech is unintelligible, who stammer in a language you cannot understand. Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts. Your eyes will see Jerusalem, a peaceful pasture, a tent that does not wander; its tent pegs will not be pulled up, nor will any of its cords be broken. But there the Majestic One, our LORD, will be for us a place of rivers and wide canals, where no galley with oars will row, and no majestic vessel will pass. For the LORD is our Judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our King. It is He who will save us. Your ropes are slack; they cannot secure the mast or spread the sail. Then an abundance of spoils will be divided, and even the lame will carry off plunder. And no resident of Zion will say, "I am sick." The people who dwell there will be forgiven of iniquity.
>
> Come near, O nations, to listen; pay attention, O peoples. Let the earth hear, and all that

fills it, the world and all that springs from it. The LORD is angry with all the nations and furious with all their armies. He will devote them to destruction; He will give them over to slaughter. Their slain will be left unburied, and the stench of their corpses will rise; the mountains will flow with their blood. All the stars of heaven will be dissolved. The skies will be rolled up like a scroll, and all their stars will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like foliage from the fig tree.

When My sword has drunk its fill in the heavens, then it will come down upon Edom, upon the people I have devoted to destruction. The sword of the LORD is bathed in blood. It drips with fat — with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams. For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah, a great slaughter in the land of Edom. And the wild oxen will fall with them, the young bulls with the strong ones. Their land will be drenched with blood, and their soil will be soaked with fat. For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. Edom's streams will be turned to tar, and her soil to sulfur; her land will become a blazing pitch. It will not be quenched— day or night. Its smoke will ascend forever. From generation to generation it will lie desolate; no one will ever again pass through it. The desert owl and screech owl will possess it, and the great owl and raven will dwell in it. The LORD will stretch out over Edom a measuring line of chaos and a plumb line of destruction. No nobles will be left to proclaim a king, and all her princes will come to nothing. Her towers will be overgrown with thorns, her fortresses with thistles and briers. She will become a haunt for jackals, an abode for ostriches. The desert creatures will meet with hyenas, and one wild goat will call to another. There the night creature will settle and find her place of repose. There the owl will make her nest; she will lay and hatch her eggs and gather her brood under her shadow. Even there the birds of prey will gather, each with its mate.

Search and read the scroll of the LORD:

Not one of these will go missing, not one will lack her mate, because He has ordered it by His mouth, and He will gather them by His Spirit. He has allotted their portion; His hand has distributed it by measure. They will possess it forever; they will dwell in it from generation to generation.

The wilderness and the dry land will be glad; the desert will rejoice and blossom like a rose. It will bloom profusely and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God. Strengthen the limp hands and steady the feeble knees! Say to those with anxious hearts: "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance. With divine retribution He will come to save you." Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer and the mute tongue will shout for joy. For waters will gush forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground will become a pool, the thirsty land springs of water. In the haunt where jackals once lay, there will be grass and reeds and papyrus. And there will be a highway called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not travel it — only those who walk in the Way — and fools will not stray onto it. No lion will be there, and no vicious beast will go up on it. Such will not be found there, but the redeemed will walk upon it. So the redeemed of the LORD will return and enter Zion with singing, crowned with everlasting joy. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee.

In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked and captured all the fortified cities of Judah. And the king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh, with a great army, from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. And he stopped by the aqueduct of the upper pool, on the road to the Launderer's Field.

Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah the palace administrator, Shebna the scribe, and Joah son of Asaph the recorder, went out to him.

The Rabshakeh said to them, "Tell Hezekiah that this is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says: What is the basis of this confidence of yours? You claim to have a strategy and strength for war, but these are empty words. In whom are you now trusting, that you have rebelled against me?

Look now, you are trusting in Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff that will pierce the hand of anyone who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him. But if you say to me, 'We trust in the LORD our God,' is He not the One whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, 'You must worship before this altar'?

Now, therefore, make a bargain with my master, the king of Assyria. I will give you two thousand horses — if you can put riders on them! For how can you repel a single officer among the least of my master's servants when you depend on Egypt for chariots and horsemen? So now, was it apart from the LORD that I have come up against this land to destroy it? The LORD Himself said to me, 'Go up against this land and destroy it.'"

Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said to the Rabshakeh, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, since we understand it. Do not speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall."

But the Rabshakeh replied, "Has my master sent me to speak these words only to you and your master, and not to the men sitting on the wall, who are destined with you to eat their own dung and drink their own urine?"

Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out loudly in Hebrew: "Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria! This is what the king says: Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he cannot deliver you. Do not let

Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the LORD when he says, 'The LORD will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.'

Do not listen to Hezekiah, for this is what the king of Assyria says: Make peace with me and come out to me. Then every one of you will eat from his own vine and his own fig tree, and drink water from his own cistern, until I come and take you away to a land like your own— a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards.

Do not let Hezekiah mislead you when he says, 'The LORD will deliver us.' Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they delivered Samaria from my hand? Who among all the gods of these lands has delivered his land from my hand? How then can the LORD deliver Jerusalem from my hand?"

But the people remained silent and did not answer a word, for Hezekiah had commanded, "Do not answer him."

Then Hilkiah's son Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the scribe, and Asaph's son Joah the recorder came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn, and they relayed to him the words of the Rabshakeh.

On hearing this report, King Hezekiah tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and entered the house of the LORD. And he sent Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the scribe, and the leading priests, all wearing sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz to tell him, "This is what Hezekiah says: Today is a day of distress, rebuke, and disgrace; for children have come to the point of birth, but there is no strength to deliver them. Perhaps the LORD your God will hear the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to defy the living God, and He will rebuke him for the words that the LORD your God has heard. Therefore lift up a prayer for the remnant that still survives."

So the servants of King Hezekiah went to Isaiah, who replied, "Tell your master that this is what the LORD says: 'Do not be afraid of the words you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he will hear a rumor and return to his own land, where I will cause him to fall by the sword.'"

When the Rabshakeh heard that the king of Assyria had left Lachish, he withdrew and found the king fighting against Libnah.

Now Sennacherib had been warned about Tirhakah king of Cush: "He has set out to fight against you."

On hearing this, Sennacherib sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, "Give this message to Hezekiah king of Judah:

'Do not let your God, in whom you trust, deceive you by saying that Jerusalem will not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. Surely you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the other countries, devoting them to destruction. Will you then be spared? Did the gods of the nations destroyed by my fathers rescue those nations— the gods of Gozan, Haran, and Rezeph, and of the people of Eden in Telassar? Where are the kings of Hamath, Arpad, Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah?'"

So Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers, read it, and went up to the house of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD:

"O LORD of Hosts, God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, You alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You made the heavens and the earth. Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see. Listen to all the words that Sennacherib has sent to defy the living God.

Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all these countries and their lands. They have cast their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods, but only wood and stone — the work of human hands.

And now, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, O LORD, are God."

Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent a message to Hezekiah: "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Because you have prayed to Me concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria, this is the word that the LORD has spoken against him:

> 'The Virgin Daughter of Zion despises you and mocks you; the Daughter of Jerusalem shakes her head behind you. Whom have you taunted and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes in pride? Against the Holy One of Israel! Through your servants you have taunted the Lord, and you have said: "With my many chariots I have ascended to the heights of the mountains, to the remote peaks of Lebanon. I have cut down its tallest cedars, the finest of its cypresses. I have reached its farthest heights, the densest of its forests. I have dug wells and drunk foreign waters. With the soles of my feet I have dried up all the streams of Egypt." Have you not heard? Long ago I ordained it; in days of old I planned it. Now I have brought it to pass, that you should crush fortified cities into piles of rubble. Therefore their inhabitants, devoid of power, are dismayed and ashamed. They are like plants in the field, tender green shoots, grass on the rooftops, scorched before it is grown. But I know your sitting down, your going out and coming in, and your raging against Me. Because your rage and arrogance against Me have reached My ears, I will put My hook in your nose and My bit in your mouth; I will send you back the way you came.'

And this will be a sign to you, O Hezekiah:

> This year you will eat what grows on its own, and in the second year what springs from the same. But in the third year you will sow and reap; you will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. And the surviving remnant of the house of Judah will again take root below and bear fruit above. For a remnant will go forth from Jerusalem, and survivors from Mount Zion.

The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will accomplish this.

So this is what the LORD says about the king of Assyria:

'He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow into it. He will not come before it with a shield or build up a siege ramp against it. He will go back the way he came, and he will not enter this city,' declares the LORD. 'I will defend this city and save it for My own sake and for the sake of My servant David.'"

Then the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 men in the camp of the Assyrians. When the people got up the next morning, there were all the dead bodies!

So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there. One day, while he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer put him to the sword and escaped to the land of Ararat. And his son Esar-haddon reigned in his place.

In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz came to him and said, "This is what the LORD says: 'Put your house in order, for you are about to die; you will not recover.'"

Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, saying, "Please, O LORD, remember how I have walked before You faithfully and with wholehearted devotion; I have done what is good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

And the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying, "Go and tell Hezekiah that this is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: 'I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Behold, I will add fifteen years to your life. And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city. This will be a sign to you from the LORD that He will do what He has promised: I will make the sun's shadow that falls on the stairway of Ahaz go back ten steps.'"

So the sunlight went back the ten steps it had descended.

This is a writing by Hezekiah king of Judah after his illness and recovery:

I said, "In the prime of my life I must go through the gates of Sheol and be deprived of the remainder of my years." I said, "I will never again see the LORD, even the LORD, in the land of the living; I will no longer look on mankind with those who dwell in this world. My dwelling has been picked up and removed from me like a shepherd's tent. I have rolled up my life like a weaver; He cuts me off from the loom; from day until night You make an end of me. I composed myself until the morning. Like a lion He breaks all my bones; from day until night You make an end of me. I chirp like a swallow or crane; I moan like a dove. My eyes grow weak as I look upward. O Lord, I am oppressed; be my security." What can I say? He has spoken to me, and He Himself has done this. I will walk slowly all my years because of the anguish of my soul. O Lord, by such things men live, and in all of them my spirit finds life. You have restored me to health and have let me live. Surely for my own welfare I had such great anguish; but Your love has delivered me from the pit of oblivion, for You have cast all my sins behind Your back. For Sheol cannot thank You; Death cannot praise You. Those who descend to the Pit cannot hope for Your faithfulness. The living, only the living, can thank You, as I do today; fathers will tell their children about Your faithfulness. The LORD will save me; we will play songs on stringed instruments all the days of our lives in the house of the LORD.

Now Isaiah had said, "Prepare a lump of pressed figs and apply it to the boil, and he will recover."

And Hezekiah had asked, "What will be the sign that I will go up to the house of the LORD?"

At that time Merodach-baladan son of Baladan king of Babylon sent letters and a gift to Hezekiah, for he had heard about Hezekiah's illness and recovery. And Hezekiah welcomed the envoys gladly and showed them what was in his treasure house — the silver, the gold, the spices, and the precious oil, as well as his entire armory — all that was found in his storehouses. There was nothing in his palace or in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them.

Then the prophet Isaiah went to King Hezekiah and asked, "Where did those men come from, and what did they say to you?"

"They came to me from a distant land," Hezekiah replied, "from Babylon."

"What have they seen in your palace?" Isaiah asked.

"They have seen everything in my palace," answered Hezekiah. "There is nothing among my treasures that I did not show them."

Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD of Hosts: The time will surely come when everything in your palace and all that your fathers have stored up until this day will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD. And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood, will be taken away to be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."

But Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD that you have spoken is good." For he thought, "At least there will be peace and security in my lifetime."

"Comfort, comfort My people," says your God. "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her forced labor has been completed; her iniquity has been pardoned. For she has received from the hand of the LORD double for all her sins."

A voice of one calling:

"Prepare the way for the LORD in the wilderness; make a straight highway for our God in the desert. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill made low; the uneven ground will become smooth, and the rugged land a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all humanity together will see it." For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

A voice says, “Cry out!” And I asked, “What should I cry out?” “All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall when the breath of the LORD blows on them; indeed, the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.”
Go up on a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news. Raise your voice loudly, O Jerusalem, herald of good news. Lift it up, do not be afraid! Say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!” Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might, and His arm establishes His rule. His reward is with Him, and His recompense accompanies Him. He tends His flock like a shepherd; He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart. He gently leads the nursing ewes. Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or marked off the heavens with the span of his hand? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on a scale and the hills with a balance? Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or informed Him as His counselor? Whom did He consult to enlighten Him, and who taught Him the paths of justice? Who imparted knowledge to Him and showed Him the way of understanding? Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are considered a speck of dust on the scales; He lifts up the islands like fine dust. Lebanon is not sufficient for fuel, nor its animals enough for a burnt offering. All the nations are as nothing before Him; He regards them as nothingness and emptiness. To whom will you liken God? To what image will you compare Him? To an idol that a craftsman casts and a metalworker overlays with gold and fits with silver chains? One lacking such an offering chooses wood that will not rot. He seeks a skilled craftsman to set up an idol that will not topple. Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood since the foundation of the earth? He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth; its dwellers are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. He brings the princes to nothing and makes the rulers of the earth meaningless. No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner have their stems taken root in the ground, than He blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like stubble. “To whom will you liken Me, or who is My equal?” asks the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high: Who created all these? He leads forth the starry host by number; He calls each one by name. Because of His great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing. Why do you say, O Jacob, and why do you assert, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the LORD, and my claim is ignored by my God”? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary; His understanding is beyond searching out. He gives power to the faint and increases the strength of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall. But those who wait upon the LORD will renew their strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not faint.
“Be silent before Me, O islands, and let the peoples renew their strength. Let them come forward and testify; let us together draw near for judgment. Who has aroused one from the east and called him to his feet in righteousness? He hands nations over to him and subdues kings before him. He turns them to dust with his sword, to windblown chaff with his bow. He pursues them, going on safely, hardly touching the path with his feet. Who has performed this and carried it out, calling forth the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD — the first and the last— I am He.” The islands see and fear; the ends of the earth tremble. They approach and come forward. Each one helps the other and says to his brother, “Be strong!” The craftsman encourages the goldsmith, and he who wields the hammer cheers him who strikes the anvil, saying of the welding, “It is good.” He nails it down so it will not be toppled. “But you, O Israel, My servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, descendant of Abraham My friend— I brought you from the ends of the earth and called you from its farthest corners. I said, ‘You are My servant.’ I have chosen and not rejected you. Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will surely help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. Behold, all who rage against you will be ashamed and disgraced; those who contend with you will be reduced to nothing and will perish. You will seek them but will not find them. Those who wage war against you will come to nothing. For I am the LORD your God, who takes hold of your right hand and tells you: Do not fear, I will help you. Do not fear, O Jacob, you worm, O few men of Israel. I will help you,” declares the LORD. “Your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make you into a threshing sledge, new and sharp, with many teeth. You will thresh the mountains and crush them, and reduce the hills to chaff. You will winnow them, and a wind will carry them away; a gale will scatter them. But you will rejoice in the LORD; you will glory in the Holy One of Israel. The poor and needy seek water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. I, the LORD, will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers on the barren heights, and fountains in the middle of the valleys. I will turn the desert into a pool of

water, and the dry land into flowing springs. I will plant cedars in the wilderness, acacias, myrtles, and olive trees. I will set cypresses in the desert, elms and boxwood together, so that all may see and know, may consider and understand, that the hand of the LORD has done this and the Holy One of Israel has created it."
"Present your case," says the LORD. "Submit your arguments," says the King of Jacob. "Let them come and tell us what will happen. Tell the former things, so that we may reflect on them and know the outcome. Or announce to us what is coming. Tell us the things that are to come, so that we may know that you are gods. Yes, do something good or evil, that we may look on together in dismay. Behold, you are nothing and your work is of no value. Anyone who chooses you is detestable. I have raised up one from the north, and he has come — one from the east who calls on My name. He will march over rulers as if they were mortar, like a potter who treads the clay. Who has declared this from the beginning, so that we may know, and from times past, so that we may say: 'He was right'? No one announced it, no one foretold it, no one heard your words. I was the first to tell Zion: 'Look, here they are!' And I gave to Jerusalem a herald of good news. When I look, there is no one; there is no counselor among them; when I ask them, they have nothing to say. See, they are all a delusion; their works amount to nothing; their images are as empty as the wind."
"Here is My Servant, whom I uphold, My Chosen One, in whom My soul delights. I will put My Spirit on Him, and He will bring justice to the nations. He will not cry out or raise His voice, nor make His voice heard in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break and a smoldering wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow weak or discouraged before He has established justice on the earth. In His law the islands will put their hope." This is what God the LORD says — He who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and its offspring, who gives breath to the people on it and life to those who walk in it: "I, the LORD, have called you for a righteous purpose, and I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and appoint you to be a covenant for the people and a light to the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring prisoners out of the dungeon and those sitting in darkness out from the prison house. I am the LORD; that is My name! I will not yield My glory to another or My praise to idols. Behold, the former things have happened, and now I declare new things. Before they spring forth I proclaim them to you."
Sing to the LORD a new song— His praise from the ends of the earth— you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, you islands, and all who dwell in them. Let the desert and its cities raise their voices; let the villages of Kedar cry aloud. Let the people of Sela sing for joy; let them cry out from the mountaintops. Let them give glory to the LORD and declare His praise in the islands. The LORD goes forth like a mighty one; He stirs up His zeal like a warrior. He shouts; yes, He roars in triumph over His enemies: "I have kept silent from ages past; I have remained quiet and restrained. But now I will groan like a woman in labor; I will at once gasp and pant. I will lay waste the mountains and hills and dry up all their vegetation. I will turn the rivers into dry land and drain the marshes. I will lead the blind by a way they did not know; I will guide them on unfamiliar paths. I will turn darkness into light before them and rough places into level ground. These things I will do for them, and I will not forsake them. But those who trust in idols and say to molten images, 'You are our gods!' will be turned back in utter shame.
Listen, you deaf ones; look, you blind ones, that you may see! Who is blind but My servant, or deaf like the messenger I am sending? Who is blind like My covenant partner, or blind like the servant of the LORD? Though seeing many things, you do not keep watch. Though your ears are open, you do not hear." The LORD was pleased, for the sake of His righteousness, to magnify His law and make it glorious. But this is a people plundered and looted, all trapped in caves or imprisoned in dungeons. They have become plunder with no one to rescue them, and loot with no one to say, "Send them back!" Who among you will pay attention to this? Who will listen and obey hereafter? Who gave Jacob up for spoil, and Israel to the plunderers? Was it not the LORD, against whom we have sinned? They were unwilling to walk in His ways, and they would not obey His law. So He poured out on them His furious anger and the fierceness of battle. It enveloped them in flames, but they did not understand; it consumed them, but they did not take it to heart.
But now, this is what the LORD says— He who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine! When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you go through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your place. Because you are precious and honored in My sight, and because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you and nations in place of your life. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the

south, ‘Do not hold them back!’ Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth— everyone called by My name and created for My glory, whom I have indeed formed and made.” Bring out a people who have eyes but are blind, and who have ears but are deaf. All the nations gather together and the peoples assemble. Who among them can declare this, and proclaim to us the former things? Let them present their witnesses to vindicate them, so that others may hear and say, “It is true.” “You are My witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and My servant whom I have chosen, so that you may consider and believe Me and understand that I am He. Before Me no god was formed, and after Me none will come. I, yes I, am the LORD, and there is no Savior but Me. I alone decreed and saved and proclaimed— I, and not some foreign god among you. So you are My witnesses,” declares the LORD, “that I am God. Even from eternity I am He, and none can deliver out of My hand. When I act, who can reverse it?”

Thus says the LORD your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “For your sake, I will send to Babylon and bring them all as fugitives, even the Chaldeans, in the ships in which they rejoice. I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, and your King.” Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea and a path through the surging waters, who brings out the chariots and horses, the armies and warriors together, to lie down, never to rise again; to be extinguished, snuffed out like a wick: “Do not call to mind the former things; pay no attention to the things of old. Behold, I am about to do something new; even now it is coming. Do you not see it? Indeed, I will make a way in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The beasts of the field will honor Me, the jackals and the ostriches, because I provide water in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My chosen people. The people I formed for Myself will declare My praise.

But you have not called on Me, O Jacob, because you have grown weary of Me, O Israel. You have not brought Me sheep for burnt offerings, nor honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with offerings, nor wearied you with frankincense. You have not bought Me sweet cane with your silver, nor satisfied Me with the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened Me with your sins; you have wearied Me with your iniquities. I, yes I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake and remembers your sins no more. Remind Me, let us argue the matter together. State your case, so that you may be vindicated. Your first father sinned, and your spokesmen rebelled against Me. So I will disgrace the princes of your sanctuary, and I will devote Jacob to destruction and Israel to reproach.”

But now listen, O Jacob My servant, Israel, whom I have chosen. This is the word of the LORD, your Maker, who formed you from the womb and who will help you: “Do not be afraid, O Jacob My servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and currents on the dry ground. I will pour out My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring. They will sprout among the grass like willows by flowing streams. One will say, ‘I belong to the LORD,’ another will call himself by the name of Jacob, and still another will write on his hand, ‘The LORD’s,’ and will take the name of Israel.” Thus says the LORD, the King and Redeemer of Israel, the LORD of Hosts: “I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God but Me. Who then is like Me? Let him say so! Let him declare his case before Me, since I established an ancient people. Let him foretell the things to come, and what is to take place. Do not tremble or fear. Have I not told you and declared it long ago? You are My witnesses! Is there any God but Me? There is no other Rock; I know not one.”

All makers of idols are nothing, and the things they treasure are worthless. Their witnesses fail to see or comprehend, so they are put to shame. Who fashions a god or casts an idol which profits him nothing? Behold, all his companions will be put to shame, for the craftsmen themselves are only human. Let them all assemble and take their stand; they will all be brought to terror and shame. The blacksmith takes a tool and labors over the coals; he fashions an idol with hammers and forges it with his strong arms. Yet he grows hungry and loses his strength; he fails to drink water and grows faint. The woodworker extends a measuring line; he marks it out with a stylus; he shapes it with chisels and outlines it with a compass. He fashions it in the likeness of man, like man in all his glory, that it may dwell in a shrine. He cuts down cedars or retrieves a cypress or oak. He lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a laurel, and the rain makes it grow. It serves as fuel for man. He takes some of it to warm himself, and he kindles a fire and bakes his bread. He also fashions it into a god and worships it; he makes an idol and bows down to it. He burns half of it in the fire, and he roasts meat on that half. He eats the roast and is satisfied. Indeed, he warms himself and says, “Ah! I am warm; I see the fire.” From the rest he makes a god, his graven image. He bows down to it and worships; he prays to it and says, “Save me, for you are my god.” They do not comprehend or discern, for He has shut their eyes so they cannot see and closed their minds so they cannot understand. And no one considers in his heart, no one has the knowledge or insight to say, “I burned half of it in the fire, and I baked bread on its coals; I roasted meat and I

ate. Shall I make something detestable with the rest of it? Shall I bow down to a block of wood?" He feeds on ashes. His deluded heart has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, "Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?"
Remember these things, O Jacob, for you are My servant, O Israel. I have made you, and you are My servant; O Israel, I will never forget you. I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud, and your sins like a mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you. Sing for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done this; shout aloud, O depths of the earth. Break forth in song, O mountains, you forests and all your trees. For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and revealed His glory in Israel. Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer who formed you from the womb: "I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who by Myself spread out the earth, who foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners, who confounds the wise and turns their knowledge into nonsense, who confirms the message of His servant and fulfills the counsel of His messengers, who says of Jerusalem, 'She will be inhabited,' and of the cities of Judah, 'They will be rebuilt, and I will restore their ruins,' who says to the depths of the sea, 'Be dry, and I will dry up your currents,' who says of Cyrus, 'My shepherd will fulfill all that I desire,' who says of Jerusalem, 'She will be rebuilt,' and of the temple, 'Let its foundation be laid.'"
This is what the LORD says to Cyrus His anointed, whose right hand I have grasped to subdue nations before him, to disarm kings, to open the doors before him, so that the gates will not be shut: "I will go before you and level the mountains; I will break down the gates of bronze and cut through the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness and the riches hidden in secret places, so that you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you by name. For the sake of Jacob My servant and Israel My chosen one, I call you by name; I have given you a title of honor, though you have not known Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no God but Me. I will equip you for battle, though you have not known Me, so that all may know, from where the sun rises to where it sets, that there is none but Me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form the light and create the darkness; I bring prosperity and create calamity. I, the LORD, do all these things. Drip down, O heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness. Let the earth open up that salvation may sprout and righteousness spring up with it; I, the LORD, have created it. Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker— one clay pot among many. Does the clay ask the potter, 'What are you making?' Does your work say, 'He has no hands'? Woe to him who says to his father, 'What have you begotten?' or to his mother, 'What have you brought forth?'" Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker: "Concerning things to come, do you question Me about My sons, or instruct Me in the work of My hands? It is I who made the earth and created man upon it. It was My hands that stretched out the heavens, and I ordained all their host. I will raise up Cyrus in righteousness, and I will make all his ways straight. He will rebuild My city and set My exiles free, but not for payment or reward, says the LORD of Hosts."
This is what the LORD says:
"The products of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, along with the Sabeans, men of stature, will come over to you and will be yours; they will trudge behind you; they will come over in chains and bow down to you. They will confess to you: 'God is indeed with you, and there is no other; there is no other God.'" Truly You are a God who hides Himself, O God of Israel, the Savior. They will all be put to shame and humiliated; the makers of idols will depart together in disgrace. But Israel will be saved by the LORD with an everlasting salvation; you will not be put to shame or humiliated, to ages everlasting. For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens— He is God; He formed the earth and fashioned it; He established it; He did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited: "I am the LORD, and there is no other. I have not spoken in secret, from a place in a land of darkness. I did not say to the descendants of Jacob, 'Seek Me in a wasteland.' I, the LORD, speak the truth; I say what is right. Come, gather together, and draw near, you fugitives from the nations. Ignorant are those who carry idols of wood and pray to a god that cannot save. Speak up and present your case— yes, let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago? Who announced it from ancient times? Was it not I, the LORD? There is no other God but Me, a righteous God and Savior; there is none but Me. Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By Myself I have sworn; truth has gone out from My mouth, a word that will not be revoked: Every knee will bow before Me, every tongue will swear allegiance. Surely they will say of Me, 'In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.'" All who rage against Him will come to Him and be put to shame. In the LORD all descendants of Israel will be justified and will exult.
Bel crouches; Nebo cowers. Their idols weigh down beasts and cattle. The images you carry are burdensome, a load to the weary animal. The gods cower; they crouch together, unable to relieve the burden; but they themselves go into captivity. "Listen to Me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been sustained from the womb, carried

along since birth. Even to your old age, I will be the same, and I will bear you up when you turn gray. I have made you, and I will carry you; I will sustain you and deliver you. To whom will you liken Me or count Me equal? To whom will you compare Me, that we should be alike? They pour out their bags of gold and weigh out silver on scales; they hire a goldsmith to fashion it into a god, so they can bow down and worship. They lift it to their shoulder and carry it along; they set it in its place, and there it stands, not budging from that spot. They cry out to it, but it does not answer; it saves no one from his troubles. Remember this and be brave; take it to heart, you transgressors! Remember what happened long ago, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me. I declare the end from the beginning, and from ancient times what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and all My good pleasure I will accomplish.' I summon a bird of prey from the east, a man for My purpose from a far-off land. Truly I have spoken, and truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, and I will surely do it. Listen to Me, you stubborn people, far removed from righteousness: I am bringing My righteousness near; it is not far away, and My salvation will not be delayed. I will grant salvation to Zion and adorn Israel with My splendor."

"Go down and sit in the dust, O Virgin Daughter of Babylon. Sit on the ground without a throne, O Daughter of the Chaldeans! For you will no longer be called tender or delicate. Take millstones and grind flour; remove your veil; strip off your skirt, bare your thigh, and wade through the streams. Your nakedness will be uncovered and your shame will be exposed. I will take vengeance; I will spare no one." Our Redeemer — the LORD of Hosts is His name — is the Holy One of Israel. "Sit in silence and go into darkness, O Daughter of the Chaldeans. For you will no longer be called the queen of kingdoms. I was angry with My people; I profaned My heritage, and I placed them under your control. You showed them no mercy; even on the elderly you laid a most heavy yoke. You said, 'I will be queen forever.' You did not take these things to heart or consider their outcome. So now hear this, O lover of luxury who sits securely, who says to herself, 'I am, and there is none besides me. I will never be a widow or know the loss of children.' These two things will overtake you in a moment, in a single day: loss of children, and widowhood. They will come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and the potency of your spells. You were secure in your wickedness; you said, 'No one sees me.' Your wisdom and knowledge led you astray; you told yourself, 'I am, and there is none besides me.' But disaster will come upon you; you will not know how to charm it away. A calamity will befall you that you will be unable to ward off. Devastation will happen to you suddenly and unexpectedly. So take your stand with your spells and with your many sorceries, with which you have wearied yourself from your youth. Perhaps you will succeed; perhaps you will inspire terror! You are wearied by your many counselors; let them come forward now and save you— your astrologers who observe the stars, who monthly predict your fate. Surely they are like stubble; the fire will burn them up. They cannot deliver themselves from the power of the flame. There will be no coals to warm them or fire to sit beside. This is what they are to you — those with whom you have labored and traded from youth— each one strays in his own direction; not one of them can save you."

"Listen to this, O house of Jacob, you who are called by the name of Israel, who have descended from the line of Judah, who swear by the name of the LORD, who invoke the God of Israel — but not in truth or righteousness — who indeed call yourselves after the holy city and lean on the God of Israel; the LORD of Hosts is His name. I foretold the former things long ago; they came out of My mouth and I proclaimed them. Suddenly I acted, and they came to pass. For I knew that you are stubborn; your neck is iron and your forehead is bronze. Therefore I declared it to you long ago; I announced it before it came to pass, so that you could not claim, 'My idol has done this; my carved image and molten god has ordained it.' You have heard these things; look at them all. Will you not acknowledge them? From now on I will tell you of new things, hidden things unknown to you. They are created now, and not long ago; you have not heard of them before today. So you cannot claim, 'I already knew them!' You have never heard; you have never understood; for a long time your ears have not been open. For I knew how deceitful you are; you have been called a rebel from birth. For the sake of My name I will delay My wrath; for the sake of My praise I will restrain it, so that you will not be cut off. See, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. For My own sake, My very own sake, I will act; for how can I let Myself be defamed? I will not yield My glory to another.

Listen to Me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I have called: I am He; I am the first, and I am the last. Surely My own hand founded the earth, and My right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they stand up together. Come together, all of you, and listen: Which of the idols has foretold these things? The LORD's chosen ally will carry out His desire against Babylon, and His arm will be against the Chaldeans. I, even I, have spoken; yes, I have called him. I have brought him, and he will succeed in his mission. Come near to Me and listen to this: From the beginning I have not

spoken in secret; from the time it happened, I was there." And now the Lord GOD has sent me, accompanied by His Spirit. Thus says the LORD your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you for your benefit, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to My commandments, your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like waves of the sea. Your descendants would have been as countless as the sand, and your offspring as numerous as its grains; their name would never be cut off or eliminated from My presence." Leave Babylon! Flee from the Chaldeans! Declare it with a shout of joy, proclaim it, let it go out to the ends of the earth, saying, "The LORD has redeemed His servant Jacob!" They did not thirst when He led them through the deserts; He made water flow for them from the rock; He split the rock, and water gushed out. "There is no peace," says the LORD, "for the wicked."

Listen to Me, O islands; pay attention, O distant peoples: The LORD called Me from the womb; from the body of My mother He named Me. He made My mouth like a sharp sword; He hid Me in the shadow of His hand. He made Me like a polished arrow; He hid Me in His quiver. He said to Me, "You are My Servant, Israel, in whom I will display My glory." But I said, "I have labored in vain, I have spent My strength in futility and vanity; yet My vindication is with the LORD, and My reward is with My God." And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, that Israel might be gathered to Him— for I am honored in the sight of the LORD, and My God is My strength— He says: "It is not enough for You to be My Servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the protected ones of Israel. I will also make You a light for the nations, to bring My salvation to the ends of the earth." Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel, to Him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the Servant of rulers: "Kings will see You and rise, and princes will bow down, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen You."

This is what the LORD says:

"In the time of favor I will answer You, and in the day of salvation I will help You; I will keep You and appoint You to be a covenant for the people, to restore the land, to apportion its desolate inheritances, to say to the prisoners, 'Come out,' and to those in darkness, 'Show yourselves.' They will feed along the pathways, and find pasture on every barren hill. They will not hunger or thirst, nor will scorching heat or sun beat down on them. For He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water. I will turn all My mountains into roads, and My highways will be raised up. Behold, they will come from far away, from the north and from the west, and from the land of Aswan." Shout for joy, O heavens; rejoice, O earth; break forth in song, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted His people, and He will have compassion on His afflicted ones. But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me; the Lord has forgotten me!" "Can a woman forget her nursing child, or lack compassion for the son of her womb? Even if she could forget, I will not forget you! Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; your walls are ever before Me. Your builders hasten back; your destroyers and wreckers depart from you. Lift up your eyes and look around. They all gather together; they come to you. As surely as I live," declares the LORD, "you will wear them all as jewelry and put them on like a bride. For your ruined and desolate places and your ravaged land will now indeed be too small for your people, and those who devoured you will be far away. Yet the children of your bereavement will say in your hearing, 'This place is too small for us; make room for us to live here.' Then you will say in your heart, 'Who has begotten these for me? I was bereaved and barren; I was exiled and rejected. So who has reared them? Look, I was left all alone, so where did they come from?'"

This is what the Lord GOD says:

"Behold, I will lift up My hand to the nations, and raise My banner to the peoples. They will bring your sons in their arms and carry your daughters on their shoulders. Kings will be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. They will bow to you face-down and lick the dust at your feet. Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who hope in Me will never be put to shame." Can the plunder be snatched from the mighty, or the captives of a tyrant be delivered?

Indeed, this is what the LORD says:

"Even the captives of the mighty will be taken away, and the plunder of the tyrant will be retrieved; I will contend with those who contend with you, and I will save your children. I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh; they will be drunk on their own blood, as with wine. Then all mankind will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."

This is what the LORD says:

"Where is your mother's certificate of divorce with which I sent her away? Or to which of My creditors did I sell you? Look, you were sold for your iniquities, and for your transgressions your mother was sent away. Why was no one there when I arrived? Why did no one answer when I called? Is My hand too short to redeem you? Or do I lack the strength to deliver you? Behold, My rebuke dries up the sea; I turn the rivers into a desert; the fish rot for lack of

water and die of thirst. I clothe the heavens in black and make sackcloth their covering."
The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of discipleship, to sustain the weary with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning; He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. The Lord GOD has opened My ears, and I have not been rebellious, nor have I turned back. I offered My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who tore out My beard. I did not hide My face from scorn and spittle. Because the Lord GOD helps Me, I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set My face like flint, and I know that I will not be put to shame. The One who vindicates Me is near. Who will dare to contend with Me? Let us confront each other! Who has a case against Me? Let him approach Me! Surely the Lord GOD helps Me. Who is there to condemn Me? See, they will all wear out like a garment; the moths will devour them. Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of His Servant? Who among you walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD; let him lean on his God. Behold, all you who kindle a fire, who array yourselves with firebrands, walk in the light of your fire and of the firebrands you have lit! This is what you will receive from My hand: You will lie down in a place of torment.
"Listen to Me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were cut, and to the quarry from which you were hewn. Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who gave you birth. When I called him, he was but one; then I blessed him and multiplied him. For the LORD will comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; He will make her wilderness like Eden and her desert like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and melodious song. Pay attention to Me, My people, and listen to Me, My nation; for a law will go out from Me, and My justice will become a light to the nations; I will bring it about quickly. My righteousness draws near, My salvation is on the way, and My arms will bring justice to the nations. The islands will look for Me and wait in hope for My arm. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth below; for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and its people will die like gnats. But My salvation will last forever, and My righteousness will never fail. Listen to Me, you who know what is right, you people with My law in your hearts: Do not fear the scorn of men; do not be broken by their insults. For the moth will devour them like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool. But My righteousness will last forever, My salvation through all generations." Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD. Wake up as in days past, as in generations of old. Was it not You who cut Rahab to pieces, who pierced through the dragon? Was it not You who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made a road in the depths of the sea for the redeemed to cross over? So the redeemed of the LORD will return and enter Zion with singing, crowned with everlasting joy. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee. "I, even I, am He who comforts you. Why should you be afraid of mortal man, of a son of man who withers like grass? But you have forgotten the LORD, your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth. You live in terror all day long because of the fury of the oppressor who is bent on destruction. But where is the fury of the oppressor? The captive will soon be freed; he will not die in the dungeon, and his bread will not be lacking. For I am the LORD your God who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar— the LORD of Hosts is His name. I have put My words in your mouth, and covered you with the shadow of My hand, to establish the heavens, to found the earth, and to say to Zion, 'You are My people.'"
Awake, awake! Rise up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD the cup of His fury; you who have drained the goblet to the dregs — the cup that makes men stagger. Among all the sons she bore, there is no one to guide her; among all the sons she brought up, there is no one to take her hand. These pairs have befallen you: devastation and destruction, famine and sword. Who will grieve for you? Who can comfort you? Your sons have fainted; they lie at the head of every street, like an antelope in a net. They are full of the wrath of the LORD, the rebuke of your God. Therefore now hear this, you afflicted one, drunken, but not with wine. Thus says your Lord, the LORD, even your God, who defends His people: "See, I have removed from your hand the cup of staggering. From that goblet, the cup of My fury, you will never drink again. I will place it in the hands of your tormentors, who told you: 'Lie down, so we can walk over you,' so that you made your back like the ground, like a street to be traversed."
Awake, awake, clothe yourself with strength, O Zion! Put on your garments of splendor, O Jerusalem, holy city! For the uncircumcised and unclean will no longer enter you. Shake off your dust! Rise up and sit on your throne, O Jerusalem. Remove the chains from your neck, O captive Daughter of Zion.
For this is what the LORD says:
"You were sold for nothing, and without money you will be redeemed."
For this is what the Lord GOD says:
"At first My people went down to Egypt to live, then Assyria oppressed them without cause. And now what have I here? declares the LORD. For My people have been taken without cause; those who rule them taunt, declares the LORD,

and My name is blasphemed continually all day long. Therefore My people will know My name; therefore they will know on that day that I am He who speaks. Here I am!" How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices, together they shout for joy. For every eye will see when the LORD returns to Zion. Break forth in joy, sing together, O ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted His people; He has redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD has bared His holy arm in the sight of all the nations; all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God. Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing; come out from it, purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of the LORD. For you will not leave in a hurry nor flee in haste, for the LORD goes before you, and the God of Israel is your rear guard.

Behold, My Servant will prosper; He will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Just as many were appalled at Him— His appearance was disfigured beyond that of any man, and His form was marred beyond human likeness — so He will sprinkle many nations. Kings will shut their mouths because of Him. For they will see what they have not been told, and they will understand what they have not heard.

Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no stately form or majesty to attract us, no beauty that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. Like one from whom men hide their faces, He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows; yet we considered Him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. We all like sheep have gone astray, each one has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away, and who can recount His descendants? For He was cut off from the land of the living; He was stricken for the transgression of My people.

He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in His death, although He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it was the LORD's will to crush Him and to cause Him to suffer; and when His soul is made a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. After the anguish of His soul, He will see the light of life and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the spoils with the strong, because He has poured out His life unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors. Yet He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.

"Shout for joy, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth in song and cry aloud, you who have never travailed; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband," says the LORD. "Enlarge the site of your tent, stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, do not hold back. Lengthen your ropes and drive your stakes in deep. For you will spread out to the right and left; your descendants will dispossess the nations and inhabit the desolate cities. Do not be afraid, for you will not be put to shame; do not be intimidated, for you will not be humiliated. For you will forget the shame of your youth and will remember no more the reproach of your widowhood. For your husband is your Maker — the LORD of Hosts is His name — the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; He is called the God of all the earth. For the LORD has called you back, like a wife deserted and wounded in spirit, like the rejected wife of one's youth," says your God. "For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will bring you back. In a surge of anger I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you," says the LORD your Redeemer. "For to Me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So I have sworn that I will not be angry with you or rebuke you. Though the mountains may be removed and the hills may be shaken, My loving devotion will not depart from you, and My covenant of peace will not be broken," says the LORD, who has compassion on you. "O afflicted city, lashed by storms, without solace, surely I will set your stones in antimony and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones. Then all your sons will be taught by the LORD, and great will be their prosperity. In righteousness you will be established, far from oppression, for you will have no fear. Terror will be far removed, for it will not come near you. If anyone attacks you, it is not from Me; whoever assails you will fall before you. Behold, I have created the craftsman who fans the coals into flame and forges a weapon fit for its task; and I have created the

destroyer to wreak havoc. No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their vindication is from Me," declares the LORD.

"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you without money, come, buy, and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost! Why spend money on that which is not bread, and your labor on that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of foods. Incline your ear and come to Me; listen, so that your soul may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant — My loving devotion promised to David. Behold, I have made him a witness to the nations, a leader and commander of the peoples. Surely you will summon a nation you do not know, and nations who do not know you will run to you. For the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, has bestowed glory on you." Seek the LORD while He may be found; call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked man forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that He may have compassion, and to our God, for He will freely pardon. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts. For just as rain and snow fall from heaven and do not return without watering the earth, making it bud and sprout, and providing seed to sow and food to eat, so My word that proceeds from My mouth will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish what I please, and it will prosper where I send it. You will indeed go out with joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thornbush, the cypress will grow, and instead of the brier, the myrtle will spring up; this will make a name for the LORD, an everlasting sign, never to be destroyed."

This is what the LORD says:

"Maintain justice and do what is right, for My salvation is coming soon, and My righteousness will be revealed. Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath without profaning it and keeps his hand from doing any evil." Let no foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, "The LORD will utterly exclude me from His people." And let the eunuch not say, "I am but a dry tree."

For this is what the LORD says:

"To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, who choose what pleases Me and hold fast to My covenant — I will give them, in My house and within My walls, a memorial and a name better than that of sons and daughters. I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off. And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD to minister to Him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be His servants — all who keep the Sabbath without profaning it and who hold fast to My covenant— I will bring them to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on My altar, for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations." Thus declares the Lord GOD, who gathers the dispersed of Israel: "I will gather to them still others besides those already gathered."

Come, all you beasts of the field; eat greedily, all you beasts of the forest. Israel's watchmen are blind, they are all oblivious; they are all mute dogs, they cannot bark; they are dreamers lying around, loving to slumber. Like ravenous dogs, they are never satisfied. They are shepherds with no discernment; they all turn to their own way, each one seeking his own gain: "Come, let me get the wine, let us imbibe the strong drink, and tomorrow will be like today, only far better!"

The righteous perish, and no one takes it to heart; devout men are taken away, while no one considers that the righteous are taken away from the presence of evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest, lying down in death.

"But come here, you sons of a sorceress, you offspring of adulterers and prostitutes! Whom are you mocking? At whom do you sneer and stick out your tongue? Are you not children of transgression, offspring of deceit, who burn with lust among the oaks, under every luxuriant tree, who slaughter your children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks? Your portion is among the smooth stones of the valley; indeed, they are your lot. Even to them you have poured out a drink offering and offered a grain offering. Should I relent because of these? On a high and lofty hill you have made your bed, and there you went up to offer sacrifices. Behind the door and doorpost you have set up your memorial. Forsaking Me, you uncovered your bed; you climbed up and opened it wide. And you have made a pact with those whose bed you have loved; you have gazed upon their nakedness. You went to Molech with oil and multiplied your perfumes. You have sent your envoys a great distance; you have descended even to Sheol itself. You are wearied by your many journeys, but you did not say, "There is no hope!" You found renewal of your strength; therefore you did not grow weak. Whom have you dreaded and feared, so that you lied and failed to remember Me or take this to heart? Is it not because I have long been silent that you do not fear Me? I will expose your righteousness and your works,

and they will not profit you. When you cry out,
let your companies of idols deliver you! Yet the
wind will carry off all of them, a breath will
take them away. But he who seeks refuge in
Me will inherit the land and possess My holy
mountain."
And it will be said,
"Build it up, build it up, prepare the way, take
every obstacle out of the way of My people."
For thus says the One who is high and lifted up,
who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I
dwell in a high and holy place, and with the
oppressed and humble in spirit, to restore the
spirit of the lowly and revive the heart of the
contrite. For I will not accuse you forever, nor
will I always be angry; for then the spirit of
man would grow weak before Me— the breath
of life I have made. I was enraged by his sinful
greed, so I struck him and hid My face in anger;
yet he kept turning back to the desires of his
heart. I have seen his ways, but I will heal him;
I will guide him and restore comfort to him
and his mourners, bringing praise to their lips.
Peace, peace to those far and near," says the
LORD, "and I will heal them." But the wicked
are like the storm-tossed sea, for it cannot be
still, and its waves churn up mire and muck.
"There is no peace," says my God, "for the
wicked."
"Cry aloud, do not hold back! Raise your voice
like a ram's horn. Declare to My people their
transgression and to the house of Jacob their
sins. For day after day they seek Me and delight
to know My ways, like a nation that does what
is right and does not forsake the justice of their
God. They ask Me for righteous judgments;
they delight in the nearness of God." "Why
have we fasted, and You have not seen? Why
have we humbled ourselves, and You have not
noticed?" "Behold, on the day of your fast, you
do as you please, and you oppress all your
workers. You fast with contention and strife to
strike viciously with your fist. You cannot fast
as you do today and have your voice be heard
on high. Is this the fast I have chosen: a day for
a man to deny himself, to bow his head like a
reed, and to spread out sackcloth and ashes?
Will you call this a fast and a day acceptable to
the LORD? Isn't this the fast that I have chosen:
to break the chains of wickedness, to untie the
cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free
and tear off every yoke? Isn't it to share your
bread with the hungry, to bring the poor and
homeless into your home, to clothe the naked
when you see him, and not to turn away from
your own flesh and blood? Then your light will
break forth like the dawn, and your healing
will come quickly. Your righteousness will go
before you, and the glory of the LORD will be
your rear guard. Then you will call, and the
LORD will answer; you will cry out, and He
will say, 'Here I am.' If you remove the yoke
from your midst, the pointing of the finger
and malicious talk, and if you give yourself to
the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then
your light will go forth in the darkness, and
your night will be like noonday. The LORD
will always guide you; He will satisfy you in a
sun-scorched land and strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden, like a
spring whose waters never fail. Your people
will rebuild the ancient ruins; you will restore
the age-old foundations; you will be called Re-
pairer of the Breach, Restorer of the Streets of
Dwelling. If you turn your foot from breaking
the Sabbath, from doing as you please on My
holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight, and
the LORD's holy day honorable, if you honor
it by not going your own way or seeking your
own pleasure or speaking idle words, then
you will delight yourself in the LORD, and I
will make you ride on the heights of the land
and feed you with the heritage of your father
Jacob." For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.
Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short
to save, nor His ear too dull to hear. But your
iniquities have built barriers between you and
your God, and your sins have hidden His face
from you, so that He does not hear. For your
hands are stained with blood, and your fingers
with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, and
your tongue mutters injustice. No one calls
for justice; no one pleads his case honestly.
They rely on empty pleas; they tell lies; they
conceive mischief and give birth to iniquity.
They hatch the eggs of vipers and weave a
spider's web. Whoever eats their eggs will
die; crack one open, and a viper is hatched.
Their cobwebs cannot be made into clothing,
and they cannot cover themselves with their
works. Their deeds are sinful deeds, and acts
of violence are in their hands. Their feet run
to evil; they are swift to shed innocent blood.
Their thoughts are sinful thoughts; ruin and
destruction lie in their wake. The way of peace
they have not known, and there is no justice
in their tracks. They have turned them into
crooked paths; no one who treads on them will
know peace. Therefore justice is far from us,
and righteousness does not reach us. We hope
for light, but there is darkness; for brightness,
but we walk in gloom. Like the blind, we feel
our way along the wall, groping like those
without eyes. We stumble at midday as in the
twilight; among the vigorous we are like the
dead. We all growl like bears and moan like
doves. We hope for justice, but find none, for
salvation, but it is far from us. For our trans-
gressions are multiplied before You, and our
sins testify against us. Our transgressions are
indeed with us, and we know our iniquities:
rebelling and denying the LORD, turning away
from our God, speaking oppression and revolt,
conceiving and uttering lies from the heart.
So justice is turned away, and righteousness
stands at a distance. For truth has stumbled in

the public square, and honesty cannot enter.
Truth is missing, and whoever turns from
evil becomes prey. The LORD looked and was
displeased that there was no justice. He saw
that there was no man; He was amazed that
there was no one to intercede. So His own arm
brought salvation, and His own righteousness
sustained Him. He put on righteousness like a
breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on His
head; He put on garments of vengeance and
wrapped Himself in a cloak of zeal.
So He will repay according to their deeds: fury
to His enemies, retribution to His foes, and
recompense to the islands. So shall they fear
the name of the LORD where the sun sets, and
His glory where it rises. For He will come like a
raging flood, driven by the breath of the LORD.
"The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in
Jacob who turn from transgression," declares
the LORD.

"As for Me, this is My covenant with them," says the LORD. "My Spirit will not depart from you, and My words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth or from the mouths of your children and grandchildren, from now on and forevermore," says the LORD.

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the
glory of the LORD rises upon you. For behold,
darkness covers the earth, and thick darkness
is over the peoples; but the LORD will rise
upon you, and His glory will appear over you.
Nations will come to your light, and kings to
the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes
and look around: They all gather and come
to you; your sons will come from afar, and
your daughters will be carried on the arm.
Then you will look and be radiant, and your
heart will tremble and swell with joy, because
the riches of the sea will be brought to you,
and the wealth of the nations will come to
you. Caravans of camels will cover your land,
young camels of Midian and Ephah, and all
from Sheba will come, bearing gold and frank-
incense and proclaiming the praises of the
LORD. All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered
to you; the rams of Nebaioth will serve you
and go up on My altar with acceptance; I will
adorn My glorious house. Who are these who
fly like clouds, like doves to their shelters?
Surely the islands will wait for Me, with the
ships of Tarshish in the lead, to bring your
children from afar, with their silver and gold,
to the honor of the LORD your God, the Holy
One of Israel, for He has glorified you. Foreign-
ers will rebuild your walls, and their kings will
serve you. Although I struck you in anger, yet
in favor I will show you mercy. Your gates will
always stand open; they will never be shut, day
or night, so that the wealth of the nations may
be brought into you, with their kings being led
in procession. For the nation or kingdom that
will not serve you will perish; it will be utterly
destroyed. The glory of Lebanon will come to
you— its cypress, elm, and boxwood together
— to adorn the place of My sanctuary, and I will
glorify the place of My feet. The sons of your
oppressors will come and bow down to you;
all who reviled you will fall facedown at your
feet and call you the City of the LORD, Zion of
the Holy One of Israel. Whereas you have been
forsaken and despised, with no one passing
through, I will make you an everlasting pride,
a joy from age to age. You will drink the milk
of nations and nurse at the breasts of royalty;
you will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior
and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.
Instead of bronze I will bring you gold; I will
bring silver in place of iron, bronze instead of
wood, and iron instead of stones. I will appoint
peace as your governor and righteousness as
your ruler. No longer will violence be heard in
your land, nor ruin or destruction within your
borders. But you will name your walls Salva-
tion and your gates Praise. No longer will the
sun be your light by day, nor the brightness of
the moon shine on your night; for the LORD
will be your everlasting light, and your God
will be your splendor. Your sun will no longer
set, and your moon will not wane; for the LORD
will be your everlasting light, and the days of
your sorrow will cease. Then all your people
will be righteous; they will possess the land for-
ever; they are the branch of My planting, the
work of My hands, so that I may be glorified.
The least of you will become a thousand, and
the smallest a mighty nation. I am the LORD; in
its time I will accomplish it quickly.
The Spirit of the Lord GOD is on Me, because
the LORD has anointed Me to preach good
news to the poor. He has sent Me to bind up the
brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the cap-
tives and freedom to the prisoners, to proclaim
the year of the LORD's favor and the day of our
God's vengeance, to comfort all who mourn, to
console the mourners in Zion — to give them
a crown of beauty for ashes, the oil of joy
for mourning, and a garment of praise for a
spirit of despair. So they will be called oaks of
righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that
He may be glorified. They will rebuild the an-
cient ruins; they will restore the places long
devastated; they will renew the ruined cities,
the desolations of many generations. Strangers
will stand and feed your flocks, and foreigners
will be your plowmen and vinedressers. But
you will be called the priests of the LORD; they
will speak of you as ministers of our God; you
will feed on the wealth of nations, and you
will boast in their riches. Instead of shame, My
people will have a double portion, and instead
of humiliation, they will rejoice in their share;
and so they will inherit a double portion in
their land, and everlasting joy will be theirs.
For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and
iniquity; in My faithfulness I will give them
their recompense and make an everlasting

covenant with them. Their descendants will be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the LORD has blessed. I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, my soul will exult in my God; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation and wrapped me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom wears a priestly headdress, as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its growth, and as a garden enables seed to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.
For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep still, until her righteousness shines like a bright light, her salvation like a blazing torch. Nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow. You will be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, a royal diadem in the palm of your God. No longer will you be called Forsaken, nor your land named Desolate; but you will be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the LORD will take delight in you, and your land will be His bride. For as a young man marries a young woman, so your sons will marry you; and as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so your God will rejoice over you. On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have posted watchmen; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD shall take no rest for yourselves, nor give Him any rest until He establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth. The LORD has sworn by His right hand and by His mighty arm: "Never again will I give your grain to your enemies for food, nor will foreigners drink the new wine for which you have toiled. For those who harvest grain will eat it and praise the LORD, and those who gather grapes will drink the wine in My holy courts." Go out, go out through the gates; prepare the way for the people! Build it up, build up the highway; clear away the stones; raise a banner for the nations! Behold, the LORD has proclaimed to the ends of the earth, "Say to Daughter Zion: See, your Savior comes! Look, His reward is with Him, and His recompense goes before Him." And they will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of The LORD; and you will be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.
Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah with crimson-stained garments? Who is this robed in splendor, marching in the greatness of His strength? "It is I, proclaiming vindication, mighty to save." Why are Your clothes red, and Your garments like one who treads the winepress? "I have trodden the winepress alone, and no one from the nations was with Me. I trampled them in My anger and trod them down in My fury; their blood spattered My garments, and all My clothes were stained. For the day of vengeance was in My heart, and the year of My redemption had come. I looked, but there was no one to help; I was appalled that no one assisted. So My arm brought Me salvation, and My own wrath upheld Me. I trampled the nations in My anger; in My wrath I made them drunk and poured out their blood on the ground."
I will make known the LORD's loving devotion and His praiseworthy acts, because of all that the LORD has done for us— the many good things for the house of Israel according to His great compassion and loving devotion. For He said, "They are surely My people, sons who will not be disloyal." So He became their Savior. In all their distress, He too was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them. In His love and compassion He redeemed them; He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit. So He turned and became their enemy, and He Himself fought against them. Then His people remembered the days of old, the days of Moses. Where is He who brought them through the sea with the shepherds of His flock? Where is the One who set His Holy Spirit among them, who sent His glorious arm to lead them by the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to gain for Himself everlasting renown, who led them through the depths like a horse in the wilderness, so that they did not stumble? Like cattle going down to the valley, the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest. You led Your people this way to make for Yourself a glorious name.
Look down from heaven and see, from Your holy and glorious habitation. Where are Your zeal and might? Your yearning and compassion for me are restrained. Yet You are our Father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us. You, O LORD, are our Father; our Redeemer from Everlasting is Your name. Why, O LORD, do You make us stray from Your ways and harden our hearts from fearing You? Return, for the sake of Your servants, the tribes of Your heritage. For a short while Your people possessed Your holy place, but our enemies have trampled Your sanctuary. We have become like those You never ruled, like those not called by Your name.
If only You would rend the heavens and come down, so that mountains would quake at Your presence, as fire kindles the brushwood and causes the water to boil, to make Your name known to Your enemies, so that the nations will tremble at Your presence! When You did awesome works that we did not expect, You came down, and the mountains trembled at Your presence. From ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides You, who acts on behalf of those who wait for Him. You welcome those

who gladly do right, who remember Your ways. Surely You were angry, for we sinned. How can we be saved if we remain in our sins? Each of us has become like something unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all wither like a leaf, and our iniquities carry us away like the wind. No one calls on Your name or strives to take hold of You. For You have hidden Your face from us and delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You are the potter; we are all the work of Your hand. Do not be angry, O LORD, beyond measure; do not remember our iniquity forever. Oh, look upon us, we pray; we are all Your people! Your holy cities have become a wilderness. Zion has become a wasteland and Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and beautiful temple, where our fathers praised You, has been burned with fire, and all that was dear to us lies in ruins. After all this, O LORD, will You restrain Yourself? Will You keep silent and afflict us beyond measure?

"I revealed Myself to those who did not ask for Me; I was found by those who did not seek Me. To a nation that did not call My name, I said, 'Here I am! Here I am!' All day long I have held out My hands to an obstinate people who walk in the wrong path, who follow their own imaginations, to a people who continually provoke Me to My face, sacrificing in the gardens and burning incense on altars of brick, sitting among the graves, spending nights in secret places, eating the meat of pigs and polluted broth from their bowls. They say, 'Keep to yourself; do not come near me, for I am holier than you!' Such people are smoke in My nostrils, a fire that burns all day long. Behold, it is written before Me: I will not keep silent, but I will repay; I will pay it back into their laps, both for your iniquities and for those of your fathers," says the LORD. "Because they burned incense on the mountains and scorned Me on the hills, I will measure into their laps full payment for their former deeds."

This is what the LORD says:

"As the new wine is found in a cluster of grapes, and men say, 'Do not destroy it, for it contains a blessing,' so I will act on behalf of My servants; I will not destroy them all. And I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and heirs from Judah; My elect will possess My mountains, and My servants will dwell there. Sharon will become a pasture for flocks, and the Valley of Achor a resting place for herds, for My people who seek Me. But you who forsake the LORD, who forget My holy mountain, who set a table for Fortune and fill bowls of mixed wine for Destiny, I will destine you for the sword, and you will all kneel down to be slaughtered, because I called and you did not answer, I spoke and you did not listen; you did evil in My sight and chose that in which I did not delight."

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says:

"My servants will eat, but you will go hungry; My servants will drink, but you will go thirsty; My servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame. My servants will shout for joy with a glad heart, but you will cry out with a heavy heart and wail with a broken spirit. You will leave behind your name as a curse for My chosen ones, and the Lord GOD will slay you; but to His servants He will give another name. Whoever invokes a blessing in the land will do so by the God of truth, and whoever takes an oath in the land will swear by the God of truth. For the former troubles will be forgotten and hidden from My sight.

For behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for I will create Jerusalem to be a joy and its people to be a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and take delight in My people. The sounds of weeping and crying will no longer be heard in her. No longer will a nursing infant live but a few days, or an old man fail to live out his years. For the youth will die at a hundred years, and he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses for others to inhabit, nor plant for others to eat. For as is the lifetime of a tree, so will be the days of My people, and My chosen ones will fully enjoy the work of their hands. They will not labor in vain or bear children doomed to disaster; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD — they and their descendants with them. Even before they call, I will answer, and while they are still speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but the food of the serpent will be dust. They will neither harm nor destroy on all My holy mountain," says the LORD.

This is what the LORD says:

"Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. What kind of house will you build for Me? Or where will My place of repose be? Has not My hand made all these things? And so they came into being," declares the LORD. "This is the one I will esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at My word. Whoever slaughters an ox is like one who slays a man; whoever sacrifices a lamb is like one who breaks a dog's neck; whoever presents a grain offering is like one who offers pig's blood; whoever offers frankincense is like one who blesses an idol. Indeed, they have chosen their own ways and delighted in their abominations. So I will choose their punishment and I will bring terror upon them, because I called and no one answered, I spoke and no one listened. But they did evil in My sight and chose that

in which I did not delight.” You who tremble
at His word, hear the word of the LORD:
“Your brothers who hate you and exclude you
because of My name have said, ‘Let the LORD
be glorified that we may see your joy!’ But they
will be put to shame.” Hear the uproar from
the city; listen to the voice from the temple! It
is the voice of the LORD, repaying His enemies
what they deserve!
“Before she was in labor, she gave birth; before
she was in pain, she delivered a boy. Who
has heard of such as this? Who has seen such
things? Can a country be born in a day or a
nation be delivered in an instant? Yet as soon
as Zion was in labor, she gave birth to her
children. Shall I bring a baby to the point of
birth and not deliver it?” says the LORD. “Or
will I who deliver close the womb?” says your
God. Be glad for Jerusalem and rejoice over
her, all who love her. Rejoice greatly with her,
all who mourn over her, so that you may nurse
and be satisfied at her comforting breasts; you
may drink deeply and delight yourselves in her
glorious abundance.
For this is what the LORD says:
“I will extend peace to her like a river, and
the wealth of nations like a flowing stream;
you will nurse and be carried on her arm, and
bounced upon her knees. As a mother comforts
her son, so will I comfort you, and you will be
consoled over Jerusalem.” When you see, you
will rejoice, and you will flourish like grass;
then the hand of the LORD will be revealed to
His servants, but His wrath will be shown to
His enemies.
For behold, the LORD will come with fire— His
chariots are like a whirlwind— to execute His
anger with fury and His rebuke with flames of
fire. For by fire and by His sword, the LORD will
execute judgment on all flesh, and many will
be slain by the LORD.
“Those who consecrate and purify themselves to enter the groves — to follow one in the center of those who eat the flesh of swine and vermin and rats — will perish together,” declares the LORD.

“And I, knowing their deeds and thoughts, am coming to gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see My glory.

I will establish a sign among them, and I will send survivors from among them to the nations — to Tarshish, Put, and the archers of Lud; to Tubal, Javan, and the islands far away who have not heard of My fame or seen My glory.

So they will proclaim My glory among the nations. And they will bring all your brothers from all the nations as a gift to the LORD on horses and chariots and wagons, on mules and camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem,” says the LORD, “just as the Israelites bring an offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD.”

“And I will select some of them as priests and Levites,” says the LORD.

“For just as the new heavens and the new
earth, which I will make, will endure before
Me,” declares the LORD, “so your descendants
and your name will endure. From one New
Moon to another and from one Sabbath to an-
other, all mankind will come to worship before
Me,” says the LORD. “As they go forth, they will
see the corpses of the men who have rebelled
against Me; for their worm will never die, their
fire will never be quenched, and they will be a
horror to all mankind.”

Jeremiah

Book of Jeremiah

These are the words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, one of the priests in Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin.

The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah, and through the days of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, until the fifth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah son of Josiah king of Judah, when the people of Jerusalem went into exile.

The word of the LORD came to me, saying:

> "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

"Ah, Lord GOD," I said, "I surely do not know how to speak, for I am only a child!"

But the LORD told me:

> "Do not say, 'I am only a child.' For to everyone I send you, you must go, and all that I command you, you must speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you," declares the LORD.

Then the LORD reached out His hand, touched my mouth, and said to me:

> "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have appointed you today over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and plant."

And the word of the LORD came to me, asking, "Jeremiah, what do you see?"

"I see a branch of an almond tree," I replied.

"You have observed correctly," said the LORD, "for I am watching over My word to accomplish it."

Again the word of the LORD came to me, asking, "What do you see?"

"I see a boiling pot," I replied, "and it is tilting toward us from the north."

Then the LORD said to me, "Disaster from the north will be poured out on all who live in the land. For I am about to summon all the clans and kingdoms of the north," declares the LORD.

> "Their kings will come and set up their thrones at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem. They will attack all her surrounding walls and all the other cities of Judah. I will pronounce My judgments against them for all their wickedness, because they have forsaken Me, and they have burned incense to other gods and worshiped the works of their own hands.

Get yourself ready. Stand up and tell them everything that I command you. Do not be intimidated by them, or I will terrify you before them. Now behold, this day I have made you like a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls against the whole land— against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land. They will fight against you but will never overcome you, since I am with you to deliver you," declares the LORD.

Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem that this is what the LORD says:

> 'I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holy to the LORD, the firstfruits of His harvest. All who devoured her were found guilty; disaster came upon them,'" declares the LORD.

Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all you families of the house of Israel. This is what the LORD says:

> "What fault did your fathers find in Me that they strayed so far from Me? They followed worthless idols, and became worthless themselves. They did not ask, 'Where is the LORD who brought us up from the land of Egypt, who led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and pits, a land of drought and darkness, a land where no one travels and no one lives?' I brought you into a fertile land to eat its fruit and bounty, but you came and defiled My land and made My inheritance detestable. The priests did not ask, 'Where is the LORD?' The experts in the law no longer knew Me, and the leaders rebelled against Me. The prophets prophesied by Baal and followed useless idols. Therefore, I will contend with you again, declares the LORD, and I will bring a case against your children's children. Cross over to the coasts of Cyprus and take a look; send to Kedar and consider carefully; see if there has ever been anything like this: Has a nation ever changed its gods? (Yet they are not gods at all.) But My people have exchanged their Glory for useless idols. Be stunned by this, O heavens; be shocked and utterly appalled," declares the LORD. "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, and they have dug their own cisterns — broken cisterns that cannot hold water.
>
> Is Israel a slave? Was he born into slavery? Why then has he become prey? The young lions have roared at him; they have sounded their voices. They have laid waste his land; his cities lie in ruins, without inhabitant. The men of Memphis and Tahpanhes have shaved the crown of your head. Have you not brought this on yourself by forsaking the LORD your God when He led you in the way? Now what will you gain on your way to Egypt to drink the waters of the Nile? What will you gain on your way to Assyria to drink the waters of the Euphrates? Your own evil will discipline you; your own apostasies will reprimand you. Consider and realize how evil and bitter it is for you to forsake the LORD your God and to have no fear of Me," declares the Lord GOD of Hosts.
>
> "For long ago you broke your yoke and tore off your chains, saying, 'I will not serve!' Indeed, on every high hill and under every green tree

you lay down as a prostitute. I had planted you like a choice vine from the very best seed. How could you turn yourself before Me into a rotten, wild vine? Although you wash with lye and use an abundance of soap, the stain of your guilt is still before Me," declares the Lord GOD.

"How can you say, 'I am not defiled; I have not run after the Baals'? Look at your behavior in the valley; acknowledge what you have done. You are a swift young she-camel galloping here and there, a wild donkey at home in the wilderness, sniffing the wind in the heat of her desire. Who can restrain her passion? All who seek her need not weary themselves; in mating season they will find her. You should have kept your feet from going bare and your throat from being thirsty. But you said, 'It is hopeless! For I love foreign gods, and I must go after them.' As the thief is ashamed when he is caught, so the house of Israel is disgraced. They, their kings, their officials, their priests, and their prophets say to a tree, 'You are my father,' and to a stone, 'You gave me birth.' They have turned their backs to Me and not their faces. Yet in the time of trouble, they say, 'Rise up and save us!' But where are the gods you made for yourselves? Let them rise up in your time of trouble and save you if they can; for your gods are as numerous as your cities, O Judah. Why do you bring a case against Me? You have all rebelled against Me," declares the LORD. "I have struck your sons in vain; they accepted no discipline. Your own sword has devoured your prophets like a voracious lion."

You people of this generation, consider the word of the LORD:

"Have I been a wilderness to Israel or a land of dense darkness? Why do My people say, 'We are free to roam; we will come to You no more'? Does a maiden forget her jewelry or a bride her wedding sash? Yet My people have forgotten Me for days without number. How skillfully you pursue love! Even the most immoral of women could learn from your ways. Moreover, your skirts are stained with the blood of the innocent poor, though you did not find them breaking in. But in spite of all these things you say, 'I am innocent. Surely His anger will turn from me.' Behold, I will judge you, because you say, 'I have not sinned.' How impulsive you are, constantly changing your ways! You will be disappointed by Egypt just as you were by Assyria. Moreover, you will leave that place with your hands on your head, for the LORD has rejected those you trust; you will not prosper by their help."

"If a man divorces his wife and she leaves him to marry another, can he ever return to her? Would not such a land be completely defiled? But you have played the harlot with many lovers — and you would return to Me?" declares the LORD. "Lift up your eyes to the barren heights and see. Is there any place where you have not been violated? You sat beside the highways waiting for your lovers, like a nomad in the desert. You have defiled the land with your prostitution and wickedness. Therefore the showers have been withheld, and no spring rains have fallen. Yet you have the brazen look of a prostitute; you refuse to be ashamed. Have you not just called to Me, 'My Father, You are my friend from youth. Will He be angry forever? Will He be indignant to the end?' This you have spoken, but you keep doing all the evil you can."

Now in the days of King Josiah, the LORD said to me, "Have you seen what faithless Israel has done? She has gone up on every high hill and under every green tree to prostitute herself there. I thought that after she had done all these things, she would return to Me. But she did not return, and her unfaithful sister Judah saw it.

She saw that because faithless Israel had committed adultery, I gave her a certificate of divorce and sent her away. Yet that unfaithful sister Judah had no fear and prostituted herself as well. Indifferent to her own infidelity, Israel had defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. Yet in spite of all this, her unfaithful sister Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but only in pretense," declares the LORD.

And the LORD said to me, "Faithless Israel has shown herself more righteous than unfaithful Judah. Go, proclaim this message toward the north:

'Return, O faithless Israel,' declares the LORD. 'I will no longer look on you with anger, for I am merciful,' declares the LORD. 'I will not be angry forever. Only acknowledge your guilt, that you have rebelled against the LORD your God. You have scattered your favors to foreign gods under every green tree and have not obeyed My voice,'" declares the LORD.

"Return, O faithless children," declares the LORD, "for I am your master, and I will take you — one from a city and two from a family — and bring you to Zion. Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding."

"In those days, when you multiply and increase in the land," declares the LORD, "they will no longer discuss the ark of the covenant of the LORD. It will never come to mind, and no one will remember it or miss it, nor will another one be made.

At that time they will call Jerusalem The Throne of the LORD, and all the nations will be gathered in Jerusalem to honor the name of the LORD. They will no longer follow the stubbornness of their evil hearts. In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north to the land that I gave to your fathers as an inheritance.

Then I said, 'How I long to make you My sons and give you a desirable land, the most beautiful inheritance of all the nations!' I thought you would call Me 'Father' and never turn away from following Me. But as a woman may betray her husband, so you have betrayed Me, O house of Israel," declares the LORD. A voice

is heard on the barren heights, the children of
Israel weeping and begging for mercy, because
they have perverted their ways and forgotten
the LORD their God. “Return, O faithless chil-
dren, and I will heal your faithlessness.” “Here
we are. We come to You, for You are the
LORD our God. Surely deception comes from
the hills, and commotion from the mountains.
Surely the salvation of Israel is in the LORD
our God. From our youth, that shameful god
has consumed what our fathers have worked
for— their flocks and herds, their sons and
daughters. Let us lie down in our shame; let
our disgrace cover us. We have sinned against
the LORD our God, both we and our fathers;
from our youth even to this day we have not
obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.”
“If you will return, O Israel, return to Me,”
declares the LORD. “If you will remove your
detestable idols from My sight and no longer
waver, and if you can swear, ‘As surely as the
LORD lives,’ in truth, in justice, and in right-
eousness, then the nations will be blessed by
Him, and in Him they will glory.”

For this is what the LORD says to the men of Judah and Jerusalem:

“Break up your unplowed ground, and do not
sow among the thorns. Circumcise yourselves
to the LORD, and remove the foreskins of
your hearts, O men of Judah and people of
Jerusalem. Otherwise, My wrath will break out
like fire and burn with no one to extinguish it,
because of your evil deeds.”

Announce in Judah, proclaim in Jerusalem, and say:

“Blow the ram’s horn throughout the land. Cry
aloud and say, ‘Assemble yourselves and let us
flee to the fortified cities.’ Raise a signal flag
toward Zion. Seek refuge! Do not delay! For
I am bringing disaster from the north, and
terrible destruction. A lion has gone up from
his thicket, and a destroyer of nations has set
out. He has left his lair to lay waste your land.
Your cities will be reduced to ruins and lie
uninhabited. So put on sackcloth, mourn and
wail, for the fierce anger of the LORD has not
turned away from us.” “In that day,” declares
the LORD, “the king and officials will lose their
courage. The priests will tremble in fear, and
the prophets will be astounded.”

Then I said, “Ah, Lord GOD, how completely You have deceived this people and Jerusalem by saying, ‘You will have peace,’ while a sword is at our throats.”

At that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem, “A searing wind from the barren heights in the desert blows toward the daughter of My people, but not to winnow or to sift; a wind too strong for that comes from Me. Now I also pronounce judgments against them.”

Behold, he advances like the clouds, his chari-
ots like the whirlwind. His horses are swifter
than eagles. Woe to us, for we are ruined!
Wash the evil from your heart, O Jerusalem,
so that you may be saved. How long will you
harbor wicked thoughts within you? For a
voice resounds from Dan, proclaiming disaster
from the hills of Ephraim. Warn the nations
now! Proclaim to Jerusalem: “A besieging army
comes from a distant land; they raise their
voices against the cities of Judah. They sur-
round her like men guarding a field, because
she has rebelled against Me,” declares the
LORD. “Your ways and deeds have brought this
upon you. This is your punishment; how bitter
it is, because it pierces to the heart!”
My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain! Oh,
the pain in my chest! My heart pounds within
me; I cannot be silent. For I have heard the
sound of the horn, the alarm of battle. Disaster
after disaster is proclaimed, for the whole land
is laid waste. My tents are destroyed in an in-
stant, my curtains in a moment. How long must
I see the signal flag and hear the sound of the
horn? “For My people are fools; they have not
known Me. They are foolish children, without
understanding. They are skilled in doing evil,
but they know not how to do good.” I looked
at the earth, and it was formless and void; I
looked to the heavens, and they had no light.
I looked at the mountains, and behold, they
were quaking; all the hills were swaying. I
looked, and no man was left; all the birds of the
air had fled. I looked, and the fruitful land was
a desert. All its cities were torn down before
the LORD, before His fierce anger.

For this is what the LORD says:

“The whole land will be desolate, but I will
not finish its destruction. Therefore the earth
will mourn and the heavens above will grow
dark. I have spoken, I have planned, and I will
not relent or turn back.” Every city flees at
the sound of the horseman and archer. They
enter the thickets and climb among the rocks.
Every city is abandoned; no inhabitant is left.
And you, O devastated one, what will you do,
though you dress yourself in scarlet, though
you adorn yourself with gold jewelry, though
you enlarge your eyes with paint? You adorn
yourself in vain; your lovers despise you; they
want to take your life. For I hear a cry like a
woman in labor, a cry of anguish like one bear-
ing her first child — the cry of the Daughter
of Zion gasping for breath, stretching out her
hands to say, “Woe is me, for my soul faints
before the murderers!”
“Go up and down the streets of Jerusalem.
Look now and take note; search her squares. If
you can find a single person, anyone who acts
justly, anyone who seeks the truth, then I will
forgive the city. Although they say, ‘As surely
as the LORD lives,’ they are swearing falsely.”
O LORD, do not Your eyes look for truth? You
struck them, but they felt no pain. You finished
them off, but they refused to accept discipline.
They have made their faces harder than stone
and refused to repent. Then I said, “They are

only the poor; they have played the fool, for they do not know the way of the LORD, the justice of their God. I will go to the powerful and speak to them. Surely they know the way of the LORD, the justice of their God." But they too, with one accord, had broken the yoke and torn off the chains. Therefore a lion from the forest will strike them down, a wolf from the desert will ravage them. A leopard will lie in wait near their cities, and everyone who ventures out will be torn to pieces. For their rebellious acts are many, and their unfaithful deeds are numerous. "Why should I forgive you? Your children have forsaken Me and sworn by gods that are not gods. I satisfied their needs, yet they committed adultery and assembled at the houses of prostitutes. They are well-fed, lusty stallions, each neighing after his neighbor's wife. Should I not punish them for these things?" declares the LORD. "Should I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this? Go up through her vineyards and ravage them, but do not finish them off. Strip off her branches, for they do not belong to the LORD. For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have been utterly unfaithful to Me," declares the LORD.

They have lied about the LORD and said:

"He will not do anything; harm will not come to us; we will not see sword or famine. The prophets are but wind, for the word is not in them. So let their own predictions befall them."

Therefore this is what the LORD God of Hosts says:

"Because you have spoken this word, I will make My words a fire in your mouth and this people the wood it consumes. Behold, I am bringing a distant nation against you, O house of Israel," declares the LORD. "It is an established nation, an ancient nation, a nation whose language you do not know and whose speech you do not understand. Their quivers are like open graves; they are all mighty men. They will devour your harvest and food; they will consume your sons and daughters; they will eat up your flocks and herds; they will feed on your vines and fig trees. With the sword they will destroy the fortified cities in which you trust."

"Yet even in those days," declares the LORD, "I will not make a full end of you. And when the people ask, 'For what offense has the LORD our God done all these things to us?' You are to tell them, 'Just as you have forsaken Me and served foreign gods in your land, so will you serve foreigners in a land that is not your own.'"

Declare this in the house of Jacob and proclaim it in Judah:

"Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes but do not see, who have ears but do not hear. Do you not fear Me?" declares the LORD. "Do you not tremble before Me, the One who set the sand as the boundary for the sea, an enduring barrier it cannot cross? The waves surge, but they cannot prevail. They roar but cannot cross it. But these people have stubborn and rebellious hearts. They have turned aside and gone away. They have not said in their hearts, 'Let us fear the LORD our God, who gives the rains, both autumn and spring, in season, who keeps for us the appointed weeks of harvest.' Your iniquities have diverted these from you; your sins have deprived you of My bounty. For among My people are wicked men; they watch like fowlers lying in wait; they set a trap to catch men. Like cages full of birds, so their houses are full of deceit. Therefore they have become powerful and rich. They have grown fat and sleek, and have excelled in the deeds of the wicked. They have not taken up the cause of the fatherless, that they might prosper; nor have they defended the rights of the needy. Should I not punish them for these things?" declares the LORD. "Should I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this? A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own authority. My people love it so, but what will you do in the end?"

"Run for cover, O sons of Benjamin; flee from Jerusalem! Sound the ram's horn in Tekoa; send up a signal over Beth-haccherem, for disaster looms from the north, even great destruction. Though she is beautiful and delicate, I will destroy the Daughter of Zion. Shepherds and their flocks will come against her; they will pitch their tents all around her, each tending his own portion: 'Prepare for battle against her; rise up, let us attack at noon. Woe to us, for the daylight is fading; the evening shadows grow long. Rise up, let us attack by night and destroy her fortresses!'"

For this is what the LORD of Hosts says:

"Cut down the trees and raise a siege ramp against Jerusalem. This city must be punished; there is nothing but oppression in her midst. As a well gushes its water, so she pours out her evil. Violence and destruction resound in her; sickness and wounds are ever before Me. Be forewarned, O Jerusalem, or I will turn away from you; I will make you a desolation, a land without inhabitant."

This is what the LORD of Hosts says:

"Glean the remnant of Israel as thoroughly as a vine. Pass your hand once more like a grape gatherer over the branches." To whom can I give this warning? Who will listen to me? Look, their ears are closed, so they cannot hear. See, the word of the LORD has become offensive to them; they find no pleasure in it. But I am full of the LORD's wrath; I am tired of holding it back. "Pour it out on the children in the street, and on the young men gathered together. For both husband and wife will be captured, the old and the very old alike. Their houses will be turned over to others, their fields and wives as well, for I will stretch out My hand against the inhabitants of the land," declares the LORD.

"For from the least of them to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; from prophet to priest, all practice deceit. They dress the wound of My people with very little care, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace at all. Are they ashamed of the abomination they have committed? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; when I punish them, they will collapse," says the LORD.

This is what the LORD says:

"Stand at the crossroads and look. Ask for the ancient paths: 'Where is the good way?' Then walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it!' I appointed watchmen over you and said, 'Listen for the sound of the ram's horn.' But they answered, 'We will not listen!' Therefore hear, O nations, and learn, O congregations, what will happen to them. Hear, O earth! I am bringing disaster on this people, the fruit of their own schemes, because they have paid no attention to My word and have rejected My instruction. What use to Me is frankincense from Sheba or sweet cane from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable; your sacrifices do not please Me."

Therefore this is what the LORD says:

"I will lay stumbling blocks before this people; fathers and sons alike will be staggered; friends and neighbors will perish."

This is what the LORD says:

"Behold, an army is coming from the land of the north; a great nation is stirred up from the ends of the earth. They grasp the bow and spear; they are cruel and merciless. Their voice roars like the sea, and they ride upon horses, lined up like men in formation against you, O Daughter of Zion." We have heard the report; our hands hang limp. Anguish has gripped us, pain like that of a woman in labor. Do not go out to the fields; do not walk the road. For the enemy has a sword; terror is on every side. O daughter of my people, dress yourselves in sackcloth and roll in ashes. Mourn with bitter wailing, as you would for an only son, for suddenly the destroyer will come upon us. "I have appointed you to examine My people like ore, so you may know and try their ways. All are hardened rebels, walking around as slanderers. They are bronze and iron; all of them are corrupt. The bellows blow fiercely, blasting away the lead with fire. The refining proceeds in vain, for the wicked are not purged. They are called rejected silver, because the LORD has rejected them."

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, "Stand in the gate of the house of the LORD and proclaim this message: Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah who enter through these gates to worship the LORD. Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel: Correct your ways and deeds, and I will let you live in this place. Do not trust in deceptive words, saying:

'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.'

For if you really correct your ways and deeds, if you act justly toward one another, if you no longer oppress the foreigner and the fatherless and the widow, and if you no longer shed innocent blood in this place or follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.

But look, you keep trusting in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal, and follow other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before Me in this house, which bears My Name, and say, 'We are delivered, so we can continue with all these abominations'? Has this house, which bears My Name, become a den of robbers in your sight? Yes, I too have seen it, declares the LORD.

But go now to the place in Shiloh where I first made a dwelling for My Name, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel. And now, because you have done all these things, declares the LORD, and because I have spoken to you again and again but you would not listen, and I have called to you but you would not answer, therefore what I did to Shiloh I will now do to the house that bears My Name, the house in which you trust, the place that I gave to you and your fathers. And I will cast you out of My presence, just as I have cast out all your brothers, all the descendants of Ephraim.

As for you, do not pray for these people, do not offer a plea or petition on their behalf, and do not beg Me, for I will not listen to you. Do you not see what they are doing in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The sons gather wood, the fathers light the fire, and the women knead the dough to make cakes for the Queen of Heaven; they pour out drink offerings to other gods to provoke Me to anger. But am I the One they are provoking? declares the LORD. Is it not themselves they spite, to their own shame?

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: Behold, My anger and My fury will be poured out on this place, on man and beast, on the trees of the field and the produce of the land, and it will burn and not be extinguished.

This is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: Add your burnt offerings to your other sacrifices and eat the meat yourselves! For when I brought your fathers out of the land of Egypt, I did not merely command them about burnt offerings and sacrifices, but this is what I commanded them: Obey Me, and I will be your God, and you will be My people. You must walk in all the ways I have commanded you, so that it may go well with you.

Yet they did not listen or incline their ear, but they followed the stubborn inclinations of their own evil hearts. They went backward and not forward. From the day your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have sent you all My servants the prophets again and again. Yet they would not listen to Me or incline

their ear, but they stiffened their necks and did more evil than their fathers.

When you tell them all these things, they will not listen to you. When you call to them, they will not answer. Therefore you must say to them, 'This is the nation that would not listen to the voice of the LORD their God and would not receive correction. Truth has perished; it has disappeared from their lips. Cut off your hair and throw it away. Raise up a lamentation on the barren heights, for the LORD has rejected and forsaken the generation of His wrath.'

For the people of Judah have done evil in My sight, declares the LORD. They have set up their abominations in the house that bears My Name, and so have defiled it. They have built the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Ben-hinnom so they could burn their sons and daughters in the fire — something I never commanded, nor did it even enter My mind.

So behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when this place will no longer be called Topheth and the Valley of Ben-hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter. For they will bury the dead in Topheth until there is no more room. The corpses of this people will become food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and there will be no one to scare them away.

I will remove from the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem the sounds of joy and gladness and the voices of the bride and bridegroom, for the land will become a wasteland."

"At that time," declares the LORD, "the bones of the kings of Judah, the bones of the officials, the bones of the priests, the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the people of Jerusalem will be removed from their graves. They will be exposed to the sun and moon, and to all the host of heaven which they have loved, served, followed, consulted, and worshiped. Their bones will not be gathered up or buried, but will become like dung lying on the ground. And wherever I have banished them, the remnant of this evil family will choose death over life," declares the LORD of Hosts.

So you are to tell them this is what the LORD says:

> "Do men fall and not get up again? Does one turn away and not return? Why then have these people turned away? Why does Jerusalem always turn away? They cling to deceit; they refuse to return. I have listened and heard; they do not speak what is right. No one repents of his wickedness, asking, 'What have I done?' Everyone has pursued his own course like a horse charging into battle. Even the stork in the sky knows her appointed seasons. The turtledove, the swift, and the thrush keep their time of migration, but My people do not know the requirements of the LORD. How can you say, 'We are wise, and the Law of the LORD is with us,' when in fact the lying pen of the scribes has produced a deception? The wise will be put to shame; they will be dismayed and trapped. Since they have rejected the word of the LORD, what wisdom do they really have? Therefore I will give their wives to other men and their fields to new owners. For from the least of them to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; from prophet to priest, all practice deceit. They dress the wound of the daughter of My people with very little care, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace at all. Are they ashamed of the abomination they have committed? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; when I punish them, they will collapse, says the LORD. I will take away their harvest, declares the LORD. There will be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the tree, and even the leaf will wither. Whatever I have given them will be lost to them."
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> Why are we just sitting here? Gather together, let us flee to the fortified cities and perish there, for the LORD our God has doomed us. He has given us poisoned water to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD. We hoped for peace, but no good has come, for a time of healing, but there was only terror. The snorting of enemy horses is heard from Dan. At the sound of the neighing of mighty steeds, the whole land quakes. They come to devour the land and everything in it, the city and all who dwell in it. "For behold, I will send snakes among you, vipers that cannot be charmed, and they will bite you," declares the LORD.
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> My sorrow is beyond healing; my heart is faint within me. Listen to the cry of the daughter of my people from a land far away: "Is the LORD no longer in Zion? Is her King no longer there?" "Why have they provoked Me to anger with their carved images, with their worthless foreign idols?" "The harvest has passed, the summer has ended, but we have not been saved." For the brokenness of the daughter of my people I am crushed. I mourn; horror has gripped me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is no physician there? Why then has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored?
>
> Oh, that my head were a spring of water, and my eyes a fountain of tears! I would weep day and night over the slain daughter of my people. If only I had a traveler's lodge in the wilderness, I would abandon my people and depart from them, for they are all adulterers, a crowd of faithless people. "They bend their tongues like bows; lies prevail over truth in the land. For they proceed from evil to evil, and they do not take Me into account," declares the LORD. "Let everyone guard against his neighbor; do not trust any brother, for every brother deals craftily, and every friend spreads slander. Each one betrays his friend; no one tells the truth. They have taught their tongues to lie; they wear themselves out committing iniquity. You dwell in the midst of deception; in their deceit they refuse to know Me," declares the LORD.

Therefore this is what the LORD of Hosts says:

> "Behold, I will refine them and test them, for what else can I do because of the daughter of My people? Their tongues are deadly arrows; they speak deception. With his mouth a man

speaks peace to his neighbor, but in his heart he sets a trap for him. Should I not punish them for these things? declares the LORD. Should I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?" I will take up a weeping and wailing for the mountains, a dirge over the wilderness pasture, for they have been scorched so no one passes through, and the lowing of cattle is not heard. Both the birds of the air and the beasts have fled; they have gone away. "And I will make Jerusalem a heap of rubble, a haunt for jackals; and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant."

Who is the man wise enough to understand this? To whom has the mouth of the LORD spoken, that he may explain it? Why is the land destroyed and scorched like a desert, so no one can pass through it?

And the LORD answered, "It is because they have forsaken My law, which I set before them; they have not walked in it or obeyed My voice. Instead, they have followed the stubbornness of their hearts and gone after the Baals, as their fathers taught them."

Therefore this is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: "Behold, I will feed this people wormwood and give them poisoned water to drink. I will scatter them among the nations that neither they nor their fathers have known, and I will send a sword after them until I have finished them off."

This is what the LORD of Hosts says:

"Take note, and summon the wailing women; send for the most skillful among them. Let them come quickly and take up a lament over us, that our eyes may overflow with tears, and our eyelids may gush with water. For the sound of wailing is heard from Zion: 'How devastated we are! How great is our shame! For we have abandoned the land because our dwellings have been torn down.'" Now, O women, hear the word of the LORD. Open your ears to the word of His mouth. Teach your daughters to wail, and one another to lament. For death has climbed in through our windows; it has entered our fortresses to cut off the children from the streets, the young men from the town squares.

Declare that this is what the LORD says:

"The corpses of men will fall like dung upon the open field, like newly cut grain behind the reaper, with no one to gather it."

This is what the LORD says:

"Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, nor the strong man in his strength, nor the wealthy man in his riches. But let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, who exercises loving devotion, justice and righteousness on the earth — for I delight in these things," declares the LORD.

"Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will punish all who are circumcised only in the flesh— Egypt, Judah, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and all the inhabitants of the desert who clip the hair of their temples. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and the whole house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart."

Hear the word that the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel. This is what the LORD says:

"Do not learn the ways of the nations or be terrified by the signs in the heavens, though the nations themselves are terrified by them. For the customs of the peoples are worthless; they cut down a tree from the forest; it is shaped with a chisel by the hands of a craftsman. They adorn it with silver and gold and fasten it with hammer and nails, so that it will not totter. Like scarecrows in a cucumber patch, their idols cannot speak. They must be carried because they cannot walk. Do not fear them, for they can do no harm, and neither can they do any good." There is none like You, O LORD. You are great, and Your name is mighty in power. Who would not fear You, O King of nations? This is Your due. For among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like You. But they are altogether senseless and foolish, instructed by worthless idols made of wood! Hammered silver is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz — the work of a craftsman from the hands of a goldsmith. Their clothes are blue and purple, all fashioned by skilled workers. But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and eternal King. The earth quakes at His wrath, and the nations cannot endure His indignation.

Thus you are to tell them: "These gods, who have made neither the heavens nor the earth, will perish from this earth and from under these heavens."

The LORD made the earth by His power; He established the world by His wisdom and stretched out the heavens by His understanding. When He thunders, the waters in the heavens roar; He causes the clouds to rise from the ends of the earth. He generates the lightning with the rain and brings forth the wind from His storehouses. Every man is senseless and devoid of knowledge; every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols. For his molten images are a fraud, and there is no breath in them. They are worthless, a work to be mocked. In the time of their punishment they will perish. The Portion of Jacob is not like these, for He is the Maker of all things, and Israel is the tribe of His inheritance— the LORD of Hosts is His name.

Gather up your belongings from this land, you who live under siege. For this is what the LORD says:

"Behold, at this time I will sling out the inhabitants of the land and bring distress upon them so that they may be captured." Woe to me because of my brokenness; my wound is grievous! But I said, "This is truly my sickness, and I must bear it." My tent is destroyed, and all its ropes are snapped. My sons have departed from me and are no more. I have no one left to pitch my tent or set up my curtains. For the shepherds have become senseless; they do not seek the LORD. Therefore they have not pros-

pered, and all their flock is scattered. Listen! The sound of a report is coming — a great commotion from the land to the north. It will make the cities of Judah a desolation, a haunt for jackals. I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not his own; no one who walks directs his own steps. Correct me, O LORD, but only with justice — not in Your anger, or You will bring me to nothing. Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not acknowledge You, and on the families that do not call on Your name. For they have devoured Jacob; they have consumed him and finished him off; they have devastated his homeland.

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: "Listen to the words of this covenant and tell them to the men of Judah and the residents of Jerusalem. You must tell them that this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Cursed is the man who does not obey the words of this covenant, which I commanded your forefathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the iron furnace, saying, 'Obey Me, and do everything I command you, and you will be My people, and I will be your God.' This was in order to establish the oath I swore to your forefathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is to this day."

"Amen, LORD," I answered.

Then the LORD said to me, "Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying: Hear the words of this covenant and carry them out. For from the time I brought your fathers out of the land of Egypt until today, I strongly warned them again and again, saying, 'Obey My voice.' Yet they would not obey or incline their ears, but each one followed the stubbornness of his evil heart. So I brought on them all the curses of this covenant I had commanded them to follow but they did not keep."

And the LORD told me, "There is a conspiracy among the men of Judah and the residents of Jerusalem. They have returned to the sins of their forefathers who refused to obey My words. They have followed other gods to serve them. The house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken the covenant I made with their fathers.

Therefore this is what the LORD says: 'I am about to bring upon them a disaster that they cannot escape. They will cry out to Me, but I will not listen to them. Then the cities of Judah and the residents of Jerusalem will go and cry out to the gods to which they have been burning incense, but these gods certainly will not save them in their time of disaster. Your gods are indeed as numerous as your cities, O Judah; the altars of shame you have set up— the altars to burn incense to Baal— are as many as the streets of Jerusalem.'

As for you, do not pray for these people. Do not raise up a cry or a prayer on their behalf, for I will not be listening when they call out to Me in their time of disaster.

What right has My beloved in My house, having carried out so many evil schemes? Can consecrated meat avert your doom? When you are wicked, then you rejoice. The LORD once called you a flourishing olive tree, beautiful with well-formed fruit. But with a mighty roar He will set it on fire, and its branches will be consumed.

The LORD of Hosts, who planted you, has decreed disaster against you on account of the evil that the house of Israel and the house of Judah have brought upon themselves, provoking Me to anger by burning incense to Baal."

And the LORD informed me, so I knew. Then You showed me their deeds. For I was like a gentle lamb led to slaughter; I did not know that they had plotted against me: "Let us destroy the tree with its fruit; let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be remembered no more." O LORD of Hosts, who judges righteously, who examines the heart and mind, let me see Your vengeance upon them, for to You I have committed my cause.

Therefore this is what the LORD says concerning the people of Anathoth who are seeking your life and saying, "You must not prophesy in the name of the LORD, or you will die by our hand." So this is what the LORD of Hosts says: "I will punish them. Their young men will die by the sword, their sons and daughters by famine. There will be no remnant, for I will bring disaster on the people of Anathoth in the year of their punishment."

Righteous are You, O LORD, when I plead before You. Yet about Your judgments I wish to contend with You: Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease? You planted them, and they have taken root. They have grown and produced fruit. You are ever on their lips, but far from their hearts. But You know me, O LORD; You see me and test my heart toward You. Drag away the wicked like sheep to the slaughter and set them apart for the day of carnage. How long will the land mourn and the grass of every field be withered? Because of the evil of its residents, the animals and birds have been swept away, for the people have said, "He cannot see what our end will be."

"If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in a peaceful land, how will you do in the thickets of the Jordan? Even your brothers— your own father's household — even they have betrayed you; even they have cried aloud against you. Do not trust them, though they speak well of you. I have forsaken My house; I have abandoned My inheritance. I have given the beloved of My soul into the hands of her enemies. My inheritance has become to Me like a lion in the forest. She has roared against Me; therefore I hate her. Is not My inheritance to Me like a speckled bird of prey with other birds of prey circling against her? Go, gather all the beasts of the field; bring them to devour her. Many shepherds have destroyed My vineyard; they have trampled My

plot of ground. They have turned My pleasant field into a desolate wasteland. They have made it a desolation; desolate before Me, it mourns. All the land is laid waste, but no man takes it to heart. Over all the barren heights in the wilderness the destroyers have come, for the sword of the LORD devours from one end of the earth to the other. No flesh has peace. They have sown wheat but harvested thorns. They have exhausted themselves to no avail. Bear the shame of your harvest because of the fierce anger of the LORD."

This is what the LORD says: "As for all My evil neighbors who attack the inheritance that I bequeathed to My people Israel, I am about to uproot them from their land, and I will uproot the house of Judah from among them. But after I have uprooted them, I will once again have compassion on them and return each one to his inheritance and to his land.

And if they will diligently learn the ways of My people and swear by My name, saying, 'As surely as the LORD lives'— just as they once taught My people to swear by Baal— then they will be established among My people. But if they will not obey, then I will uproot that nation; I will uproot it and destroy it, declares the LORD."

This is what the LORD said to me: "Go and buy yourself a linen loincloth and put it around your waist, but do not let it touch water."

So I bought a loincloth in accordance with the word of the LORD, and I put it around my waist.

Then the word of the LORD came to me a second time: "Take the loincloth that you bought and are wearing, and go at once to Perath and hide it there in a crevice of the rocks."

So I went and hid it at Perath, as the LORD had commanded me.

Many days later the LORD said to me, "Arise, go to Perath, and get the loincloth that I commanded you to hide there." So I went to Perath and dug up the loincloth, and I took it from the place where I had hidden it. But now it was ruined— of no use at all.

Then the word of the LORD came to me: "This is what the LORD says: In the same way I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. These evil people, who refuse to listen to My words, who follow the stubbornness of their own hearts, and who go after other gods to serve and worship them, they will be like this loincloth — of no use at all.

For just as a loincloth clings to a man's waist, so I have made the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah cling to Me, declares the LORD, so that they might be My people for My renown and praise and glory. But they did not listen.

Therefore you are to tell them that this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Every wineskin shall be filled with wine.'

And when they reply, 'Don't we surely know that every wineskin should be filled with wine?' then you are to tell them that this is what the LORD says: 'I am going to fill with drunkenness all who live in this land— the kings who sit on David's throne, the priests, the prophets, and all the people of Jerusalem. I will smash them against one another, fathers and sons alike, declares the LORD. I will allow no mercy or pity or compassion to keep Me from destroying them.'"

Listen and give heed. Do not be arrogant, for the LORD has spoken. Give glory to the LORD your God before He brings darkness, before your feet stumble on the dusky mountains. You wait for light, but He turns it into deep gloom and thick darkness. But if you do not listen, I will weep in secret because of your pride. My eyes will overflow with tears, because the LORD's flock has been taken captive. Say to the king and to the queen mother: "Take a lowly seat, for your glorious crowns have fallen from your heads." The cities of the Negev have been shut tight, and no one can open them. All Judah has been carried into exile, wholly taken captive. Lift up your eyes and see those coming from the north. Where is the flock entrusted to you, the sheep that were your pride? What will you say when He sets over you close allies whom you yourself trained? Will not pangs of anguish grip you, as they do a woman in labor? And if you ask yourself, "Why has this happened to me?" It is because of the magnitude of your iniquity that your skirts have been stripped off and your body has been exposed. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Neither are you able to do good — you who are accustomed to doing evil. "I will scatter you like chaff driven by the desert wind. This is your lot, the portion I have measured to you," declares the LORD, "because you have forgotten Me and trusted in falsehood. So I will pull your skirts up over your face, that your shame may be seen. Your adulteries and lustful neighings, your shameless prostitution on the hills and in the fields — I have seen your detestable acts. Woe to you, O Jerusalem! How long will you remain unclean?"

This is the word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought:

"Judah mourns and her gates languish. Her people wail for the land, and a cry goes up from Jerusalem. The nobles send their servants for water; they go to the cisterns, but find no water; their jars return empty. They are ashamed and humiliated; they cover their heads. The ground is cracked because no rain has fallen on the land. The farmers are ashamed; they cover their heads. Even the doe in the field deserts her newborn fawn because there is no grass. Wild donkeys stand on barren heights; they pant for air like jackals; their eyes fail for lack of pasture." Although our iniquities testify against us, O LORD, act for the sake of Your name. Indeed, our rebellions are many; we have sinned against You. O Hope of Israel, its Savior in times of distress, why are You like a stranger in the land, like a traveler who stays but a night? Why are You like a man taken by surprise, like a warrior powerless to save? Yet

You are among us, O LORD, and we are called by Your name. Do not forsake us!

This is what the LORD says about this people:

"Truly they love to wander; they have not restrained their feet. So the LORD does not accept them; He will now remember their iniquity and punish them for their sins."

Then the LORD said to me, "Do not pray for the well-being of this people. Although they may fast, I will not listen to their cry; although they may offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Instead, I will finish them off by sword and famine and plague."

"Ah, Lord GOD!" I replied, "Look, the prophets are telling them, 'You will not see the sword or suffer famine, but I will give you lasting peace in this place.'"

"The prophets are prophesying lies in My name," replied the LORD. "I did not send them or appoint them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a false vision, a worthless divination, the futility and delusion of their own minds.

Therefore this is what the LORD says about the prophets who prophesy in My name: I did not send them, yet they say, 'No sword or famine will touch this land.'

By sword and famine these very prophets will meet their end! And the people to whom they prophesy will be thrown into the streets of Jerusalem because of famine and sword. There will be no one to bury them or their wives, their sons or their daughters. I will pour out their own evil upon them.

You are to speak this word to them:

'My eyes overflow with tears; day and night they do not cease, for the virgin daughter of my people has been shattered by a crushing blow, a severely grievous wound. If I go out to the country, I see those slain by the sword; if I enter the city, I see those ravaged by famine! For both prophet and priest travel to a land they do not know.'"

Have You rejected Judah completely? Do You despise Zion? Why have You stricken us so that we are beyond healing? We hoped for peace, but no good has come, and for the time of healing, but there was only terror. We acknowledge our wickedness, O LORD, the guilt of our fathers; indeed, we have sinned against You. For the sake of Your name do not despise us; do not disgrace Your glorious throne. Remember Your covenant with us; do not break it. Can the worthless idols of the nations bring rain? Do the skies alone send showers? Is this not by You, O LORD our God? So we put our hope in You, for You have done all these things.

Then the LORD said to me: "Even if Moses and Samuel should stand before Me, My heart would not go out to this people. Send them from My presence, and let them go! If they ask you, 'Where shall we go?' you are to tell them that this is what the LORD says:

'Those destined for death, to death; those destined for the sword, to the sword; those destined for famine, to famine; and those destined for captivity, to captivity.'

I will appoint over them four kinds of destroyers, declares the LORD: the sword to kill, the dogs to drag away, and the birds of the air and beasts of the earth to devour and destroy. I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth because of what Manasseh son of Hezekiah king of Judah did in Jerusalem.

Who will have pity on you, O Jerusalem? Who will mourn for you? Who will turn aside to ask about your welfare? You have forsaken Me, declares the LORD. You have turned your back. So I will stretch out My hand against you and I will destroy you; I am weary of showing compassion. I will scatter them with a winnowing fork at the gates of the land. I will bereave and destroy My people who have not turned from their ways. I will make their widows more numerous than the sand of the sea. I will bring a destroyer at noon against the mothers of young men. I will suddenly bring upon them anguish and dismay. The mother of seven will grow faint; she will breathe her last breath. Her sun will set while it is still day; she will be disgraced and humiliated. And the rest I will put to the sword in the presence of their enemies," declares the LORD.

Woe to me, my mother, that you have borne me, a man of strife and conflict in all the land. I have neither lent nor borrowed, yet everyone curses me.

The LORD said:

"Surely I will deliver you for a good purpose; surely I will intercede with your enemy in your time of trouble, in your time of distress. Can anyone smash iron — iron from the north — or bronze? Your wealth and your treasures I will give up as plunder, without charge for all your sins within all your borders. Then I will enslave you to your enemies in a land you do not know, for My anger will kindle a fire that will burn against you." You understand, O LORD; remember me and attend to me. Avenge me against my persecutors. In Your patience, do not take me away. Know that I endure reproach for Your honor. Your words were found, and I ate them. Your words became my joy and my heart's delight. For I bear Your name, O LORD God of Hosts. I never sat with the band of revelers, nor did I celebrate with them. Because Your hand was on me, I sat alone, for You have filled me with indignation. Why is my pain unending, and my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? You have indeed become like a mirage to me— water that is not there.

Therefore this is what the LORD says:

"If you return, I will restore you; you will stand in My presence. And if you speak words that are noble instead of worthless, you will be My spokesman. It is they who must turn to you, but you must not turn to them. Then I will make you a wall to this people, a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you to save and deliver you, declares the LORD. I will deliver

you from the hand of the wicked and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless."

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "You must not marry or have sons or daughters in this place."

For this is what the LORD says concerning the sons and daughters born in this place, and the mothers who bore them, and the fathers who fathered them in this land: "They will die from deadly diseases. They will not be mourned or buried, but will lie like dung on the ground. They will be finished off by sword and famine, and their corpses will become food for the birds of the air and beasts of the earth."

Indeed, this is what the LORD says: "Do not enter a house where there is a funeral meal. Do not go to mourn or show sympathy, for I have removed from this people My peace, My loving devotion, and My compassion," declares the LORD.

"Both great and small will die in this land. They will not be buried or mourned, nor will anyone cut himself or shave his head for them. No food will be offered to comfort those who mourn the dead; not even a cup of consolation will be given for the loss of a father or mother.

You must not enter a house where there is feasting and sit down with them to eat and drink. For this is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: I am going to remove from this place, before your very eyes and in your days, the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of the bride and bridegroom.

When you tell these people all these things, they will ask you, 'Why has the LORD pronounced all this great disaster against us? What is our iniquity? What is the sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?'

Then you are to answer them: 'It is because your fathers have forsaken Me, declares the LORD, and followed other gods, and served and worshiped them. They abandoned Me and did not keep My instruction. And you have done more evil than your fathers. See how each of you follows the stubbornness of his evil heart instead of obeying Me. So I will cast you out of this land into a land that neither you nor your fathers have known. There you will serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favor.'

Yet behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when they will no longer say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of Egypt.' Instead they will say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and all the other lands to which He had banished them.' For I will return them to their land that I gave to their forefathers.

But for now I will send for many fishermen, declares the LORD, and they will catch them. After that I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them down on every mountain and hill, even from the clefts of the rocks.

For My eyes are on all their ways. They are not hidden from My face, and their guilt is not concealed from My eyes. And I will first repay them double their iniquity and their sin, because they have defiled My land with the carcasses of their detestable idols, and they have filled My inheritance with their abominations."

O LORD, my strength and my fortress, my refuge in the day of distress, the nations will come to You from the ends of the earth, and they will say, "Our fathers inherited nothing but lies, worthless idols of no benefit at all. Can man make gods for himself? Such are not gods!" "Therefore behold, I will inform them, and this time I will make them know My power and My might; then they will know that My name is the LORD."

"The sin of Judah is written with an iron stylus, engraved with a diamond point on the tablets of their hearts and on the horns of their altars. Even their children remember their altars and Asherah poles by the green trees and on the high hills. O My mountain in the countryside, I will give over your wealth and all your treasures as plunder, because of the sin of your high places, within all your borders. And you yourself will relinquish the inheritance that I gave you. I will enslave you to your enemies in a land that you do not know, for you have kindled My anger; it will burn forever."

This is what the LORD says:

"Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind, who makes mere flesh his strength and turns his heart from the LORD. He will be like a shrub in the desert; he will not see when prosperity comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in Him. He is like a tree planted by the waters that sends out its roots toward the stream. It does not fear when the heat comes, and its leaves are always green. It does not worry in a year of drought, nor does it cease to produce fruit. The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart; I examine the mind to reward a man according to his way, by what his deeds deserve. Like a partridge hatching eggs it did not lay is the man who makes a fortune unjustly. In the middle of his days his riches will desert him, and in the end he will be the fool."

A glorious throne, exalted from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary. O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who abandon You will be put to shame. All who turn away will be written in the dust, for they have abandoned the LORD, the fountain of living water. Heal me, O LORD, and I will be healed; save me, and I will be saved, for You are my praise. Behold, they keep saying to me, "Where is the word of the LORD? Let it come now!" But I have not run away from being Your shepherd; I have not desired the day of despair. You know that the utterance of my lips was spoken in Your presence. Do not become a terror to me; You are my refuge in the day of disaster. Let my persecutors be put to shame, but do not let me be put to shame.

> Let them be terrified, but do not let me be terrified. Bring upon them the day of disaster and shatter them with double destruction.

This is what the LORD said to me: "Go and stand at the gate of the people, through which the kings of Judah go in and out; and stand at all the other gates of Jerusalem.

Say to them, 'Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah, all people of Judah and Jerusalem who enter through these gates. This is what the LORD says: Take heed for yourselves; do not carry a load or bring it through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. You must not carry a load out of your houses or do any work on the Sabbath day, but you must keep the Sabbath day holy, just as I commanded your forefathers. Yet they would not listen or incline their ear, but they stiffened their necks and would not listen or receive My discipline.

If, however, you listen carefully to Me, says the LORD, and bring no load through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, and keep the Sabbath day holy, and do no work on it, then kings and princes will enter through the gates of this city. They will sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses with their officials, along with the men of Judah and the residents of Jerusalem, and this city will be inhabited forever. And people will come from the cities of Judah and the places around Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin, and from the foothills, the hill country, and the Negev, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and frankincense, and thank offerings to the house of the LORD.

But if you do not listen to Me to keep the Sabbath day holy by not carrying a load while entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle an unquenchable fire in its gates to consume the citadels of Jerusalem.'"

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: "Go down at once to the potter's house, and there I will give you My message."

So I went down to the potter's house and saw him working at the wheel. But the vessel that he was shaping from the clay became flawed in his hand; so he formed it into another vessel, as it seemed best for him to do.

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "O house of Israel, declares the LORD, can I not treat you as this potter treats his clay? Just like clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel.

At any time I might announce that a nation or kingdom will be uprooted, torn down, and destroyed. But if that nation I warned turns from its evil, then I will relent of the disaster I had planned to bring.

And if at another time I announce that I will build up and establish a nation or kingdom, and if it does evil in My sight and does not listen to My voice, then I will relent of the good I had intended for it.

Now therefore, tell the men of Judah and the residents of Jerusalem that this is what the LORD says: 'Behold, I am planning a disaster for you and devising a plan against you. Turn now, each of you, from your evil ways, and correct your ways and deeds.'

But they will reply, 'It is hopeless. We will follow our own plans, and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.'"

Therefore this is what the LORD says:

> "Inquire among the nations: Who has ever heard things like these? Virgin Israel has done a most terrible thing. Does the snow of Lebanon ever leave its rocky slopes? Or do its cool waters flowing from a distance ever run dry? Yet My people have forgotten Me. They burn incense to worthless idols that make them stumble in their ways, leaving the ancient roads to walk on rutted bypaths instead of on the highway. They have made their land a desolation, a perpetual object of scorn; all who pass by will be appalled and shake their heads. I will scatter them before the enemy like the east wind. I will show them My back and not My face in the day of their calamity."

Then some said, "Come, let us make plans against Jeremiah, for the law will never be lost to the priest, nor counsel to the wise, nor an oracle to the prophet. Come, let us denounce him and pay no heed to any of his words."

> Attend to me, O LORD. Hear what my accusers are saying! Should good be repaid with evil? Yet they have dug a pit for me. Remember how I stood before You to speak good on their behalf, to turn Your wrath from them. Therefore, hand their children over to famine; pour out the power of the sword upon them. Let their wives become childless and widowed; let their husbands be slain by disease, their young men struck down by the sword in battle. Let a cry be heard from their houses when You suddenly bring raiders against them, for they have dug a pit to capture me and have hidden snares for my feet. But You, O LORD, know all their deadly plots against me. Do not wipe out their guilt or blot out their sin from Your sight. Let them be overthrown before You; deal with them in the time of Your anger.

This is what the LORD says: "Go and buy a clay jar from a potter. Take some of the elders of the people and leaders of the priests, and go out to the Valley of Ben-hinnom near the entrance of the Potsherd Gate.

Proclaim there the words I speak to you, saying, 'Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and residents of Jerusalem. This is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: I am going to bring such disaster on this place that the ears of all who hear of it will ring, because they have abandoned Me and made this a foreign place. They have burned incense in this place to other gods that neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah have ever known. They have filled this place with the blood of the innocent. They have built high places to Baal on which to burn their children in the fire as offerings to Baal — something I never commanded or mentioned, nor did it even enter My mind.

So behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when this place will no longer be called Topheth or the Valley of Ben-hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter. And in this place I will ruin the plans of Judah and

Jerusalem. I will make them fall by the sword before their enemies, by the hands of those who seek their lives, and I will give their carcasses as food to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth.

I will make this city a desolation and an object of scorn. All who pass by will be appalled and will scoff at all her wounds. I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and daughters, and they will eat one another's flesh in the siege and distress inflicted on them by their enemies who seek their lives.'

Then you are to shatter the jar in the presence of the men who accompany you, and you are to proclaim to them that this is what the LORD of Hosts says: I will shatter this nation and this city, like one shatters a potter's jar that can never again be repaired. They will bury the dead in Topheth until there is no more room to bury them.

This is what I will do to this place and to its residents, declares the LORD. I will make this city like Topheth. The houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah will be defiled like that place, Topheth—all the houses on whose rooftops they burned incense to all the host of heaven and poured out drink offerings to other gods."

Then Jeremiah returned from Topheth, where the LORD had sent him to prophesy, and he stood in the courtyard of the house of the LORD and proclaimed to all the people, "This is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: 'Behold, I am about to bring on this city and on all the villages around it every disaster I have pronounced against them, because they have stiffened their necks so as not to heed My words.'"

When Pashhur the priest, the son of Immer and the chief official in the house of the LORD, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things, he had Jeremiah the prophet beaten and put in the stocks at the Upper Gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the LORD.

The next day, when Pashhur released Jeremiah from the stocks, Jeremiah said to him, "The LORD does not call you Pashhur, but Magor-missabib. For this is what the LORD says: 'I will make you a terror to yourself and to all your friends. They will fall by the sword of their enemies before your very eyes. And I will hand Judah over to the king of Babylon, and he will carry them away to Babylon and put them to the sword. I will give away all the wealth of this city — all its products and valuables, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah — to their enemies. They will plunder them, seize them, and carry them off to Babylon. And you, Pashhur, and all who live in your house, will go into captivity. You will go to Babylon, and there you will die and be buried — you and all your friends to whom you have prophesied these lies.'"

> You have deceived me, O LORD, and I was deceived. You have overcome me and prevailed. I am a laughingstock all day long; everyone mocks me. For whenever I speak, I cry out; I proclaim violence and destruction. For the word of the LORD has become to me a reproach and derision all day long. If I say, "I will not mention Him or speak any more in His name," His message becomes a fire burning in my heart, shut up in my bones, and I become weary of holding it in, and I cannot prevail. For I have heard the whispering of many: "Terror is on every side! Report him; let us report him!" All my trusted friends watch for my fall: "Perhaps he will be deceived so that we may prevail against him and take our vengeance upon him." But the LORD is with me like a fearsome warrior. Therefore, my persecutors will stumble and will not prevail. Since they have not succeeded, they will be utterly put to shame, with an everlasting disgrace that will never be forgotten. O LORD of Hosts, who examines the righteous, who sees the heart and mind, let me see Your vengeance upon them, for to You I have committed my cause. Sing to the LORD! Praise the LORD! For He rescues the life of the needy from the hands of evildoers. Cursed be the day I was born! May the day my mother bore me never be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought my father the news, saying, "A son is born to you," bringing him great joy. May that man be like the cities that the LORD overthrew without compassion. May he hear an outcry in the morning and a battle cry at noon, because he did not kill me in the womb so that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb forever enlarged. Why did I come out of the womb to see only trouble and sorrow, and to end my days in shame?

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur son of Malchijah and the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah. They said, "Please inquire of the LORD on our behalf, since Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon is waging war against us. Perhaps the LORD will perform for us something like all His past wonders, so that Nebuchadnezzar will withdraw from us."

But Jeremiah answered, "You are to tell Zedekiah that this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I will turn against you the weapons of war in your hands, with which you are fighting the king of Babylon and the Chaldeans who besiege you outside the wall, and I will assemble their forces in the center of this city. And I Myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm, with anger, fury, and great wrath. I will strike down the residents of this city, both man and beast. They will die in a terrible plague.'

'After that,' declares the LORD, 'I will hand over Zedekiah king of Judah, his officers, and the people in this city who survive the plague and sword and famine, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and to their enemies who seek their lives. He will put them to the sword; he will not spare them or show pity or compassion.'

Furthermore, you are to tell this people that this is what the LORD says: 'Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death. Whoever stays in this city will die by sword and famine and plague, but whoever goes out and surrenders to the Chaldeans who besiege you will live; he will retain his life like a spoil of war. For I have set My face against this city to bring disaster and not good, declares the LORD. It will be delivered

into the hand of the king of Babylon, who will destroy it with fire.'

Moreover, tell the house of the king of Judah to hear the word of the LORD. O house of David, this is what the LORD says:

> 'Administer justice every morning, and rescue the victim of robbery from the hand of his oppressor, or My wrath will go forth like fire and burn with no one to extinguish it because of their evil deeds. Behold, I am against you who dwell above the valley, atop the rocky plateau — declares the LORD — you who say, "Who can come against us? Who can enter our dwellings?" I will punish you as your deeds deserve, declares the LORD. I will kindle a fire in your forest that will consume everything around you.'"

This is what the LORD says: "Go down to the palace of the king of Judah and proclaim this message there, saying, 'Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, who sits on the throne of David— you and your officials and your people who enter these gates. This is what the LORD says: Administer justice and righteousness. Rescue the victim of robbery from the hand of his oppressor. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless, or the widow. Do not shed innocent blood in this place.

For if you will indeed carry out these commands, then kings who sit on David's throne will enter through the gates of this palace riding on chariots and horses — they and their officials and their people. But if you do not obey these words, then I swear by Myself, declares the LORD, that this house will become a pile of rubble.'"

For this is what the LORD says concerning the house of the king of Judah:

> "You are like Gilead to Me, like the summit of Lebanon; but I will surely turn you into a desert, like cities that are uninhabited. I will appoint destroyers against you, each man with his weapons, and they will cut down the choicest of your cedars and throw them into the fire.

And many nations will pass by this city and ask one another, 'Why has the LORD done such a thing to this great city?'

Then people will reply, 'Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God and have worshiped and served other gods.'"

> Do not weep for him who is dead; do not mourn his loss. Weep bitterly for him who is exiled, for he will never return to see his native land.

For this is what the LORD says concerning Shallum son of Josiah, king of Judah, who succeeded his father Josiah but has gone forth from this place: "He will never return, but he will die in the place to which he was exiled; he will never see this land again."

> "Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms without justice, who makes his countrymen serve without pay, and fails to pay their wages, who says, 'I will build myself a great palace, with spacious upper rooms.' So he cuts windows in it, panels it with cedar, and paints it with vermilion. Does it make you a king to excel in cedar? Did not your father have food and drink? He administered justice and righteousness, and so it went well with him. He took up the cause of the poor and needy, and so it went well with him. Is this not what it means to know Me?" declares the LORD. "But your eyes and heart are set on nothing except your own dishonest gain, on shedding innocent blood, on practicing extortion and oppression."

Therefore this is what the LORD says concerning Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah:

> "They will not mourn for him: 'Alas, my brother! Alas, my sister!' They will not mourn for him: 'Alas, my master! Alas, his splendor!' He will be buried like a donkey, dragged away and thrown outside the gates of Jerusalem. Go up to Lebanon and cry out; raise your voice in Bashan; cry out from Abarim, for all your lovers have been crushed. I warned you when you were secure. You said, 'I will not listen.' This has been your way from youth, that you have not obeyed My voice. The wind will drive away all your shepherds, and your lovers will go into captivity. Then you will be ashamed and humiliated because of all your wickedness. O inhabitant of Lebanon, nestled in the cedars, how you will groan when pangs of anguish come upon you, agony like a woman in labor."

"As surely as I live," declares the LORD, "evenif you, Coniah son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, were a signet ring on My right hand, I would pull you off. In fact, I will hand you over to those you dread, who want to take your life — to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and to the Chaldeans. I will hurl you and the mother who gave you birth into another land, where neither of you were born — and there you both will die. You will never return to the land for which you long."

> Is this man Coniah a despised and shattered pot, a jar that no one wants? Why are he and his descendants hurled out and cast into a land they do not know? O land, land, land, hear the word of the LORD!

This is what the LORD says:

> "Enroll this man as childless, a man who will not prosper in his lifetime. None of his descendants will prosper to sit on the throne of David or to rule again in Judah."

"Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!" declares the LORD.

Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says about the shepherds who tend My people: "You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your deeds, declares the LORD.

Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock from all the lands to which I have banished them, and I will return them to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and multiply. I will raise up shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or dismayed, nor will any go missing, declares the LORD.

> Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and He will reign wisely as King and will administer justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is His name by which He will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.

So behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when they will no longer say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of Egypt.' Instead they will say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought and led the descendants of the house of Israel up out of the land of the north and all the other lands to which He had banished them.' Then they will dwell once more in their own land."

As for the prophets:

> My heart is broken within me, and all my bones tremble. I have become like a drunkard, like a man overcome by wine, because of the LORD, because of His holy words. For the land is full of adulterers — because of the curse, the land mourns and the pastures of the wilderness have dried up — their course is evil and their power is misused. "For both prophet and priest are ungodly; even in My house I have found their wickedness," declares the LORD. "Therefore their path will become slick; they will be driven away into the darkness and fall into it. For I will bring disaster upon them in the year of their punishment," declares the LORD. "Among the prophets of Samaria I saw an offensive thing: They prophesied by Baal and led My people Israel astray. And among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: They commit adultery and walk in lies. They strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns his back on wickedness. They are all like Sodom to Me; the people of Jerusalem are like Gomorrah."

Therefore this is what the LORD of Hosts says concerning the prophets:

> "I will feed them wormwood and give them poisoned water to drink, for from the prophets of Jerusalem ungodliness has spread throughout the land."

This is what the LORD of Hosts says:

> "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They are filling you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. They keep saying to those who despise Me, 'The LORD says that you will have peace,' and to everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart, 'No harm will come to you.' But which of them has stood in the council of the LORD to see and hear His word? Who has given heed to His word and obeyed it? Behold, the storm of the LORD has gone out with fury, a whirlwind swirling down upon the heads of the wicked. The anger of the LORD will not turn back until He has fully accomplished the purposes of His heart. In the days to come you will understand this clearly. I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message; I did not speak to them, yet they have prophesied. But if they had stood in My council, they would have proclaimed My words to My people and turned them back from their evil ways and deeds."

"Am I only a God nearby," declares the LORD, "and not a God far away?"

"Can a man hide in secret places where I cannot see him?" declares the LORD.

"Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" declares the LORD.

"I have heard the sayings of the prophets who prophesy lies in My name: 'I had a dream! I had a dream!' How long will this continue in the hearts of these prophets who prophesy falsehood, these prophets of the delusion of their own minds? They suppose the dreams that they tell one another will make My people forget My name, just as their fathers forgot My name through the worship of Baal.

Let the prophet who has a dream retell it, but let him who has My word speak it truthfully. For what is straw compared to grain?" declares the LORD. "Is not My word like fire," declares the LORD, "and like a hammer that smashes a rock?"

"Therefore behold," declares the LORD, "I am against the prophets who steal from one another words they attribute to Me."

"Yes," declares the LORD, "I am against the prophets who wag their own tongues and proclaim, 'The LORD declares it.'"

"Indeed," declares the LORD, "I am against those who prophesy false dreams and retell them to lead My people astray with their reckless lies. It was not I who sent them or commanded them, and they are of no benefit at all to these people," declares the LORD.

"Now when this people or a prophet or priest asks you, 'What is the burden of the LORD?' you are to say to them, 'What burden? I will forsake you, declares the LORD.'

As for the prophet or priest or anyone who claims, 'This is the burden of the LORD,' I will punish that man and his household.

This is what each man is to say to his friend and to his brother: 'What has the LORD answered?' or 'What has the LORD spoken?' But refer no more to the burden of the LORD, for each man's word becomes the burden, so that you pervert the words of the living God, the LORD of Hosts, our God.

Thus you are to say to the prophet: 'What has the LORD answered you?' and 'What has the LORD spoken?'

But if you claim, 'This is the burden of the LORD,' then this is what the LORD says: Because you have said, 'This is the burden of the LORD,' and I specifically told you not to make this claim, therefore I will surely forget you and will cast you out of My presence, both you and the city that I gave to you and your fathers. And I will bring upon you everlasting shame and perpetual humiliation that will never be forgotten."

After Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, as well as the officials of Judah and the craftsmen and

metalsmiths from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon, the LORD showed me two baskets of figs placed in front of the temple of the LORD. One basket had very good figs, like those that ripen early, but the other basket contained very poor figs, so bad they could not be eaten.

"Jeremiah," the LORD asked, "what do you see?"

"Figs!" I replied. "The good figs are very good, but the bad figs are very bad, so bad they cannot be eaten."

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Like these good figs, so I regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans. I will keep My eyes on them for good and will return them to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them. I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the LORD. They will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with all their heart.

But like the bad figs, so bad they cannot be eaten,' says the LORD, 'so will I deal with Zedekiah king of Judah, his officials, and the remnant of Jerusalem—those remaining in this land and those living in the land of Egypt. I will make them a horror and an offense to all the kingdoms of the earth, a disgrace and an object of scorn, ridicule, and cursing wherever I have banished them. And I will send against them sword and famine and plague, until they have perished from the land that I gave to them and their fathers.'"

This is the word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. So the prophet Jeremiah spoke to all the people of Judah and all the residents of Jerusalem as follows:

"From the thirteenth year of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah until this very day— twenty-three years—the word of the LORD has come to me, and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened. And the LORD has sent all His servants the prophets to you again and again, but you have not listened or inclined your ear to hear.

The prophets told you, 'Turn now, each of you, from your evil ways and deeds, and you can dwell in the land that the LORD has given to you and your fathers forever and ever. Do not follow other gods to serve and worship them, and do not provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands. Then I will do you no harm.'

'But to your own harm, you have not listened to Me,' declares the LORD, 'so you have provoked Me to anger with the works of your hands.'

Therefore this is what the LORD of Hosts says: 'Because you have not obeyed My words, behold, I will summon all the families of the north, declares the LORD, and I will send for My servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, whom I will bring against this land, against its residents, and against all the surrounding nations. So I will devote them to destruction and make them an object of horror and contempt, an everlasting desolation.

Moreover, I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of the bride and bridegroom, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the lamp. And this whole land will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years.

But when seventy years are complete, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their guilt, declares the LORD, and I will make it an everlasting desolation.

I will bring upon that land all the words I have pronounced against it, all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah has prophesied against all the nations. For many nations and great kings will enslave them, and I will repay them according to their deeds and according to the work of their hands.'"

This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: "Take from My hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink from it. And they will drink and stagger and go out of their minds, because of the sword that I will send among them."

So I took the cup from the LORD's hand and made all the nations drink from it, each one to whom the LORD had sent me, to make them a ruin, an object of horror and contempt and cursing, as they are to this day — Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, its kings and officials; Pharaoh king of Egypt, his officials, his leaders, and all his people; all the mixed tribes; all the kings of Uz; all the kings of the Philistines: Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod; Edom, Moab, and the Ammonites; all the kings of Tyre and Sidon; the kings of the coastlands across the sea; Dedan, Tema, Buz, and all who cut the corners of their hair; all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the mixed tribes who dwell in the desert; all the kings of Zimri, Elam, and Media; all the kings of the north, both near and far, one after another — all the kingdoms on the face of the earth. And after all of them, the king of Sheshach will drink it too.

"Then you are to tell them that this is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: 'Drink, get drunk, and vomit. Fall down and never get up again, because of the sword I will send among you.'

If they refuse to take the cup from your hand and drink it, you are to tell them that this is what the LORD of Hosts says: 'You most certainly must drink it! For behold, I am beginning to bring disaster on the city that bears My Name, so how could you possibly go unpunished? You will not go unpunished, for I am calling down a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, declares the LORD of Hosts.'

So you are to prophesy all these words against them and say to them:

> 'The LORD will roar from on high; He will raise His voice from His holy habitation. He will roar loudly over His pasture; like those who tread the grapes, He will call out with a shout against all the inhabitants of the earth. The tumult will resound to the ends of the earth because the LORD brings a charge against the nations. He brings judgment on all mankind and puts the wicked to the sword,'" declares the LORD.

This is what the LORD of Hosts says:

> "Behold! Disaster is spreading from nation to nation; a mighty storm is rising from the ends of the earth."

Those slain by the LORD on that day will be spread from one end of the earth to the other. They will not be mourned, gathered, or buried. They will be like dung lying on the ground.

> Wail, you shepherds, and cry out; roll in the dust, you leaders of the flock. For the days of your slaughter have come; you will fall and be shattered like fine pottery. Flight will evade the shepherds, and escape will elude the leaders of the flock. Hear the cry of the shepherds, the wailing of the leaders of the flock, for the LORD is destroying their pasture. The peaceful meadows have been silenced because of the LORD's burning anger. He has left His den like a lion, for their land has been made a desolation by the sword of the oppressor, and because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

At the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came from the LORD: "This is what the LORD says: Stand in the courtyard of the house of the LORD and speak all the words I have commanded you to speak to all the cities of Judah who come to worship there. Do not omit a word. Perhaps they will listen and turn— each from his evil way of life — so that I may relent of the disaster I am planning to bring upon them because of the evil of their deeds.

And you are to tell them that this is what the LORD says: 'If you do not listen to Me and walk in My law, which I have set before you, and if you do not listen to the words of My servants the prophets, whom I have sent you again and again even though you did not listen, then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city an object of cursing among all the nations of the earth.'"

Now the priests and prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD, and as soon as he had finished telling all the people everything the LORD had commanded him to say, the priests and prophets and all the people seized him, shouting, "You must surely die! How dare you prophesy in the name of the LORD that this house will become like Shiloh and this city will be desolate and deserted!"

And all the people assembled against Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

When the officials of Judah heard these things, they went up from the king's palace to the house of the LORD and sat there at the entrance of the New Gate.

Then the priests and prophets said to the officials and all the people, "This man is worthy of death, for he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears!"

But Jeremiah said to all the officials and all the people, "The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that you have heard. So now, correct your ways and deeds, and obey the voice of the LORD your God, so that He might relent of the disaster He has pronounced against you. As for me, here I am in your hands; do to me what you think is good and right. But know for certain that if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood upon yourselves, upon this city, and upon its residents; for truly the LORD has sent me to speak all these words in your hearing."

Then the officials and all the people told the priests and prophets, "This man is not worthy of death, for he has spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God!"

Some of the elders of the land stood up and said to the whole assembly of the people, "Micah the Moreshite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah and told all the people of Judah that this is what the LORD of Hosts says:

> 'Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, and the temple mount a wooded ridge.'

Did Hezekiah king of Judah or anyone else in Judah put him to death? Did Hezekiah not fear the LORD and seek His favor, and did not the LORD relent of the disaster He had pronounced against them? But we are about to bring great harm on ourselves!"

Now there was another man prophesying in the name of the LORD, Uriah son of Shemaiah from Kiriath-jearim. He prophesied against this city and against this land the same things that Jeremiah did. King Jehoiakim and all his mighty men and officials heard his words, and the king sought to put him to death. But when Uriah found out about it, he fled in fear and went to Egypt.

Then King Jehoiakim sent men to Egypt: Elnathan son of Achbor along with some other men. They brought Uriah out of Egypt and took him to King Jehoiakim, who had him put to the sword and his body thrown into the burial place of the common people.

Nevertheless, Ahikam son of Shaphan supported Jeremiah, so he was not handed over to the people to be put to death.

At the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD. This is what the LORD said to me:

"Make for yourself a yoke out of leather straps and put it on your neck. Send word to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon through the envoys who have come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah. Give them a message from the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, to relay to their masters:

By My great power and outstretched arm, I made the earth and the men and beasts on the face of it, and I give it to whom I please. So now I have placed all these lands under the authority of My servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. I have even made the beasts of the field subject to him. All nations will serve him and his son and grandson, until the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great kings will enslave him.

As for the nation or kingdom that does not serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and does not place its neck under his yoke, I will punish that nation by sword and famine and plague, declares the LORD, until I have destroyed it by his hand.

But as for you, do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your interpreters of dreams, your mediums, or your sorcerers who declare, 'You will not serve the king of Babylon.' For they prophesy to you a lie that will serve to remove you from your land; I will banish you and you will perish. But the nation that will put its neck

under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will leave in its own land, to cultivate it and reside in it, declares the LORD."

And to Zedekiah king of Judah I spoke the same message: "Put your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon; serve him and his people, and live! Why should you and your people die by sword and famine and plague, as the LORD has decreed against any nation that does not serve the king of Babylon?

Do not listen to the words of the prophets who say, 'You must not serve the king of Babylon,' for they are prophesying to you a lie. For I have not sent them, declares the LORD, and yet they are prophesying falsely in My name; therefore I will banish you, and you will perish— you and the prophets who prophesy to you."

Then I said to the priests and to all this people, "This is what the LORD says: Do not listen to the words of your prophets who prophesy to you, saying, 'Look, very soon now the articles from the house of the LORD will be brought back from Babylon.' They are prophesying to you a lie. Do not listen to them. Serve the king of Babylon and live! Why should this city become a ruin?

If they are indeed prophets and the word of the LORD is with them, let them now plead with the LORD of Hosts that the articles remaining in the house of the LORD, in the palace of the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem, not be taken to Babylon.

For this is what the LORD of Hosts says about the pillars, the sea, the bases, and the rest of the articles that remain in this city, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon did not take when he carried Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim king of Judah into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, along with all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem. Yes, this is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says about the articles that remain in the house of the LORD, in the palace of the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem: 'They will be carried to Babylon and will remain there until the day I attend to them again,' declares the LORD. 'Then I will bring them back and restore them to this place.'"

In the fifth month of that same year, the fourth year, near the beginning of the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah, the prophet Hananiah son of Azzur, who was from Gibeon, said to me in the house of the LORD in the presence of the priests and all the people: "This is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: 'I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two years I will restore to this place all the articles of the house of the LORD that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon removed from here and carried to Babylon. And I will restore to this place Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, along with all the exiles from Judah who went to Babylon,' declares the LORD, 'for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.'"

Then the prophet Jeremiah replied to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD. "Amen!" Jeremiah said. "May the LORD do so! May the LORD fulfill the words you have prophesied, and may He restore the articles of His house and all the exiles back to this place from Babylon.

Nevertheless, listen now to this message I am speaking in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. The prophets of old who preceded you and me prophesied war, disaster, and plague against many lands and great kingdoms. As for the prophet who prophesies peace, only if the word of the prophet comes true will the prophet be recognized as one the LORD has truly sent."

Then the prophet Hananiah took the yoke off the neck of Jeremiah the prophet and broke it. And in the presence of all the people Hananiah proclaimed, "This is what the LORD says: 'In this way, within two years I will break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon off the neck of all the nations.'"

At this, Jeremiah the prophet went on his way. But shortly after Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke off his neck, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: "Go and tell Hananiah that this is what the LORD says: 'You have broken a yoke of wood, but in its place you have fashioned a yoke of iron.'

For this is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: 'I have put a yoke of iron on the neck of all these nations to make them serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and they will serve him. I have even given him control of the beasts of the field.'"

Then the prophet Jeremiah said to the prophet Hananiah, "Listen, Hananiah! The LORD did not send you, but you have persuaded this people to trust in a lie. Therefore this is what the LORD says: 'I am about to remove you from the face of the earth. You will die this year because you have preached rebellion against the LORD.'"

And in the seventh month of that very year, the prophet Hananiah died.

This is the text of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets, and all the others Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. (This was after King Jeconiah, the queen mother, the court officials, the officials of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the metalsmiths had been exiled from Jerusalem.) The letter was entrusted to Elasah son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. It stated:

This is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says to all the exiles who were carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and settle down. Plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters. Take wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Multiply there; do not decrease. Seek the prosperity of the city to which I have sent you as exiles. Pray to the LORD on its behalf, for if it prospers, you too will prosper."

For this is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: "Do not be deceived by the prophets and diviners among you, and do not listen to the dreams you elicit from them. For they are falsely prophesying to you in My name; I have not sent them, declares the LORD."

For this is what the LORD says: "When Babylon's seventy years are complete, I will attend to you and confirm My promise to restore you to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a future

and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore you from captivity and gather you from all the nations and places to which I have banished you, declares the LORD. I will restore you to the place from which I sent you into exile."

Because you may say, "The LORD has raised up for us prophets in Babylon," this is what the LORD says about the king who sits on David's throne and all the people who remain in this city, your brothers who did not go with you into exile— this is what the LORD of Hosts says:

"I will send against them sword and famine and plague, and I will make them like rotten figs, so bad they cannot be eaten. I will pursue them with sword and famine and plague. I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth— a curse, a desolation, and an object of scorn and reproach among all the nations to which I banish them. I will do this because they have not listened to My words, declares the LORD,which I sent to them again and again through My servants the prophets. And neither have you exiles listened, declares the LORD."

So hear the word of the LORD, all you exiles I have sent away from Jerusalem to Babylon. This is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says about Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah, who are prophesying to you lies in My name: "I will deliver them to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he will kill them before your very eyes. Because of them, all the exiles of Judah who are in Babylon will use this curse: 'May the LORD make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire!' For they have committed an outrage in Israel by committing adultery with the wives of their neighbors and speaking lies in My name, which I did not command them to do. I am He who knows, and I am a witness, declares the LORD."

You are to tell Shemaiah the Nehelamite that this is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: "In your own name you have sent out letters to all the people of Jerusalem, to the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah, and to all the priests. You said to Zephaniah:
'The LORD has appointed you priest in place of Jehoiada, to be the chief officer in the house of the LORD, responsible for any madman who acts like a prophet — you must put him in stocks and neck irons. So now, why have you not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth, who poses as a prophet among you? For he has sent to us in Babylon, claiming: Since the exile will be lengthy, build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat their produce.'"

(Zephaniah the priest, however, had read this letter to Jeremiah the prophet.)

Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: "Send a message telling all the exiles what the LORD says concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite. Because Shemaiah has prophesied to you— though I did not send him— and has made you trust in a lie, this is what the LORD says: 'I will surely punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his descendants. He will have no one left among this people, nor will he see the good that I will bring to My people, declares the LORD, for he has preached rebellion against the LORD.'"

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Write in a book all the words that I have spoken to you. For behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will restore from captivity My people Israel and Judah, declares the LORD. I will restore them to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they will possess it.'"

These are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah. Yes, this is what the LORD says:

> "A cry of panic is heard — a cry of terror, not of peace. Ask now, and see: Can a male give birth? Why then do I see every man with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labor and every face turned pale? How awful that day will be! None will be like it! It is the time of Jacob's distress, but he will be saved out of it. On that day, declares the LORD of Hosts, I will break the yoke off their necks and tear off their bonds, and no longer will strangers enslave them. Instead, they will serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. As for you, O Jacob My servant, do not be afraid, declares the LORD, and do not be dismayed, O Israel. For I will surely save you out of a distant place, your descendants from the land of their captivity! Jacob will return to quiet and ease, with no one to make him afraid. For I am with you to save you, declares the LORD. Though I will completely destroy all the nations to which I have scattered you, I will not completely destroy you. Yet I will discipline you justly, and will by no means leave you unpunished."

For this is what the LORD says:

> "Your injury is incurable; your wound is grievous. There is no one to plead your cause, no remedy for your sores, no recovery for you. All your lovers have forgotten you; they no longer seek you, for I have struck you as an enemy would, with the discipline of someone cruel, because of your great iniquity and your numerous sins. Why do you cry out over your wound? Your pain has no cure! Because of your great iniquity and your numerous sins I have done these things to you. Nevertheless, all who devour you will be devoured, and all your adversaries— every one of them— will go off into exile. Those who plundered you will be plundered, and all who raided you will be raided. But I will restore your health and heal your wounds, declares the LORD, because they call you an outcast, Zion, for whom no one cares."

This is what the LORD says:

> "I will restore the fortunes of Jacob's tents and have compassion on his dwellings. And the city will be rebuilt on her own ruins, and the palace will stand in its rightful place. Thanksgiving will proceed from them, a sound of celebration. I will multiply them, and they will not be decreased; I will honor them, and they will not

be belittled. Their children will be as in days of old, and their congregation will be established before Me; and I will punish all their oppressors. Their leader will be one of their own, and their ruler will arise from their midst. And I will bring him near, and he will approach Me, for who would dare on his own to approach Me?" declares the LORD. "And you will be My people, and I will be your God." Behold, the storm of the LORD has gone out with fury, a whirlwind swirling down upon the heads of the wicked. The fierce anger of the LORD will not turn back until He has fully accomplished the purposes of His heart. In the days to come you will understand this.

"At that time," declares the LORD, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they will be My people."

This is what the LORD says:

"The people who survived the sword found favor in the wilderness when Israel went to find rest."

The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying:

"I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn you with loving devotion. Again I will build you, and you will be rebuilt, O Virgin Israel. Again you will take up your tambourines and go out in joyful dancing. Again you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria; the farmers will plant and enjoy the fruit. For there will be a day when watchmen will call out on the hills of Ephraim, 'Arise, let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God!'"

For this is what the LORD says:

"Sing with joy for Jacob; shout for the foremost of the nations! Make your praises heard, and say, 'O LORD, save Your people, the remnant of Israel!' Behold, I will bring them from the land of the north and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, including the blind and the lame, expectant mothers and women in labor. They will return as a great assembly! They will come with weeping, and by their supplication I will lead them; I will make them walk beside streams of waters, on a level path where they will not stumble. For I am Israel's Father, and Ephraim is My firstborn." Hear, O nations, the word of the LORD, and proclaim it in distant coastlands: "The One who scattered Israel will gather them and keep them as a shepherd keeps his flock. For the LORD has ransomed Jacob and redeemed him from the hand that had overpowered him. They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion; they will be radiant over the bounty of the LORD — the grain, new wine, and oil, and the young of the flocks and herds. Their life will be like a well-watered garden, and never again will they languish. Then the maidens will rejoice with dancing, young men and old as well. I will turn their mourning into joy, and give them comfort and joy for their sorrow. I will fill the souls of the priests abundantly, and will fill My people with My goodness," declares the LORD.

This is what the LORD says:

"A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

This is what the LORD says:

"Keep your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for the reward for your work will come, declares the LORD. Then your children will return from the land of the enemy. So there is hope for your future, declares the LORD, and your children will return to their own land. I have surely heard Ephraim's moaning: 'You disciplined me severely, like an untrained calf. Restore me, that I may return, for You are the LORD my God. After I returned, I repented; and after I was instructed, I struck my thigh in grief. I was ashamed and humiliated because I bore the disgrace of my youth.' Is not Ephraim a precious son to Me, a delightful child? Though I often speak against him, I still remember him. Therefore My heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him," declares the LORD. "Set up the road markers, put up the signposts. Keep the highway in mind, the road you have traveled. Return, O Virgin Israel, return to these cities of yours. How long will you wander, O faithless daughter? For the LORD has created a new thing in the land— a woman will shelter a man."

This is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: "When I restore them from captivity, they will once again speak this word in the land of Judah and in its cities: 'May the LORD bless you, O righteous dwelling place, O holy mountain.' And Judah and all its cities will dwell together in the land, the farmers and those who move with the flocks, for I will refresh the weary soul and replenish all who are weak."

At this I awoke and looked around. My sleep had been most pleasant to me.

"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and of beast. Just as I watched over them to uproot and tear down, to demolish, destroy, and bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant," declares the LORD.

"In those days, it will no longer be said:

'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the teeth of the children are set on edge.'

Instead, each will die for his own iniquity. If anyone eats the sour grapes, his own teeth will be set on edge.

Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt— a covenant they broke, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD. I will put My law in their minds and inscribe it on their hearts. And

> I will be their God, and they will be My people. No longer will each man teach his neighbor or his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquities and will remember their sins no more."

Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day, who sets in order the moon and stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar — the LORD of Hosts is His name:

> "Only if this fixed order departed from My presence, declares the LORD, would Israel's descendants ever cease to be a nation before Me."

This is what the LORD says:

> "Only if the heavens above could be measured and the foundations of the earth below searched out would I reject all of Israel's descendants because of all they have done," declares the LORD.

"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when this city will be rebuilt for Me, from the tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. The measuring line will once again stretch out straight to the hill of Gareb and then turn toward Goah. The whole valley of the dead bodies and ashes, and all the fields as far as the Kidron Valley, to the corner of the Horse Gate to the east, will be holy to the LORD. It will never again be uprooted or demolished."

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. At that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem, and Jeremiah the prophet was imprisoned in the courtyard of the guard, which was in the palace of the king of Judah.

For Zedekiah king of Judah had imprisoned him, saying: "Why are you prophesying like this? You claim that the LORD says, 'Behold, I am about to deliver this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will capture it. Zedekiah king of Judah will not escape from the hands of the Chaldeans, but he will surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and will speak with him face to face and see him eye to eye. He will take Zedekiah to Babylon, where he will stay until I attend to him, declares the LORD. If you fight against the Chaldeans, you will not succeed.'"

Jeremiah replied, "The word of the LORD came to me, saying: Behold! Hanamel, the son of your uncle Shallum, is coming to you to say, 'Buy for yourself my field in Anathoth, for you have the right of redemption to buy it.' Then, as the LORD had said, my cousin Hanamel came to me in the courtyard of the guard and urged me, 'Please buy my field in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for you own the right of inheritance and redemption. Buy it for yourself.'"

Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.

So I bought the field in Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel, and I weighed out seventeen shekels of silver. I signed and sealed the deed, called in witnesses, and weighed out the silver on the scales. Then I took the deed of purchase— the sealed copy with its terms and conditions, as well as the open copy— and I gave this deed to Baruch son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, in the sight of my cousin Hanamel and the witnesses who were signing the purchase agreement and all the Jews sitting in the courtyard of the guard.

In their sight I instructed Baruch, "This is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: Take these deeds — both the sealed copy and the open copy of the deed of purchase— and put them in a clay jar to preserve them for a long time. For this is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: Houses, fields, and vineyards will again be bought in this land."

After I had given the deed of purchase to Baruch son of Neriah, I prayed to the LORD: "Oh, Lord GOD! You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too difficult for You!

You show loving devotion to thousands but lay the iniquity of the fathers into the laps of their children after them, O great and mighty God whose name is the LORD of Hosts, the One great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are on all the ways of the sons of men, to reward each one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds.

You performed signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and You do so to this very day, both in Israel and among all mankind. And You have made a name for Yourself, as is the case to this day.

You brought Your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and with great terror. You gave them this land that You had sworn to give their fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey.

They came in and possessed it, but they did not obey Your voice or walk in Your law. They failed to perform all that You commanded them to do, and so You have brought upon them all this disaster. See how the siege ramps are mounted against the city to capture it. And by sword and famine and plague, the city has been given into the hands of the Chaldeans who are fighting against it. What You have spoken has happened, as You now see!

Yet You, O Lord GOD, have said to me, 'Buy for yourself the field with silver and call in witnesses, even though the city has been delivered into the hands of the Chaldeans!'"

Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is anything too difficult for Me?

Therefore this is what the LORD says: Behold, I am about to deliver this city into the hands of the Chaldeans and of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, who will capture it. And the Chaldeans who are fighting against this city will come in, set it on fire, and burn it, along with the houses of those who provoked Me to anger by burning incense to Baal on their rooftops and by pouring out drink offerings to other gods.

For the children of Israel and of Judah have done nothing but evil in My sight from their youth; indeed, they have done nothing but provoke Me to anger by the work of their hands, declares the LORD.

For this city has aroused My wrath and fury from the day it was built until now. Therefore I will remove

it from My presence because of all the evil the children of Israel and of Judah have done to provoke Me to anger— they, their kings, their officials, their priests and prophets, the men of Judah, and the residents of Jerusalem. They have turned their backs to Me and not their faces. Though I taught them again and again, they would not listen or respond to discipline.

They have placed their abominations in the house that bears My Name, and so have defiled it. They have built the high places of Baal in the Valley of Ben-hinnom to make their sons and daughters pass through the fire to Molech— something I never commanded them, nor had it ever entered My mind, that they should commit such an abomination and cause Judah to sin.

Now therefore, about this city of which you say, 'It will be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword and famine and plague,' this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I will surely gather My people from all the lands to which I have banished them in My furious anger and great wrath, and I will return them to this place and make them dwell in safety. They will be My people, and I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way, so that they will always fear Me for their own good and for the good of their children after them.

I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never turn away from doing good to them, and I will put My fear in their hearts, so that they will never turn away from Me. Yes, I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul.

For this is what the LORD says: Just as I have brought all this great disaster on this people, so I will bring on them all the good I have promised them. And fields will be bought in this land about which you are saying, 'It is a desolation, without man or beast; it has been delivered into the hands of the Chaldeans.' Fields will be purchased with silver, and deeds will be signed, sealed, and witnessed in the land of Benjamin, in the areas surrounding Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah — the cities of the hill country, the foothills, and the Negev— because I will restore them from captivity, declares the LORD."

While Jeremiah was still confined in the courtyard of the guard, the word of the LORD came to him a second time: "Thus says the LORD who made the earth, the LORD who formed it and established it, the LORD is His name: Call to Me, and I will answer and show you great and unsearchable things you do not know.

For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says about the houses of this city and the palaces of the kings of Judah that have been torn down for defense against the siege ramps and the sword: The Chaldeans are coming to fight and to fill those places with the corpses of the men I will strike down in My anger and in My wrath. I have hidden My face from this city because of all its wickedness.

Nevertheless, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal its people and reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth. I will restore Judah and Israel from captivity and will rebuild them as in former times. And I will cleanse them from all the iniquity they have committed against Me, and will forgive all their sins of rebellion against Me.

So this city will bring Me renown, joy, praise, and glory before all the nations of the earth, who will hear of all the good I do for it. They will tremble in awe because of all the goodness and prosperity that I will provide for it.

This is what the LORD says: In this place you say is a wasteland without man or beast, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem that are deserted — inhabited by neither man nor beast — there will be heard again the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of the bride and bridegroom, and the voices of those bringing thank offerings into the house of the LORD, saying:

> 'Give thanks to the LORD of Hosts, for the LORD is good; His loving devotion endures forever.'

For I will restore the land from captivity as in former times, says the LORD.

This is what the LORD of Hosts says: In this desolate place, without man or beast, and in all its cities, there will once more be pastures for shepherds to rest their flocks. In the cities of the hill country, the foothills, and the Negev, in the land of Benjamin and the cities surrounding Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, the flocks will again pass under the hands of the one who counts them, says the LORD.

> Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the gracious promise that I have spoken to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause to sprout for David a righteous Branch, and He will administer justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely, and this is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.

For this is what the LORD says: David will never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel, nor will the priests who are Levites ever fail to have a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings, and to present sacrifices."

And the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: "This is what the LORD says: If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that day and night cease to occupy their appointed time, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant and with My ministers the Levites who are priests, so that David will not have a son to reign on his throne. As the hosts of heaven cannot be counted and as the sand on the seashore cannot be measured, so too will I multiply the descendants of My servant David and the Levites who minister before Me."

Moreover, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: "Have you not noticed what these people are saying: 'The LORD has rejected the two families He had chosen'? So they despise My people and no longer regard them as a nation. This is what the LORD says: If I have not established My covenant with the day and the night and the fixed order of heaven and earth, then I would also reject the descendants of Jacob and of My servant David, so as not to take from his descendants rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

For I will restore them from captivity and will have compassion on them."

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, all his army, all the earthly kingdoms under his control, and all the other nations were fighting against Jerusalem and all its surrounding cities. The LORD, the God of Israel, told Jeremiah to go and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah and tell him that this is what the LORD says: "Behold, I am about to deliver this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will burn it down. And you yourself will not escape his grasp, but will surely be captured and delivered into his hand. You will see the king of Babylon eye to eye and speak with him face to face; and you will go to Babylon.

Yet hear the word of the LORD, O Zedekiah king of Judah. This is what the LORD says concerning you: You will not die by the sword; you will die in peace. As spices were burned for your fathers, the former kings who preceded you, so people will burn spices for you and lament, 'Alas, O master!' For I Myself have spoken this word, declares the LORD."

In Jerusalem, then, Jeremiah the prophet relayed all these words to Zedekiah king of Judah as the army of the king of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem and the remaining cities of Judah— against Lachish and Azekah. For these were the only fortified cities remaining in Judah.

After King Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people in Jerusalem to proclaim liberty, the word came to Jeremiah from the LORD that each man should free his Hebrew slaves, both male and female, and no one should hold his fellow Jew in bondage. So all the officials and all the people who entered into this covenant agreed that they would free their menservants and maidservants and no longer hold them in bondage. They obeyed and released them, but later they changed their minds and took back the menservants and maidservants they had freed, and they forced them to become slaves again.

Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I made a covenant with your forefathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, saying: Every seventh year, each of you must free his Hebrew brother who has sold himself to you. He may serve you six years, but then you must let him go free. But your fathers did not listen or incline their ear.

Recently you repented and did what pleased Me; each of you proclaimed freedom for his neighbor. You made a covenant before Me in the house that bears My Name. But now you have changed your minds and profaned My name. Each of you has taken back the menservants and maidservants whom you had set at liberty to go wherever they wanted, and you have again forced them to be your slaves.

Therefore this is what the LORD says: You have not obeyed Me; you have not proclaimed freedom, each man for his brother and for his neighbor. So now I proclaim freedom for you, declares the LORD — freedom to fall by sword, by plague, and by famine! I will make you a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth.

And those who have transgressed My covenant and have not fulfilled the terms of the covenant they made before Me, I will treat like the calf they cut in two in order to pass between its pieces. The officials of Judah and Jerusalem, the court officials, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the pieces of the calf, I will deliver into the hands of their enemies who seek their lives. Their corpses will become food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth. And I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah and his officials into the hands of their enemies who seek their lives, to the army of the king of Babylon that had withdrawn from you.

Behold, I am going to give the command, declares the LORD, and I will bring them back to this city. They will fight against it, capture it, and burn it down. And I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant."

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah: "Go to the house of the Rechabites, speak to them, and bring them to one of the chambers of the house of the LORD to offer them a drink of wine."

So I took Jaazaniah son of Jeremiah, the son of Habazziniah, and his brothers and all his sons— the entire house of the Rechabites— and I brought them into the house of the LORD, to a chamber occupied by the sons of Hanan son of Igdaliah, a man of God. This room was near the chamber of the officials, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah son of Shallum the doorkeeper.

Then I set pitchers full of wine and some cups before the men of the house of the Rechabites, and I said to them, "Drink some wine."

"We do not drink wine," they replied, "for our forefather Jonadab son of Rechab commanded us, 'Neither you nor your descendants are ever to drink wine. Nor are you ever to build a house or sow seed or plant a vineyard. Those things are not for you. Instead, you must live in tents all your lives, so that you may live a long time in the land where you wander.'

And we have obeyed the voice of our forefather Jonadab son of Rechab in all he commanded us. So we have not drunk wine all our lives— neither we nor our wives nor our sons and daughters. Nor have we built houses in which to live, and we have not owned any vineyards or fields or crops. But we have lived in tents and have obeyed and done exactly as our forefather Jonadab commanded us.

So when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched into the land, we said: 'Come, let us go into Jerusalem to escape the armies of the Chaldeans and the Arameans.' So we have remained in Jerusalem."

Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: "This is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: Go and tell the men of Judah and the residents of Jerusalem: 'Will you not accept discipline and obey My words?' declares the LORD.

The words of Jonadab son of Rechab have been carried out. He commanded his sons not to drink wine, and they have not drunk it to this very day because they have obeyed the command of their forefather. But I have spoken to you again and again, and you have not obeyed Me!

Again and again I have sent you all My servants the prophets, proclaiming: 'Turn now, each of you, from your wicked ways, and correct your actions. Do not go after other gods to serve them. Live in the land that I have given to you and your fathers.' But you have not inclined your ear or listened to Me. Yes, the sons of Jonadab son of Rechab carried out the command their forefather gave them, but these people have not listened to Me.

Therefore this is what the LORD God of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: 'Behold, I will bring to Judah and to all the residents of Jerusalem all the disaster I have pronounced against them, because I have spoken to them but they have not obeyed, and I have called to them but they have not answered.'"

Then Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites: "This is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: 'Because you have obeyed the command of your forefather Jonadab and have kept all his commandments and have done all that he charged you to do, this is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: Jonadab son of Rechab will never fail to have a man to stand before Me.'"

In the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: "Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah, and all the nations, from the day I first spoke to you during the reign of Josiah until today. Perhaps when the people of Judah hear about all the calamity I plan to bring upon them, each of them will turn from his wicked way. Then I will forgive their iniquity and their sin."

So Jeremiah called Baruch son of Neriah, and at the dictation of Jeremiah, Baruch wrote on a scroll all the words that the LORD had spoken to Jeremiah.

Then Jeremiah commanded Baruch, "I am restricted; I cannot enter the house of the LORD; so you are to go to the house of the LORD on a day of fasting, and in the hearing of the people you are to read the words of the LORD from the scroll you have written at my dictation. Read them in the hearing of all the people of Judah who are coming from their cities.

Perhaps they will bring their petition before the LORD, and each one will turn from his wicked way; for great are the anger and fury that the LORD has pronounced against this people."

So Baruch son of Neriah did everything that Jeremiah the prophet had commanded him. In the house of the LORD he read the words of the LORD from the scroll.

Now in the ninth month of the fifth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, a fast before the LORD was proclaimed to all the people of Jerusalem and all who had come there from the cities of Judah. From the chamber of Gemariah son of Shaphan the scribe, which was in the upper courtyard at the opening of the New Gate of the house of the LORD, Baruch read from the scroll the words of Jeremiah in the hearing of all the people.

When Micaiah son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, heard all the words of the LORD from the scroll, he went down to the scribe's chamber in the king's palace, where all the officials were sitting: Elishama the scribe, Delaiah son of Shemaiah, Elnathan son of Achbor, Gemariah son of Shaphan, Zedekiah son of Hananiah, and all the other officials. And Micaiah reported to them all the words he had heard Baruch read from the scroll in the hearing of the people.

Then all the officials sent word to Baruch through Jehudi son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, saying, "Bring the scroll that you read in the hearing of the people, and come here."

So Baruch son of Neriah took the scroll and went to them.

"Please sit down," they said, "and read it in our hearing."

So Baruch read it in their hearing.

When they had heard all these words, they turned to one another in fear and said to Baruch, "Surely we must report all these words to the king."

"Tell us now," they asked Baruch, "how did you write all these words? Was it at Jeremiah's dictation?"

"It was at his dictation," Baruch replied. "He recited all these words to me and I wrote them in ink on the scroll."

Then the officials said to Baruch, "You and Jeremiah must hide yourselves and tell no one where you are."

So the officials went to the king in the courtyard. And having stored the scroll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, they reported everything to the king.

Then the king sent Jehudi to get the scroll, and he took it from the chamber of Elishama the scribe. And Jehudi read it in the hearing of the king and all the officials who were standing beside him.

Since it was the ninth month, the king was sitting in his winter quarters with a fire burning before him. And as soon as Jehudi had read three or four columns, Jehoiakim would cut them off with a scribe's knife and throw them into the firepot, until the entire scroll had been consumed by the fire.

Yet in hearing all these words, the king and his servants did not become frightened or tear their garments. Even though Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah urged the king not to burn the scroll, he would not listen to them. Instead, the king commanded Jerahmeel, a son of the king, as well as Seraiah son of Azriel and Shelemiah son of Abdeel, to seize Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet. But the LORD had hidden them.

After the king had burned the scroll containing the words that Baruch had written at Jeremiah's dictation, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: "Take another scroll and rewrite on it the very words that were on the original scroll, which Jehoiakim king of Judah has burned.

You are to proclaim concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah that this is what the LORD says: You have burned the scroll and said, 'Why have you written on it that the king of Babylon would surely come and destroy this land and deprive it of man and beast?'

Therefore this is what the LORD says about Jehoiakim king of Judah: He will have no one to sit on David's throne, and his body will be thrown out and exposed to heat by day and frost by night. I will punish him and his descendants and servants for their iniquity. I will bring on them, on the residents of Jerusalem, and

on the men of Judah, all the calamity about which I warned them but they did not listen."

Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to the scribe Baruch son of Neriah, and at Jeremiah's dictation he wrote on it all the words of the scroll that Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire. And many similar words were added to them.

Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made Zedekiah son of Josiah the king of Judah, and he reigned in place of Coniah son of Jehoiakim. But he and his officers and the people of the land refused to obey the words that the LORD had spoken through Jeremiah the prophet.

Yet King Zedekiah sent Jehucal son of Shelemiah and Zephaniah the priest, the son of Maaseiah, to Jeremiah the prophet with the message, "Please pray to the LORD our God for us!"

Now Jeremiah was free to come and go among the people, for they had not yet put him in prison. Pharaoh's army had left Egypt, and when the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard the report, they withdrew from Jerusalem.

Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet: "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says that you are to tell the king of Judah, who sent you to Me: Behold, Pharaoh's army, which has marched out to help you, will go back to its own land of Egypt. Then the Chaldeans will return and fight against this city. They will capture it and burn it down.

This is what the LORD says: Do not deceive yourselves by saying, 'The Chaldeans will go away for good,' for they will not! Indeed, if you were to strike down the entire army of the Chaldeans that is fighting against you, and only wounded men remained in their tents, they would still get up and burn this city down."

When the Chaldean army withdrew from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army, Jeremiah started to leave Jerusalem to go to the land of Benjamin to claim his portion there among the people. But when he reached the Gate of Benjamin, the captain of the guard, whose name was Irijah son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah, seized him and said, "You are deserting to the Chaldeans!"

"That is a lie," Jeremiah replied. "I am not deserting to the Chaldeans!"

But Irijah would not listen to him; instead, he arrested Jeremiah and took him to the officials.

The officials were angry with Jeremiah, and they beat him and placed him in jail in the house of Jonathan the scribe, for it had been made into a prison.

So Jeremiah went into a cell in the dungeon and remained there a long time.

Later, King Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah and received him in his palace, where he asked him privately, "Is there a word from the LORD?"

"There is," Jeremiah replied. "You will be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon."

Then Jeremiah asked King Zedekiah, "How have I sinned against you or your servants or these people, that you have put me in prison? Where are your prophets who prophesied to you, claiming, 'The king of Babylon will not come against you or this land'? But now please listen, O my lord the king. May my petition come before you. Do not send me back to the house of Jonathan the scribe, or I will die there."

So King Zedekiah gave orders for Jeremiah to be placed in the courtyard of the guard and given a loaf of bread daily from the street of the bakers, until all the bread in the city was gone. So Jeremiah remained in the courtyard of the guard.

Now Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jucal son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur son of Malchijah heard that Jeremiah had been telling all the people: "This is what the LORD says: Whoever stays in this city will die by sword and famine and plague, but whoever surrenders to the Chaldeans will live; he will retain his life like a spoil of war, and he will live. This is what the LORD says: This city will surely be delivered into the hands of the army of the king of Babylon, and he will capture it."

Then the officials said to the king, "This man ought to die, for he is discouraging the warriors who remain in this city, as well as all the people, by speaking such words to them; this man is not seeking the well-being of these people, but their ruin."

"Here he is," replied King Zedekiah. "He is in your hands, since the king can do nothing to stop you."

So they took Jeremiah and dropped him into the cistern of Malchiah, the king's son, which was in the courtyard of the guard. They lowered Jeremiah with ropes into the cistern, which had no water but only mud, and Jeremiah sank down into the mud.

Now Ebed-melech the Cushite, a court official in the royal palace, heard that Jeremiah had been put into the cistern. While the king was sitting at the Gate of Benjamin, Ebed-melech went out from the king's palace and said to the king, "My lord the king, these men have acted wickedly in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet. They have dropped him into the cistern, where he will starve to death, for there is no more bread in the city."

So the king commanded Ebed-melech the Cushite, "Take thirty men from here with you and pull Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern before he dies."

Then Ebed-melech took the men with him and went to the king's palace, to a place below the storehouse. From there he took old rags and worn-out clothes and lowered them with ropes to Jeremiah in the cistern.

Ebed-melech the Cushite cried out to Jeremiah, "Put these worn-out rags and clothes under your arms to pad the ropes." Jeremiah did so, and they pulled him up with the ropes and lifted him out of the cistern. And Jeremiah remained in the courtyard of the guard.

Then King Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah the prophet and received him at the third entrance to the house of the LORD. "I am going to ask you something," said the king to Jeremiah. "Do not hide anything from me."

"If I tell you," Jeremiah replied, "you will surely put me to death. And even if I give you advice, you will not listen to me."

But King Zedekiah swore secretly to Jeremiah, "As surely as the LORD lives, who has given us this life, I will not kill you, nor will I deliver you into the hands of these men who are seeking your life."

Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "This is what the LORD God of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: 'If you indeed surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon,

then you will live, this city will not be burned down, and you and your household will survive. But if you do not surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, then this city will be delivered into the hands of the Chaldeans. They will burn it down, and you yourself will not escape their grasp.'"

But King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "I am afraid of the Jews who have deserted to the Chaldeans, for the Chaldeans may deliver me into their hands to abuse me."

"They will not hand you over," Jeremiah replied. "Obey the voice of the LORD in what I am telling you, that it may go well with you and you may live. But if you refuse to surrender, this is the word that the LORD has shown me: All the women who remain in the palace of the king of Judah will be brought out to the officials of the king of Babylon, and those women will say:

> 'They misled you and overcame you — those trusted friends of yours. Your feet sank into the mire, and they deserted you.'

All your wives and children will be brought out to the Chaldeans. And you yourself will not escape their grasp, for you will be seized by the king of Babylon, and this city will be burned down."

Then Zedekiah warned Jeremiah, "Do not let anyone know about this conversation, or you will die. If the officials hear that I have spoken with you, and they come and demand of you, 'Tell us what you said to the king and what he said to you; do not hide it from us, or we will kill you,' then tell them, 'I was presenting to the king my petition that he not return me to the house of Jonathan to die there.'"

When all the officials came to Jeremiah and questioned him, he relayed to them the exact words the king had commanded him to say. So they said no more to him, for no one had overheard the conversation. And Jeremiah remained in the courtyard of the guard until the day Jerusalem was captured.

In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his entire army and laid siege to the city. And on the ninth day of the fourth month of Zedekiah's eleventh year, the city was breached.

Then all the officials of the king of Babylon entered and sat in the Middle Gate: Nergal-sharezer of Samgar, Nebo-sarsekim the Rabsaris, Nergal-sharezer the Rabmag, and all the rest of the officials of the king of Babylon.

When Zedekiah king of Judah and all the soldiers saw them, they fled. They left the city at night by way of the king's garden, through the gate between the two walls, and they went out along the route to the Arabah. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. They seized him and brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he pronounced judgment on him.

There at Riblah the king of Babylon slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and he also killed all the nobles of Judah. Then he put out Zedekiah's eyes and bound him with bronze chains to take him to Babylon.

The Chaldeans set fire to the palace of the king and to the houses of the people, and they broke down the walls of Jerusalem.

Then Nebuzaradan captain of the guard carried away to Babylon the remnant of the people who had remained in the city, along with the deserters who had defected to him. But Nebuzaradan left behind in the land of Judah some of the poor people who had no property, and at that time he gave them vineyards and fields.

Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had given orders about Jeremiah through Nebuzaradan captain of the guard, saying, "Take him, look after him, and do not let any harm come to him; do for him whatever he says."

So Nebuzaradan captain of the guard, Nebushazban the Rabsaris, Nergal-sharezer the Rabmag, and all the captains of the king of Babylon had Jeremiah brought from the courtyard of the guard, and they turned him over to Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, to take him home. So Jeremiah remained among his own people.

And while Jeremiah had been confined in the courtyard of the guard, the word of the LORD had come to him: "Go and tell Ebed-melech the Cushite that this is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: 'I am about to fulfill My words against this city for harm and not for good, and on that day they will be fulfilled before your eyes. But I will deliver you on that day, declares the LORD, and you will not be delivered into the hands of the men whom you fear. For I will surely rescue you so that you do not fall by the sword. Because you have trusted in Me, you will escape with your life like a spoil of war, declares the LORD.'"

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD after Nebuzaradan captain of the guard had released him at Ramah, having found him bound in chains among all the captives of Jerusalem and Judah who were being exiled to Babylon.

The captain of the guard found Jeremiah and said to him, "The LORD your God decreed this disaster on this place, and now the LORD has fulfilled it; He has done just as He said. Because you people have sinned against the LORD and have not obeyed His voice, this thing has happened to you. But now, behold, I am freeing you today from the chains that were on your wrists. If it pleases you to come with me to Babylon, then come, and I will take care of you. But if it seems wrong to you to come with me to Babylon, go no farther. Look, the whole land is before you. Wherever it seems good and right to you, go there."

But before Jeremiah turned to go, Nebuzaradan added, "Return to Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon has appointed over the cities of Judah, and stay with him among the people, or go anywhere else that seems right." Then the captain of the guard gave him a ration and a gift and released him.

So Jeremiah went to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah and stayed with him among the people who were left in the land.

When all the commanders and men of the armies in the field heard that the king of Babylon had ap-

pointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam over the land and that he had put him in charge of the men, women, and children who were the poorest of the land and had not been exiled to Babylon, they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah — Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth, the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah son of the Maacathite — they and their men.

Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, swore an oath to them and their men, assuring them, "Do not be afraid to serve the Chaldeans. Live in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will go well with you. As for me, I will stay in Mizpah to represent you before the Chaldeans who come to us. As for you, gather wine grapes, summer fruit, and oil, place them in your storage jars, and live in the cities you have taken."

When all the Jews in Moab, Ammon, Edom, and all the other lands heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant in Judah and had appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, over them, they all returned from all the places to which they had been banished and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah. And they gathered an abundance of wine grapes and summer fruit.

Meanwhile, Johanan son of Kareah and all the commanders of the armies in the field came to Gedaliah at Mizpah and said to him, "Are you aware that Baalis king of the Ammonites has sent Ishmael son of Nethaniah to take your life?"

But Gedaliah son of Ahikam did not believe them.

Then Johanan son of Kareah spoke privately to Gedaliah at Mizpah. "Let me go and kill Ishmael son of Nethaniah," he said. "No one will know it. Why should he take your life and scatter all the people of Judah who have gathered to you, so that the remnant of Judah would perish?"

But Gedaliah son of Ahikam said to Johanan son of Kareah, "Do not do such a thing! What you are saying about Ishmael is a lie."

In the seventh month, Ishmael son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, who was a member of the royal family and one of the king's chief officers, came with ten men to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah, and they ate a meal together there. Then Ishmael son of Nethaniah and the ten men who were with him got up and struck down Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, with the sword, killing the one whom the king of Babylon had appointed to govern the land. Ishmael also killed all the Jews who were with Gedaliah at Mizpah, as well as the Chaldean soldiers who were there.

On the second day after the murder of Gedaliah, when no one yet knew about it, eighty men who had shaved off their beards, torn their garments, and cut themselves came from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria, carrying grain offerings and frankincense for the house of the LORD. And Ishmael son of Nethaniah went out from Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he went.

When Ishmael encountered the men, he said, "Come to Gedaliah son of Ahikam." And when they came into the city, Ishmael son of Nethaniah and the men with him slaughtered them and threw them into a cistern.

But ten of the men among them said to Ishmael, "Do not kill us, for we have hidden treasure in the field — wheat, barley, oil, and honey!" So he refrained from killing them with the others.

Now the cistern into which Ishmael had thrown all the bodies of the men he had struck down along with Gedaliah was a large one that King Asa had made for fear of Baasha king of Israel. Ishmael son of Nethaniah filled it with the slain.

Then Ishmael took captive all the remnant of the people of Mizpah— the daughters of the king along with all the others who remained in Mizpah— over whom Nebuzaradan captain of the guard had appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam. Ishmael son of Nethaniah took them captive and set off to cross over to the Ammonites.

When Johanan son of Kareah and all the commanders of the armies with him heard of all the crimes that Ishmael son of Nethaniah had committed, they took all their men and went to fight Ishmael son of Nethaniah. And they found him near the great pool in Gibeon.

When all the people with Ishmael saw Johanan son of Kareah and all the commanders of the army with him, they rejoiced, and all the people whom Ishmael had taken captive at Mizpah turned and went over to Johanan son of Kareah. But Ishmael son of Nethaniah and eight of his men escaped from Johanan and went to the Ammonites.

Then Johanan son of Kareah and all the commanders of the armies with him took the whole remnant of the people from Mizpah whom he had recovered from Ishmael son of Nethaniah after Ishmael had killed Gedaliah son of Ahikam: the soldiers, women, children, and court officials he had brought back from Gibeon. And they went and stayed in Geruth Chimham, near Bethlehem, in order to proceed into Egypt to escape the Chaldeans. For they were afraid of the Chaldeans because Ishmael son of Nethaniah had struck down Gedaliah son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon had appointed over the land.

Then all the commanders of the forces, along with Johanan son of Kareah, Jezaniah son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least to the greatest, approached Jeremiah the prophet and said, "May our petition come before you; pray to the LORD your God on behalf of this entire remnant. For few of us remain of the many, as you can see with your own eyes. Pray that the LORD your God will tell us the way we should walk and the thing we should do."

"I have heard you," replied Jeremiah the prophet. "I will surely pray to the LORD your God as you request, and I will tell you everything that the LORD answers. I will not withhold a word from you."

Then they said to Jeremiah, "May the LORD be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not act upon every word that the LORD your God sends you to tell us. Whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God to whom we are sending you, so that it may go well with us when we obey the voice of the LORD our God!"

After ten days the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, and he summoned Johanan son of Kareah, all the commanders of the forces who were with him, and all the people from the least to the greatest.

Jeremiah told them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to whom you sent me to present your petition: ‘If you will indeed stay in this land, then I will build you up and not tear you down; I will plant you and not uproot you, for I will relent of the disaster I have brought upon you.

Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, whom you now fear; do not be afraid of him, declares the LORD, for I am with you to save you and deliver you from him. And I will show you compassion, and he will have compassion on you and restore you to your own land.’

But if you say, ‘We will not stay in this land,’ and you thus disobey the voice of the LORD your God, and if you say, ‘No, but we will go to the land of Egypt and live there, where we will not see war or hear the sound of the ram’s horn or hunger for bread,’ then hear the word of the LORD, O remnant of Judah! This is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: ‘If you are determined to go to Egypt and reside there, then the sword you fear will overtake you there, and the famine you dread will follow on your heels into Egypt, and you will die there. So all who resolve to go to Egypt to reside there will die by sword and famine and plague. Not one of them will survive or escape the disaster I will bring upon them.’

For this is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: ‘Just as My anger and wrath were poured out on the residents of Jerusalem, so will My wrath be poured out on you if you go to Egypt. You will become an object of cursing and horror, of vilification and disgrace, and you will never see this place again.’

The LORD has told you, O remnant of Judah, ‘Do not go to Egypt.’ Know for sure that I have warned you today! For you have deceived yourselves by sending me to the LORD your God, saying, ‘Pray to the LORD our God on our behalf, and as for all that the LORD our God says, tell it to us and we will do it.’

For I have told you today, but you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD your God in all He has sent me to tell you. Now therefore, know for sure that by sword and famine and plague you will die in the place where you desire to go to reside.”

When Jeremiah had finished telling all the people all the words of the LORD their God— everything that the LORD had sent him to say— Azariah son of Hoshaiah, Johanan son of Kareah, and all the arrogant men said to Jeremiah, “You are lying! The LORD our God has not sent you to say, ‘You must not go to Egypt to reside there.’ Rather, Baruch son of Neriah is inciting you against us to deliver us into the hands of the Chaldeans, so that they may put us to death or exile us to Babylon!”

So Johanan son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces disobeyed the command of the LORD to stay in the land of Judah. Instead, Johanan son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces took the whole remnant of Judah, those who had returned to the land of Judah from all the nations to which they had been scattered, the men, the women, the children, the king’s daughters, and everyone whom Nebuzaradan captain of the guard had allowed to remain with Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, as well as Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch son of Neriah.

So they entered the land of Egypt because they did not obey the voice of the LORD, and they went as far as Tahpanhes.

Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah at Tahpanhes: “In the sight of the Jews, pick up some large stones and bury them in the clay of the brick pavement at the entrance to Pharaoh’s palace at Tahpanhes.

Then tell them that this is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: ‘I will send for My servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and I will set his throne over these stones that I have embedded, and he will spread his royal pavilion over them. He will come and strike down the land of Egypt, bringing death to those destined for death, captivity to those destined for captivity, and the sword to those destined for the sword.

I will kindle a fire in the temples of the gods of Egypt, and Nebuchadnezzar will burn those temples and take their gods as captives. So he will wrap himself with the land of Egypt as a shepherd wraps himself in his garment, and he will depart from there unscathed. He will demolish the sacred pillars of the temple of the sun in the land of Egypt, and he will burn down the temples of the gods of Egypt.’”

This is the word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews living in the land of Egypt— in Migdol, Tahpanhes, and Memphis— and in the land of Pathros: “This is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: You have seen all the disaster that I brought against Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah; and behold, they lie today in ruins and desolation because of the evil they have done.

They provoked Me to anger by continuing to burn incense and to serve other gods that neither they nor you nor your fathers ever knew. Yet I sent you all My servants the prophets again and again, saying: ‘Do not do this detestable thing that I hate.’

But they did not listen or incline their ears; they did not turn from their wickedness or stop burning incense to other gods. Therefore My wrath and anger poured out and burned in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, so that they have become the desolate ruin they are today.

So now, this is what the LORD God of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: Why are you doing such great harm to yourselves by cutting off from Judah man and woman, child and infant, leaving yourselves without a remnant? Why are you provoking Me to anger by the work of your hands by burning incense to other gods in the land of Egypt, where you have gone to reside?

As a result, you will be cut off and will become an object of cursing and reproach among all the nations of the earth. Have you forgotten the wickedness of your fathers and of the kings of Judah and their wives, as well as the wickedness that you and your wives committed in the land of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? To this day they have not humbled themselves or shown reverence, nor have they followed My instruction or the statutes that I set before you and your fathers.

Therefore this is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: I will set My face to bring disaster and to cut off all Judah. And I will take away the remnant of Judah who have resolved to go to the land of Egypt

to reside there; they will meet their end. They will all fall by the sword or be consumed by famine. From the least to the greatest, they will die by sword or famine; and they will become an object of cursing and horror, of vilification and reproach.

I will punish those who live in the land of Egypt, just as I punished Jerusalem, by sword and famine and plague, so that none of the remnant of Judah who have gone to reside in Egypt will escape or survive to return to the land of Judah, where they long to return and live; for none will return except a few fugitives."

Then all the men who knew that their wives were burning incense to other gods, and all the women standing by— a great assembly— along with all the people living in the land of Egypt and in Pathros, said to Jeremiah, "As for the word you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD, we will not listen to you! Instead, we will do everything we vowed to do: We will burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and offer drink offerings to her, just as we, our fathers, our kings, and our officials did in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem.

At that time we had plenty of food and good things, and we saw no disaster. But from the time we stopped burning incense to the Queen of Heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything and have been perishing by sword and famine."

"Moreover," said the women, "when we burned incense to the Queen of Heaven and poured out drink offerings to her, was it without our husbands' knowledge that we made sacrificial cakes in her image and poured out drink offerings to her?"

Then Jeremiah said to all the people, both men and women, who were answering him, "As for the incense you burned in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem— you, your fathers, your kings, your officials, and the people of the land— did the LORD not remember and bring this to mind? So the LORD could no longer endure the evil deeds and detestable acts you committed, and your land became a desolation, a horror, and an object of cursing, without inhabitant, as it is this day. Because you burned incense and sinned against the LORD and did not obey the voice of the LORD or walk in His instruction, His statutes, and His testimonies, this disaster has befallen you, as you see today."

Then Jeremiah said to all the people, including all the women, "Hear the word of the LORD, all those of Judah who are in the land of Egypt. This is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: As for you and your wives, you have spoken with your mouths and fulfilled with your hands your words: 'We will surely perform our vows that we have made to burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and to pour out drink offerings to her.' Go ahead, then, do what you have promised! Keep your vows!

Nevertheless, hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah living in Egypt: Behold, I have sworn by My great name, says the LORD, that never again will any man of Judah living in the land of Egypt invoke My name or say, 'As surely as the Lord GOD lives.'

I am watching over them for harm and not for good, and every man of Judah who is in the land of Egypt will meet his end by sword or famine, until they are finished off.

Those who escape the sword will return from Egypt to Judah, few in number, and the whole remnant of Judah who went to dwell in the land of Egypt will know whose word will stand, Mine or theirs!

This will be a sign to you that I will punish you in this place, declares the LORD, so that you may know that My threats of harm against you will surely stand. This is what the LORD says: Behold, I will deliver Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt into the hands of his enemies who seek his life, just as I delivered Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the enemy who was seeking his life."

This is the word that Jeremiah the prophet spoke to Baruch son of Neriah when he wrote these words on a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah:

"This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to you, Baruch: You have said, 'Woe is me because the LORD has added sorrow to my pain! I am worn out with groaning and have found no rest.'"

Thus Jeremiah was to say to Baruch: "This is what the LORD says: Throughout the land I will demolish what I have built and uproot what I have planted. But as for you, do you seek great things for yourself? Stop seeking! For I will bring disaster on every living creature, declares the LORD, but wherever you go, I will grant your life as a spoil of war."

This is the word of the LORD about the nations— the word that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning Egypt and the army of Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt, which was defeated at Carchemish on the Euphrates River by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah:

> "Deploy your shields, small and large; advance for battle! Harness the horses; mount the steeds; take your positions with helmets on! Polish your spears; put on armor! Why am I seeing this? They are terrified, they are retreating; their warriors are defeated, they flee in haste without looking back; terror is on every side!" declares the LORD. "The swift cannot flee, and the warrior cannot escape! In the north by the River Euphrates they stumble and fall. Who is this, rising like the Nile, like rivers whose waters churn? Egypt rises like the Nile, and its waters churn like rivers, boasting, 'I will rise and cover the earth; I will destroy the cities and their people.' Advance, O horses! Race furiously, O chariots! Let the warriors come forth— Cush and Put carrying their shields, men of Lydia drawing the bow. For that day belongs to the Lord GOD of Hosts, a day of vengeance against His foes. The sword will devour until it is satisfied, until it is quenched with their blood. For the Lord GOD of Hosts will hold a sacrifice in the land of the north by the River Euphrates. Go up to Gilead for balm, O Virgin Daughter of Egypt! In vain you try many remedies, but for you there is no healing. The nations have heard of your shame, and your outcry fills the earth, because warrior

stumbles over warrior and both of them have fallen together."

This is the word that the LORD spoke to Jeremiah the prophet about the coming of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to strike the land of Egypt:

"Announce it in Egypt, and proclaim it in Migdol; proclaim it in Memphis and Tahpanhes: 'Take your positions and prepare yourself, for the sword devours those around you.' Why have your warriors been laid low? They cannot stand, for the LORD has thrust them down. They continue to stumble; indeed, they have fallen over one another. They say, 'Get up! Let us return to our people and to the land of our birth, away from the sword of the oppressor.' There they will cry out: 'Pharaoh king of Egypt was all noise; he has let the appointed time pass him by.' As surely as I live, declares the King, whose name is the LORD of Hosts, there will come one who is like Tabor among the mountains and like Carmel by the sea. Pack your bags for exile, O daughter dwelling in Egypt! For Memphis will be laid waste, destroyed and uninhabited. Egypt is a beautiful heifer, but a gadfly from the north is coming against her. Even the mercenaries among her are like fattened calves. They too will turn back; together they will flee, they will not stand their ground, for the day of calamity is coming upon them — the time of their punishment. Egypt will hiss like a fleeing serpent, for the enemy will advance in force; with axes they will come against her like woodsmen cutting down trees. They will chop down her forest, declares the LORD, dense though it may be, for they are more numerous than locusts; they cannot be counted. The Daughter of Egypt will be put to shame; she will be delivered into the hands of the people of the north."

The LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: "Behold, I am about to punish Amon god of Thebes, along with Pharaoh, Egypt with her gods and kings, and those who trust in Pharaoh. I will deliver them into the hands of those who seek their lives— of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and his officers. But after this, Egypt will be inhabited as in days of old, declares the LORD.

But you, O Jacob My servant, do not be afraid, and do not be dismayed, O Israel. For I will surely save you out of a distant place, your descendants from the land of their captivity! Jacob will return to quiet and ease, with no one to make him afraid. And you, My servant Jacob, do not be afraid, declares the LORD, for I am with you. Though I will completely destroy all the nations to which I have banished you, I will not completely destroy you. Yet I will discipline you justly, and will by no means leave you unpunished."

This is the word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet about the Philistines before Pharaoh struck down Gaza. This is what the LORD says:

"See how the waters are rising from the north and becoming an overflowing torrent. They will overflow the land and its fullness, the cities and their inhabitants. The people will cry out, and all who dwell in the land will wail at the sound of the galloping hooves of stallions, the rumbling of chariots, and the clatter of their wheels. The fathers will not turn back for their sons; their hands will hang limp. For the day has come to destroy all the Philistines, to cut off from Tyre and Sidon every remaining ally. Indeed, the LORD is about to destroy the Philistines, the remnant from the coasts of Caphtor. The people of Gaza will shave their heads in mourning; Ashkelon will be silenced. O remnant of their valley, how long will you gash yourself? 'Alas, O sword of the LORD, how long until you rest? Return to your sheath; cease and be still!' How can it rest when the LORD has commanded it? He has appointed it against Ashkelon and the shore of its coastland."

Concerning Moab, this is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says:

"Woe to Nebo, for it will be devastated. Kiriathaim will be captured and disgraced; the fortress will be shattered and dismantled. There is no longer praise for Moab; in Heshbon they devise evil against her: 'Come, let us cut her off from nationhood.' You too, O people of Madmen, will be silenced; the sword will pursue you. A voice cries out from Horonaim: 'Devastation and great destruction!' Moab will be shattered; her little ones will cry out. For on the ascent to Luhith they weep bitterly as they go, and on the descent to Horonaim cries of distress resound over the destruction: 'Flee! Run for your lives! Become like a juniper in the desert.' Because you trust in your works and treasures, you too will be captured, and Chemosh will go into exile with his priests and officials. The destroyer will move against every city, and not one town will escape. The valley will also be ruined, and the high plain will be destroyed, as the LORD has said. Put salt on Moab, for she will be laid waste; her cities will become desolate, with no one to dwell in them. Cursed is the one who is remiss in doing the work of the LORD, and cursed is he who withholds his sword from bloodshed. Moab has been at ease from youth, settled like wine on its dregs; he has not been poured from vessel to vessel or gone into exile. So his flavor has remained the same, and his aroma is unchanged. Therefore behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will send to him wanderers, who will pour him out. They will empty his vessels and shatter his jars. Then Moab will be ashamed of Chemosh, just as the house of Israel was ashamed when they trusted in Bethel. How can you say, 'We are warriors, mighty men ready for battle'? Moab has been destroyed and its towns have been invaded; the best of its young men have gone down in the slaughter, declares the King,

whose name is the LORD of Hosts. Moab's calamity is at hand, and his affliction is rushing swiftly. Mourn for him, all you who surround him, everyone who knows his name; tell how the mighty scepter is shattered — the glorious staff! Come down from your glory; sit on parched ground, O daughter dwelling in Dibon, for the destroyer of Moab has come against you; he has destroyed your fortresses. Stand by the road and watch, O dweller of Aroer! Ask the man fleeing or the woman escaping, 'What has happened?' Moab is put to shame, for it has been shattered. Wail and cry out! Declare by the Arnon that Moab is destroyed. Judgment has come upon the high plain— upon Holon, Jahzah, and Mephaath, upon Dibon, Nebo, and Beth-diblathaim, upon Kiriathaim, Beth-gamul, and Beth-meon, upon Kerioth, Bozrah, and all the towns of Moab, those far and near. The horn of Moab has been cut off, and his arm is broken," declares the LORD. "Make him drunk, because he has magnified himself against the LORD; so Moab will wallow in his own vomit, and he will also become a laughingstock. Was not Israel your object of ridicule? Was he ever found among thieves? For whenever you speak of him you shake your head. Abandon the towns and settle among the rocks, O dwellers of Moab! Be like a dove that nests at the mouth of a cave. We have heard of Moab's pomposity, his exceeding pride and conceit, his proud arrogance and haughtiness of heart. I know his insolence," declares the LORD, "but it is futile. His boasting is as empty as his deeds. Therefore I will wail for Moab; I will cry out for all of Moab; I will moan for the men of Kir-heres. I will weep for you, O vine of Sibmah, more than I weep for Jazer. Your tendrils have extended to the sea; they reach even to Jazer. The destroyer has descended on your summer fruit and grape harvest. Joy and gladness are removed from the orchard and from the fields of Moab. I have stopped the flow of wine from the presses; no one treads them with shouts of joy; their shouts are not for joy. There is a cry from Heshbon to Elealeh; they raise their voices to Jahaz, from Zoar to Horonaim and Eglath-shelishiyah; for even the waters of Nimrim have dried up. In Moab, declares the LORD, I will bring an end to those who make offerings on the high places and burn incense to their gods. Therefore My heart laments like a flute for Moab; it laments like a flute for the men of Kir-heres, because the wealth they acquired has perished. For every head is shaved and every beard is clipped; on every hand is a gash, and around every waist is sackcloth. On all the rooftops of Moab and in the public squares, everyone is mourning; for I have shattered Moab like an unwanted jar," declares the LORD. "How shattered it is! How they wail! How Moab has turned his back in shame! Moab has become an object of ridicule and horror to all those around him."

For this is what the LORD says:

"Behold, an eagle swoops down and spreads his wings against Moab. Kirioth has been taken, and the strongholds seized. In that day the heart of Moab's warriors will be like the heart of a woman in labor. Moab will be destroyed as a nation because he vaunted himself against the LORD. Terror and pit and snare await you, O dweller of Moab," declares the LORD. "Whoever flees the panic will fall into the pit, and whoever climbs from the pit will be caught in the snare. For I will bring upon Moab the year of their punishment," declares the LORD. "Those who flee will stand helpless in Heshbon's shadow, because fire has gone forth from Heshbon and a flame from within Sihon. It devours the foreheads of Moab and the skulls of the sons of tumult. Woe to you, O Moab! The people of Chemosh have perished; for your sons have been taken into exile and your daughters have gone into captivity. Yet in the latter days I will restore Moab from captivity," declares the LORD.

Here ends the judgment on Moab.

Concerning the Ammonites, this is what the LORD says:

"Has Israel no sons? Is he without heir? Why then has Milcom taken possession of Gad? Why have his people settled in their cities? Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will sound the battle cry against Rabbah of the Ammonites. It will become a heap of ruins, and its villages will be burned. Then Israel will drive out their dispossessors, says the LORD. Wail, O Heshbon, for Ai has been destroyed; cry out, O daughters of Rabbah! Put on sackcloth and mourn; run back and forth within your walls, for Milcom will go into exile together with his priests and officials. Why do you boast of your valleys— your valleys so fruitful, O faithless daughter? You trust in your riches and say, 'Who can come against me?' Behold, I am about to bring terror upon you, declares the Lord GOD of Hosts, from all those around you. You will each be driven headlong, with no one to regather the fugitives. Yet afterward I will restore the Ammonites from captivity," declares the LORD.

Concerning Edom, this is what the LORD of Hosts says:

"Is there no longer wisdom in Teman? Has counsel perished from the prudent? Has their wisdom decayed? Turn and run! Lie low, O dwellers of Dedan, for I will bring disaster on Esau at the time I punish him. If grape gatherers came to you, would they not leave some gleanings? Were thieves to come in the night, would they not steal only what they wanted? But I will strip Esau bare; I will uncover his hiding places, and he will be unable to conceal

himself. His descendants will be destroyed along with his relatives and neighbors, and he will be no more. Abandon your orphans; I will preserve their lives. Let your widows trust in Me."

For this is what the LORD says: "If those who do not deserve to drink the cup must drink it, can you possibly remain unpunished? You will not go unpunished, for you must drink it too. For by Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, that Bozrah will become a desolation, a disgrace, a ruin, and a curse, and all her cities will be in ruins forever."

I have heard a message from the LORD; an envoy has been sent to the nations: "Assemble yourselves to march against her! Rise up for battle!" "For behold, I will make you small among nations, despised among men. The terror you cause and the pride of your heart have deceived you, O dwellers in the clefts of the rocks, O occupiers of the mountain summit. Though you elevate your nest like the eagle, even from there I will bring you down," declares the LORD. "Edom will become an object of horror. All who pass by will be appalled and will scoff at all her wounds. As Sodom and Gomorrah were overthrown along with their neighbors," says the LORD, "no one will dwell there; no man will abide there. Behold, one will come up like a lion from the thickets of the Jordan to the watered pasture. For in an instant I will chase Edom from her land. Who is the chosen one I will appoint for this? For who is like Me, and who can challenge Me? What shepherd can stand against Me?" Therefore hear the plans that the LORD has drawn up against Edom and the strategies He has devised against the people of Teman: Surely the little ones of the flock will be dragged away; certainly their pasture will be made desolate because of them. At the sound of their fall the earth will quake; their cry will resound to the Red Sea. Look! An eagle will soar and swoop down, spreading its wings over Bozrah. In that day the hearts of Edom's mighty men will be like the heart of a woman in labor.

Concerning Damascus:

"Hamath and Arpad are put to shame, for they have heard a bad report; they are agitated like the sea; their anxiety cannot be calmed. Damascus has become feeble; she has turned to flee. Panic has gripped her; anguish and pain have seized her like a woman in labor. How is the city of praise not forsaken, the town that brings Me joy? For her young men will fall in the streets, and all her warriors will be silenced in that day," declares the LORD of Hosts. "I will set fire to the walls of Damascus; it will consume the fortresses of Ben-hadad."

Concerning Kedar and the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon defeated, this is what the LORD says:

"Rise up, advance against Kedar, and destroy the people of the east! They will take their tents and flocks, their tent curtains and all their goods. They will take their camels for themselves. They will shout to them: 'Terror is on every side!' Run! Escape quickly! Lie low, O residents of Hazor," declares the LORD, "for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has drawn up a plan against you; he has devised a strategy against you. Rise up, advance against a nation at ease, one that dwells securely," declares the LORD. "They have no gates or bars; they live alone. Their camels will become plunder, and their large herds will be spoil. I will scatter to the wind in every direction those who shave their temples; I will bring calamity on them from all sides," declares the LORD. "Hazor will become a haunt for jackals, a desolation forever. No one will dwell there; no man will abide there."

This is the word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning Elam at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah. This is what the LORD of Hosts says:

"Behold, I will shatter Elam's bow, the mainstay of their might. I will bring the four winds against Elam from the four corners of the heavens, and I will scatter them to all these winds. There will not be a nation to which Elam's exiles will not go. So I will shatter Elam before their foes, before those who seek their lives. I will bring disaster upon them, even My fierce anger," declares the LORD. "I will send out the sword after them until I finish them off. I will set My throne in Elam, and destroy its king and officials," declares the LORD. "Yet in the last days, I will restore Elam from captivity," declares the LORD.

This is the word that the LORD spoke through Jeremiah the prophet concerning Babylon and the land of the Chaldeans:

"Announce and declare to the nations; lift up a banner and proclaim it; hold nothing back when you say, 'Babylon is captured; Bel is put to shame; Marduk is shattered, her images are disgraced, her idols are broken in pieces.' For a nation from the north will come against her; it will make her land a desolation. No one will live in it; both man and beast will flee."

"In those days and at that time, declares the LORD, the children of Israel and the children of Judah will come together, weeping as they come, and will seek the LORD their God. They will ask the way to Zion and turn their faces toward it. They will come and join themselves to the LORD in an everlasting covenant that will never be forgotten. My people are lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray, causing them to roam the mountains. They have wandered from mountain to hill; they have forgotten their resting place. All who found them devoured them, and their enemies said, 'We are not guilty, for they have sinned against the LORD, their true pasture, the LORD, the hope of their fathers.' Flee from the midst of Babylon;

depart from the land of the Chaldeans; be like the he-goats that lead the flock. For behold, I stir up and bring against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the land of the north. They will line up against her; from the north she will be captured. Their arrows will be like skilled warriors who do not return empty-handed. Chaldea will be plundered; all who plunder her will have their fill," declares the LORD.

"Because you rejoice, because you sing in triumph— you who plunder My inheritance— because you frolic like a heifer treading grain and neigh like stallions, your mother will be greatly ashamed; she who bore you will be disgraced. Behold, she will be the least of the nations, a wilderness, a dry land, and a desert. Because of the wrath of the LORD, she will not be inhabited; she will become completely desolate. All who pass through Babylon will be horrified and will hiss at all her wounds. Line up in formation around Babylon, all you who draw the bow! Shoot at her! Spare no arrows! For she has sinned against the LORD. Raise a war cry against her on every side! She has thrown up her hands in surrender; her towers have fallen; her walls are torn down. Since this is the vengeance of the LORD, take out your vengeance upon her; as she has done, do the same to her. Cut off the sower from Babylon, and the one who wields the sickle at harvest time. In the face of the oppressor's sword, each will turn to his own people, each will flee to his own land.

Israel is a scattered flock, chased away by lions. The first to devour him was the king of Assyria; the last to crush his bones was Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon."

Therefore this is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says:

"I will punish the king of Babylon and his land as I punished the king of Assyria. I will return Israel to his pasture, and he will graze on Carmel and Bashan; his soul will be satisfied on the hills of Ephraim and Gilead. In those days and at that time, declares the LORD, a search will be made for Israel's guilt, but there will be none, and for Judah's sins, but they will not be found; for I will forgive the remnant I preserve.

Go up against the land of Merathaim, and against the residents of Pekod. Kill them and devote them to destruction. Do all that I have commanded you," declares the LORD. "The noise of battle is in the land — the noise of great destruction. How the hammer of the whole earth lies broken and shattered! What a horror Babylon has become among the nations! I laid a snare for you, O Babylon, and you were caught before you knew it. You were found and captured because you challenged the LORD. The LORD has opened His armory and brought out His weapons of wrath, for this is the work of the Lord GOD of Hosts in the land of the Chaldeans. Come against her from the farthest border. Break open her granaries; pile her up like mounds of grain. Devote her to destruction; leave her no survivors. Kill all her young bulls; let them go down to the slaughter. Woe to them, for their day has come — the time of their punishment. Listen to the fugitives and refugees from the land of Babylon, declaring in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God, the vengeance for His temple. Summon the archers against Babylon, all who string the bow. Encamp all around her; let no one escape. Repay her according to her deeds; do to her as she has done. For she has defied the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. Therefore, her young men will fall in the streets, and all her warriors will be silenced in that day," declares the LORD.

"Behold, I am against you, O arrogant one," declares the Lord GOD of Hosts, "for your day has come, the time when I will punish you. The arrogant one will stumble and fall with no one to pick him up. And I will kindle a fire in his cities to consume all those around him."

This is what the LORD of Hosts says:

"The sons of Israel are oppressed, and the sons of Judah as well. All their captors hold them fast, refusing to release them. Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of Hosts is His name. He will fervently plead their case so that He may bring rest to the earth, but turmoil to those who live in Babylon. A sword is against the Chaldeans, declares the LORD, against those who live in Babylon, and against her officials and wise men. A sword is against her false prophets, and they will become fools. A sword is against her warriors, and they will be filled with terror. A sword is against her horses and chariots and against all the foreigners in her midst, and they will become like women. A sword is against her treasuries, and they will be plundered. A drought is upon her waters, and they will be dried up. For it is a land of graven images, and the people go mad over idols. So the desert creatures and hyenas will live there and ostriches will dwell there. It will never again be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation. As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah along with their neighbors," declares the LORD, "no one will dwell there; no man will abide there. Behold, an army is coming from the north; a great nation and many kings are stirred up from the ends of the earth. They grasp the bow and spear; they are cruel and merciless. Their voice roars like the sea, and they ride upon horses, lined up like men in formation against you, O Daughter of Babylon. The king of Babylon has heard the report, and his hands hang limp. Anguish has gripped him, pain like that of a woman in labor. Behold, one will come up like a lion from the thickets of the Jordan to the watered pasture. For in an instant I will chase Babylon

from her land. Who is the chosen one I will appoint for this? For who is like Me, and who can challenge Me? What shepherd can stand against Me?" Therefore hear the plans that the LORD has drawn up against Babylon and the strategies He has devised against the land of the Chaldeans: Surely the little ones of the flock will be dragged away; certainly their pasture will be made desolate because of them. At the sound of Babylon's capture the earth will quake; a cry will be heard among the nations.

This is what the LORD says:

"Behold, I will stir up against Babylon and against the people of Leb-kamai the spirit of a destroyer. I will send strangers to Babylon to winnow her and empty her land; for they will come against her from every side in her day of disaster. Do not let the archer bend his bow or put on his armor. Do not spare her young men; devote all her army to destruction! And they will fall slain in the land of the Chaldeans, and pierced through in her streets. For Israel and Judah have not been abandoned by their God, the LORD of Hosts, though their land is full of guilt before the Holy One of Israel." Flee from Babylon! Escape with your lives! Do not be destroyed in her punishment. For this is the time of the LORD's vengeance; He will pay her what she deserves. Babylon was a gold cup in the hand of the LORD, making the whole earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore the nations have gone mad. Suddenly Babylon has fallen and been shattered. Wail for her; get her balm for her pain; perhaps she can be healed. "We tried to heal Babylon, but she could not be healed. Abandon her! Let each of us go to his own land, for her judgment extends to the sky and reaches to the clouds."

"The LORD has brought forth our vindication; come, let us tell in Zion what the LORD our God has accomplished." Sharpen the arrows! Fill the quivers! The LORD has aroused the spirit of the kings of the Medes, because His plan is aimed at Babylon to destroy her, for it is the vengeance of the LORD — vengeance for His temple. Raise a banner against the walls of Babylon; post the guard; station the watchmen; prepare the ambush. For the LORD has both devised and accomplished what He spoke against the people of Babylon. You who dwell by many waters, rich in treasures, your end has come; the thread of your life is cut.

The LORD of Hosts has sworn by Himself:

"Surely I will fill you up with men as with locusts, and they will shout in triumph over you."

The LORD made the earth by His power; He established the world by His wisdom and stretched out the heavens by His understanding. When He thunders, the waters in the heavens roar; He causes the clouds to rise from the ends of the earth. He generates the lightning with the rain and brings forth the wind from His storehouses. Every man is senseless and devoid of knowledge; every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols. For his molten images are a fraud, and there is no breath in them. They are worthless, a work to be mocked. In the time of their punishment they will perish. The Portion of Jacob is not like these, for He is the Maker of all things, and of the tribe of His inheritance — the LORD of Hosts is His name.

"You are My war club, My weapon for battle. With you I shatter nations; with you I bring kingdoms to ruin. With you I shatter the horse and rider; with you I shatter the chariot and driver. With you I shatter man and woman; with you I shatter the old man and the youth; with you I shatter the young man and the maiden. With you I shatter the shepherd and his flock; with you I shatter the farmer and his oxen; with you I shatter the governors and officials. Before your very eyes I will repay Babylon and all the dwellers of Chaldea for all the evil they have done in Zion," declares the LORD. "Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, you who devastate the whole earth, declares the LORD. I will stretch out My hand against you; I will roll you over the cliffs and turn you into a charred mountain. No one shall retrieve from you a cornerstone or a foundation stone, because you will become desolate forever," declares the LORD.

"Raise a banner in the land! Blow the ram's horn among the nations! Prepare the nations against her. Summon the kingdoms against her — Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz. Appoint a captain against her; bring up horses like swarming locusts. Prepare the nations for battle against her — the kings of the Medes, their governors and all their officials, and all the lands they rule. The earth quakes and writhes because the LORD's intentions against Babylon stand: to make the land of Babylon a desolation, without inhabitant. The warriors of Babylon have stopped fighting; they sit in their strongholds. Their strength is exhausted; they have become like women. Babylon's homes have been set ablaze, the bars of her gates are broken. One courier races to meet another, and messenger follows messenger, to announce to the king of Babylon that his city has been captured from end to end. The fords have been seized, the marshes set on fire, and the soldiers are terrified."

For this is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says:

"The Daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor at the time it is trampled. In just a little while her harvest time will come." "Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has devoured me; he has crushed me. He has set me aside like an empty vessel; he has swallowed me like a monster; he filled his belly with my delicacies and vomited me out. May the violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon," says

the dweller of Zion. “May my blood be on the dwellers of Chaldea,” says Jerusalem.

Therefore this is what the LORD says:

“Behold, I will plead your case and take vengeance on your behalf; I will dry up her sea and make her springs run dry. Babylon will become a heap of rubble, a haunt for jackals, an object of horror and scorn, without inhabitant. They will roar together like young lions; they will growl like lion cubs. While they are flushed with heat, I will serve them a feast, and I will make them drunk so that they may revel; then they will fall asleep forever and never wake up, declares the LORD. I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams with male goats. How Sheshach has been captured! The praise of all the earth has been seized. What a horror Babylon has become among the nations! The sea has come up over Babylon; she is covered in turbulent waves. Her cities have become a desolation, a dry and arid land, a land where no one lives, where no son of man passes through. I will punish Bel in Babylon. I will make him spew out what he swallowed. The nations will no longer stream to him; even the wall of Babylon will fall. Come out of her, My people! Save your lives, each of you, from the fierce anger of the LORD. Do not let your heart grow faint, and do not be afraid when the rumor is heard in the land; for a rumor will come one year— and then another the next year— of violence in the land and of ruler against ruler. Therefore, behold, the days are coming when I will punish the idols of Babylon. Her entire land will suffer shame, and all her slain will lie fallen within her. Then heaven and earth and all that is in them will shout for joy over Babylon because the destroyers from the north will come against her,” declares the LORD. “Babylon must fall on account of the slain of Israel, just as the slain of all the earth have fallen because of Babylon. You who have escaped the sword, depart and do not linger! Remember the LORD from far away, and let Jerusalem come to mind.” “We are ashamed because we have heard reproach; disgrace has covered our faces, because foreigners have entered the holy places of the LORD’s house.” “Therefore, behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will punish her idols, and throughout her land the wounded will groan. Even if Babylon ascends to the heavens and fortifies her lofty stronghold, the destroyers I send will come against her,” declares the LORD. “The sound of a cry comes from Babylon, the sound of great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans! For the LORD will destroy Babylon; He will silence her mighty voice. The waves will roar like great waters; the tumult of their voices will resound. For a destroyer is coming against her — against Babylon. Her warriors will be captured, and their bows will be broken, for the LORD is a God of retribution; He will repay in full. I will make her princes and wise men drunk, along with her governors, officials, and warriors. Then they will fall asleep forever and not wake up,” declares the King, whose name is the LORD of Hosts.

This is what the LORD of Hosts says:

“Babylon’s thick walls will be leveled, and her high gates consumed by fire. So the labor of the people will be for nothing; the nations will exhaust themselves to fuel the flames.”

This is the message that Jeremiah the prophet gave to the quartermaster Seraiah son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, when he went to Babylon with King Zedekiah of Judah in the fourth year of Zedekiah’s reign. Jeremiah had written on a single scroll about all the disaster that would come upon Babylon — all these words that had been written concerning Babylon.

And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, “When you get to Babylon, see that you read all these words aloud, and say, ‘O LORD, You have promised to cut off this place so that no one will remain — neither man nor beast. Indeed, it will be desolate forever.’

When you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it and cast it into the Euphrates. Then you are to say, ‘In the same way Babylon will sink and never rise again, because of the disaster I will bring upon her. And her people will grow weary.’”

Here end the words of Jeremiah.

Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. His mother’s name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah; she was from Libnah.

And Zedekiah did evil in the sight of the LORD, just as Jehoiakim had done. For because of the anger of the LORD, all this happened in Jerusalem and Judah, until He finally banished them from His presence.

And Zedekiah also rebelled against the king of Babylon.

So in the ninth year of Zedekiah’s reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his entire army. They encamped outside the city and built a siege wall all around it. And the city was kept under siege until King Zedekiah’s eleventh year.

By the ninth day of the fourth month, the famine in the city was so severe that the people of the land had no food. Then the city was breached; and though the Chaldeans had surrounded the city, all the men of war fled the city by night by way of the gate between the two walls near the king’s garden.

They headed toward the Arabah, but the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho, and his whole army deserted him.

The Chaldeans seized the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he pronounced judgment on Zedekiah.

There at Riblah the king of Babylon slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and he also killed all the officials of Judah. Then he put out Zedekiah’s eyes, bound him with bronze shackles, and took him to Babylon, where he kept him in custody until his dying day.

On the tenth day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign over Babylon, Nebuzaradan captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, entered Jerusalem. He burned down the house of the LORD, the royal palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem — every significant building. And the whole army of the Chaldeans under the captain of the guard broke down all the walls around Jerusalem.

Then Nebuzaradan captain of the guard carried into exile some of the poorest people and those who remained in the city, along with the deserters who had defected to the king of Babylon and the rest of the craftsmen. But Nebuzaradan captain of the guard left behind some of the poorest of the land to tend the vineyards and fields.

Moreover, the Chaldeans broke up the bronze pillars and stands and the bronze Sea in the house of the LORD, and they carried all the bronze to Babylon. They also took away the pots, shovels, wick trimmers, sprinkling bowls, dishes, and all the articles of bronze used in the temple service. The captain of the guard also took away the basins, censers, sprinkling bowls, pots, lampstands, pans, and drink offering bowls— anything made of pure gold or fine silver.

As for the two pillars, the Sea, the twelve bronze bulls under it, and the movable stands that King Solomon had made for the house of the LORD, the weight of the bronze from all these articles was beyond measure. Each pillar was eighteen cubits tall and twelve cubits in circumference; each was hollow, four fingers thick. The bronze capital atop one pillar was five cubits high, with a network of bronze pomegranates all around. The second pillar, with its pomegranates, was similar. Each capital had ninety-six pomegranates on the sides, and a total of a hundred pomegranates were above the surrounding network.

The captain of the guard also took away Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the priest of second rank, and the three doorkeepers. Of those still in the city, he took a court official who had been appointed over the men of war, as well as seven trusted royal advisers. He also took the scribe of the captain of the army, who had enlisted the people of the land, and sixty men who were found in the city.

Nebuzaradan captain of the guard took them and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. There at Riblah in the land of Hamath, the king of Babylon struck them down and put them to death. So Judah was taken into exile, away from its own land.

These are the people Nebuchadnezzar carried away:

in the seventh year, 3,023 Jews;

in Nebuchadnezzar's eighteenth year, 832 people from Jerusalem;

in Nebuchadnezzar's twenty-third year, Nebuzaradan captain of the guard carried away 745 Jews.

So in all, 4,600 people were taken away.

On the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month of the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the first year of the reign of Evil-merodach king of Babylon, he pardoned Jehoiachin king of Judah and released him from prison. And he spoke kindly to Jehoiachin and set his throne above the thrones of the other kings who were with him in Babylon.

So Jehoiachin changed out of his prison clothes, and he dined regularly at the king's table for the rest of his life. And the king of Babylon provided Jehoiachin a daily portion for the rest of his life, until the day of his death.

Lamentations

Book of Lamentations

How lonely lies the city, once so full of people! She who was great among the nations has become a widow. The princess of the provinces has become a slave. She weeps aloud in the night, with tears upon her cheeks. Among all her lovers there is no one to comfort her. All her friends have betrayed her; they have become her enemies. Judah has gone into exile under affliction and harsh slavery; she dwells among the nations but finds no place to rest. All her pursuers have overtaken her in the midst of her distress. The roads to Zion mourn, because no one comes to her appointed feasts. All her gates are deserted; her priests groan, her maidens grieve, and she herself is bitter with anguish. Her foes have become her masters; her enemies are at ease. For the LORD has brought her grief because of her many transgressions. Her children have gone away as captives before the enemy. All the splendor has departed from the Daughter of Zion. Her princes are like deer that find no pasture; they lack the strength to flee in the face of the hunter. In the days of her affliction and wandering Jerusalem remembers all the treasures that were hers in days of old. When her people fell into enemy hands she received no help. Her enemies looked upon her, laughing at her downfall. Jerusalem has sinned greatly; therefore she has become an object of scorn. All who honored her now despise her, for they have seen her nakedness; she herself groans and turns away. Her uncleanness stains her skirts; she did not consider her end. Her downfall was astounding; there was no one to comfort her. Look, O LORD, on my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed! The adversary has seized all her treasures. For she has seen the nations enter her sanctuary— those You had forbidden to enter Your assembly. All her people groan as they search for bread. They have traded their treasures for food to keep themselves alive. Look, O LORD, and consider, for I have become despised. Is this nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look around and see! Is there any sorrow like mine, which was inflicted on me, which the LORD made me suffer on the day of His fierce anger? He sent fire from on high, and it overpowered my bones. He spread a net for my feet and turned me back. He made me desolate, faint all the day long. My transgressions are bound into a yoke, knit together by His hand; they are draped over my neck, and the Lord has broken my strength. He has delivered me into the hands of those I cannot withstand. The Lord has rejected all the mighty men in my midst; He has summoned an army against me to crush my young warriors. Like grapes in a winepress, the Lord has trampled the Virgin Daughter of Judah. For these things I weep; my eyes flow with tears. For there is no one nearby to comfort me, no one to revive my soul. My children are destitute because the enemy has prevailed. Zion stretches out her hands, but there is no one to comfort her. The LORD has decreed against Jacob that his neighbors become his foes. Jerusalem has become an unclean thing among them. The LORD is righteous, yet I rebelled against His command. Listen, all you people; look upon my suffering. My young men and maidens have gone into captivity. I called out to my lovers, but they have betrayed me. My priests and elders perished in the city while they searched for food to keep themselves alive. See, O LORD, how distressed I am! I am churning within; my heart is pounding within me, for I have been most rebellious. Outside, the sword bereaves; inside, there is death. People have heard my groaning, but there is no one to comfort me. All my enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that You have caused it. May You bring the day You have announced, so that they may become like me. Let all their wickedness come before You, and deal with them as You have dealt with me because of all my transgressions. For my groans are many, and my heart is faint. How the Lord has covered the Daughter of Zion with the cloud of His anger! He has cast the glory of Israel from heaven to earth. He has abandoned His footstool in the day of His anger. Without pity the Lord has swallowed up all the dwellings of Jacob. In His wrath He has demolished the fortified cities of the Daughter of Judah. He brought to the ground and defiled her kingdom and its princes. In fierce anger He has cut off every horn of Israel and withdrawn His right hand at the approach of the enemy. He has burned in Jacob like a flaming fire that consumes everything around it. He has bent His bow like an enemy; His right hand is positioned. Like a foe He has killed all who were pleasing to the eye; He has poured out His wrath like fire on the tent of the Daughter of Zion. The Lord is like an enemy; He has swallowed up Israel. He has swallowed up all her palaces and destroyed her strongholds. He has multiplied mourning and lamentation for the Daughter of Judah. He has laid waste His tabernacle like a garden booth; He has destroyed His place of meeting. The LORD has made Zion forget her appointed feasts and Sabbaths. In His fierce anger He has despised both king and priest. The Lord has rejected His altar; He has abandoned His sanctuary; He has delivered the walls of her palaces into the hand of the enemy. They have raised a shout in the house of the LORD as on the day of an appointed

feast. The LORD determined to destroy the wall of the Daughter of Zion. He stretched out a measuring line and did not withdraw His hand from destroying. He made the ramparts and walls lament; together they waste away. Her gates have sunk into the ground; He has destroyed and shattered their bars. Her king and her princes are exiled among the nations, the law is no more, and even her prophets find no vision from the LORD. The elders of the Daughter of Zion sit on the ground in silence. They have thrown dust on their heads and put on sackcloth. The young women of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground. My eyes fail from weeping; I am churning within. My heart is poured out in grief over the destruction of the daughter of my people, because children and infants faint in the streets of the city. They cry out to their mothers: "Where is the grain and wine?" as they faint like the wounded in the streets of the city, as their lives fade away in the arms of their mothers. What can I say for you? To what can I compare you, O Daughter of Jerusalem? To what can I liken you, that I may console you, O Virgin Daughter of Zion? For your wound is as deep as the sea. Who can ever heal you? The visions of your prophets were empty and deceptive; they did not expose your guilt to ward off your captivity. The burdens they envisioned for you were empty and misleading. All who pass by clap their hands at you in scorn. They hiss and shake their heads at the Daughter of Jerusalem: "Is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of all the earth?" All your enemies open their mouths against you. They hiss and gnash their teeth, saying, "We have swallowed her up. This is the day for which we have waited. We have lived to see it!" The LORD has done what He planned; He has accomplished His decree, which He ordained in days of old; He has overthrown you without pity. He has let the enemy gloat over you and exalted the horn of your foes. The hearts of the people cry out to the Lord. O wall of the Daughter of Zion, let your tears run down like a river day and night. Give yourself no relief, and your eyes no rest. Arise, cry out in the night from the first watch of the night. Pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to Him for the lives of your children who are fainting from hunger on the corner of every street. Look, O LORD, and consider: Whom have You ever treated like this? Should women eat their offspring, the infants they have nurtured? Should priests and prophets be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord? Both young and old lie together in the dust of the streets. My young men and maidens have fallen by the sword. You have slain them in the day of Your anger; You have slaughtered them without compassion. You summoned my terrors on every side, as for the day of an appointed feast. In the day of the LORD's anger no one escaped or survived; my enemy has destroyed those I nurtured and reared.

I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of God's wrath. He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness instead of light. Indeed, He keeps turning His hand against me all day long. He has worn away my flesh and skin; He has shattered my bones. He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and hardship. He has made me dwell in darkness like those dead for ages. He has walled me in so I cannot escape; He has weighed me down with chains. Even when I cry out and plead for help, He shuts out my prayer. He has barred my ways with cut stones; He has made my paths crooked. He is a bear lying in wait, a lion hiding in ambush. He forced me off my path and tore me to pieces; He left me without help. He bent His bow and set me as the target for His arrow. He pierced my kidneys with His arrows. I am a laughingstock to all my people; they mock me in song all day long. He has filled me with bitterness; He has intoxicated me with wormwood. He has ground my teeth with gravel and trampled me in the dust. My soul has been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is. So I say, "My strength has perished, along with my hope from the LORD."

Remember my affliction and wandering, the wormwood and the gall. Surely my soul remembers and is humbled within me. Yet I call this to mind, and therefore I have hope: Because of the loving devotion of the LORD we are not consumed, for His mercies never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness! "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in Him." The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is still young. Let him sit alone in silence, for the LORD has laid it upon him. Let him bury his face in the dust— perhaps there is still hope. Let him offer his cheek to the one who would strike him; let him be filled with reproach. For the Lord will not cast us off forever. Even if He causes grief, He will show compassion according to His abundant loving devotion. For He does not willingly afflict or grieve the sons of men. To crush underfoot all the prisoners of the land, to deny a man justice before the Most High, to subvert a man in his lawsuit— of these the Lord does not approve.

Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has ordained it? Do not both adversity and good come from the mouth of the Most High? Why should any mortal man complain, in view of his sins? Let us examine and test our ways, and turn back to the LORD. Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven:

"We have sinned and rebelled; You have not forgiven." You have covered Yourself in anger and pursued us; You have killed without pity. You have covered Yourself with a cloud that no prayer can pass through. You have made us scum and refuse among the nations. All our enemies open their mouths against us. Panic and pitfall have come upon us — devastation and destruction. Streams of tears flow from my eyes over the destruction of the daughter of my people. My eyes overflow unceasingly, without relief, until the LORD looks down from heaven and sees. My eyes bring grief to my soul because of all the daughters of my city. Without cause my enemies hunted me like a bird. They dropped me alive into a pit and cast stones upon me. The waters flowed over my head, and I thought I was going to die. I called on Your name, O LORD, out of the depths of the Pit. You heard my plea: "Do not ignore my cry for relief." You drew near when I called on You; You said, "Do not be afraid." You defend my cause, O Lord; You redeem my life. You have seen, O LORD, the wrong done to me; vindicate my cause! You have seen all their malice, all their plots against me. O LORD, You have heard their insults, all their plots against me — the slander and murmuring of my assailants against me all day long. When they sit and when they rise, see how they mock me in song. You will pay them back what they deserve, O LORD, according to the work of their hands. Put a veil of anguish over their hearts; may Your curse be upon them! You will pursue them in anger and exterminate them from under Your heavens, O LORD.

How the gold has become tarnished, the pure gold has become dull! The gems of the temple lie scattered on every street corner. How the precious sons of Zion, once worth their weight in pure gold, are now esteemed as jars of clay, the work of a potter's hands! Even jackals offer their breasts to nurse their young, but the daughter of my people has become cruel, like an ostrich in the wilderness. The nursing infant's tongue clings in thirst to the roof of his mouth. Little children beg for bread, but no one gives them any. Those who once ate delicacies are destitute in the streets; those brought up in crimson huddle in ash heaps. The punishment of the daughter of my people is greater than that of Sodom, which was overthrown in an instant without a hand turned to help her. Her dignitaries were brighter than snow, whiter than milk; their bodies were more ruddy than rubies, their appearance like sapphires. But now their appearance is blacker than soot; they are not recognized in the streets. Their skin has shriveled on their bones; it has become as dry as a stick. Those slain by the sword are better off than those who die of hunger, who waste away, pierced with pain because the fields lack produce. The hands of compassionate women have cooked their own children, who became their food in the destruction of the daughter of my people. The LORD has exhausted His wrath; He has poured out His fierce anger; He has kindled a fire in Zion, and it has consumed her foundations. The kings of the earth did not believe, nor any people of the world, that an enemy or a foe could enter the gates of Jerusalem. But this was for the sins of her prophets and the guilt of her priests, who shed the blood of the righteous in her midst. They wandered blind in the streets, defiled by this blood, so that no one dared to touch their garments. "Go away! Unclean!" men shouted at them. "Away, away! Do not touch us!" So they fled and wandered. Among the nations it was said, "They can stay here no longer." The presence of the LORD has scattered them; He regards them no more. The priests are shown no honor; the elders find no favor. All the while our eyes were failing as we looked in vain for help. We watched from our towers for a nation that could not save us. They stalked our every step, so that we could not walk in our streets. Our end drew near, our time ran out, for our end had come! Those who chased us were swifter than the eagles in the sky; they pursued us over the mountains and ambushed us in the wilderness. The LORD's anointed, the breath of our life, was captured in their pits. We had said of him, "Under his shadow we will live among the nations." So rejoice and be glad, O Daughter of Edom, you who dwell in the land of Uz. Yet the cup will pass to you as well; you will get drunk and expose yourself. O Daughter of Zion, your punishment is complete; He will not prolong your exile. But He will punish your iniquity, O Daughter of Edom; He will expose your sins.

Remember, O LORD, what has happened to us. Look and see our disgrace! Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, our houses to foreigners. We have become fatherless orphans; our mothers are widows. We must buy the water we drink; our wood comes at a price. We are closely pursued; we are weary and find no rest. We submitted to Egypt and Assyria to get enough bread. Our fathers sinned and are no more, but we bear their punishment. Slaves rule over us; there is no one to deliver us from their hands. We get our bread at the risk of our lives because of the sword in the wilderness. Our skin is as hot as an oven with fever from our hunger. Women have been ravished in Zion, virgins in the cities of Judah. Princes have been hung up by their hands; elders receive no respect. Young men toil at millstones; boys stagger under loads of wood. The elders have left the city gate; the young men have stopped their music. Joy has left our hearts; our dancing has turned to mourning. The crown has fallen from our head. Woe to us, for we have sinned! Because of this, our hearts are faint;

because of these, our eyes grow dim— because of Mount Zion, which lies desolate, patrolled by foxes. You, O LORD, reign forever; Your throne endures from generation to generation. Why have You forgotten us forever? Why have You forsaken us for so long? Restore us to Yourself, O LORD, so we may return; renew our days as of old, unless You have utterly rejected us and remain angry with us beyond measure.

Ezekiel

Book of Ezekiel

In the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was among the exiles by the River Kebar, the heavens opened and I saw visions of God.

On the fifth day of the month— it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin— the word of the LORD came directly to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the River Kebar. And there the LORD's hand was upon him.

I looked and saw a whirlwind coming from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing back and forth and brilliant light all around it. In the center of the fire was a gleam like amber, and within it was the form of four living creatures.

And this was their appearance: They had a human form, but each had four faces and four wings. Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the hooves of a calf, gleaming like polished bronze.

Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. All four living creatures had faces and wings, and their wings were touching one another. They did not turn as they moved; each one went straight ahead.

The form of their faces was that of a man, and each of the four had the face of a lion on the right side, the face of an ox on the left side, and also the face of an eagle. Such were their faces.

Their wings were spread upward; each had two wings touching the wings of the creature on either side, and two wings covering its body. Each creature went straight ahead. Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, without turning as they moved.

In the midst of the living creatures was the appearance of glowing coals of fire, or of torches. Fire moved back and forth between the living creatures; it was bright, and lightning flashed out of it. The creatures were darting back and forth as quickly as flashes of lightning.

When I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the ground beside each creature with its four faces. The workmanship of the wheels looked like the gleam of beryl, and all four had the same likeness. Their workmanship looked like a wheel within a wheel. As they moved, they went in any of the four directions, without pivoting as they moved. Their rims were high and awesome, and all four rims were full of eyes all around. So as the living creatures moved, the wheels moved beside them, and when the creatures rose from the ground, the wheels also rose.

Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, and the wheels would rise alongside them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. When the creatures moved, the wheels moved; when the creatures stood still, the wheels stood still; and when the creatures rose from the ground, the wheels rose alongside them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

Spread out above the heads of the living creatures was the likeness of an awesome expanse, gleaming like crystal. And under the expanse, their wings stretched out toward one another. Each one also had two wings covering its body.

When the creatures moved, I heard the sound of their wings like the roar of many waters, like the voice of the Almighty, like the tumult of an army.

When they stood still, they lowered their wings. And there came a voice from above the expanse over their heads as they stood still with their wings lowered.

Above the expanse over their heads was the likeness of a throne with the appearance of sapphire, and on the throne high above was a figure like that of a man. From what seemed to be His waist up, I saw a gleam like amber, with what looked like fire within it all around. And from what seemed to be His waist down, I saw what looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded Him.

The appearance of the brilliant light all around Him was like that of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell facedown and heard a voice speaking.

"Son of man," He said to me, "stand up on your feet and I will speak to you." And as He spoke to me, the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet, and I heard Him speaking to me.

"Son of man," He said to me, "I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me. To this very day they and their fathers have rebelled against Me. They are obstinate and stubborn children. I am sending you to them, and you are to say to them, 'This is what the Lord GOD says.'

And whether they listen or refuse to listen— for they are a rebellious house— they will know that a prophet has been among them.

But you, son of man, do not be afraid of them or their words. Do not be afraid, though briers and thorns surround you, and you dwell among scorpions. Do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their presence, though they are a rebellious house. But speak My words to them, whether they listen or refuse to listen, for they are rebellious.

And you, son of man, listen to what I tell you. Do not be rebellious like that rebellious house. Open your mouth and eat what I give you."

Then I looked and saw a hand reaching out to me, and in it was a scroll, which He unrolled before me. And written on the front and back of it were words of lamentation, mourning, and woe.

"Son of man," He said to me, "eat what you find here. Eat this scroll, then go and speak to the house of Israel."

So I opened my mouth, and He fed me the scroll.

"Son of man," He said to me, "eat and fill your stomach with this scroll I am giving you."

So I ate, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth.

Then He said to me, "Son of man, go now to the house of Israel and speak My words to them. For you are not being sent to a people of unfamiliar speech or difficult language, but to the house of Israel — not to the many peoples of unfamiliar speech and difficult

language whose words you cannot understand. Surely if I had sent you to them, they would have listened to you.

But the house of Israel will be unwilling to listen to you, since they are unwilling to listen to Me. For the whole house of Israel is hard-headed and hard-hearted.

Behold, I will make your face as hard as their faces, and your forehead as hard as their foreheads. I will make your forehead like a diamond, harder than flint. Do not be afraid of them or dismayed at their presence, even though they are a rebellious house."

"Son of man," He added, "listen carefully to all the words I speak to you, and take them to heart. Go to your people, the exiles; speak to them and tell them, 'This is what the Lord GOD says,' whether they listen or refuse to listen."

Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard a great rumbling sound behind me: "Blessed be the glory of the LORD in His dwelling place!" It was the sound of the wings of the living creatures brushing against one another and the sound of the wheels beside them, a great rumbling sound.

So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness and in the anger of my spirit, with the strong hand of the LORD upon me. I came to the exiles at Tel-abib who dwelt by the River Kebar. And for seven days I sat where they sat and remained there among them, overwhelmed.

At the end of seven days the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from My mouth, give them a warning from Me.

If I say to the wicked man, 'You will surely die,' but you do not warn him or speak out to warn him from his wicked way to save his life, that wicked man will die in his iniquity, and I will hold you responsible for his blood. But if you warn a wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness and his wicked way, he will die in his iniquity, but you will have saved yourself.

Now if a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I put a stumbling block before him, he will die. If you did not warn him, he will die in his sin, and the righteous acts he did will not be remembered. And I will hold you responsible for his blood. But if you warn the righteous man not to sin, and he does not sin, he will indeed live because he heeded your warning, and you will have saved yourself."

And there the hand of the LORD was upon me, and He said to me, "Get up, go out to the plain, and there I will speak with you."

So I got up and went out to the plain, and behold, the glory of the LORD was present there, like the glory I had seen by the River Kebar, and I fell facedown.

Then the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet. He spoke with me and said, "Go, shut yourself inside your house. And you, son of man, they will tie with ropes, and you will be bound so that you cannot go out among the people. I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth, and you will be silent and unable to rebuke them, though they are a rebellious house.

But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you are to tell them, 'This is what the Lord GOD says.' Whoever listens, let him listen; and whoever refuses, let him refuse, for they are a rebellious house."

"Now you, son of man, take a brick, place it before you, and draw on it the city of Jerusalem. Then lay siege against it: Construct a siege wall, build a ramp to it, set up camps against it, and place battering rams around it on all sides. Then take an iron plate and set it up as an iron wall between yourself and the city. Turn your face toward it so that it is under siege, and besiege it. This will be a sign to the house of Israel.

Then lie down on your left side and place the iniquity of the house of Israel upon yourself. You are to bear their iniquity for the number of days you lie on your side. For I have assigned to you 390 days, according to the number of years of their iniquity. So you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel.

When you have completed these days, lie down again, but on your right side, and bear the iniquity of the house of Judah. I have assigned to you 40 days, a day for each year. You must turn your face toward the siege of Jerusalem with your arm bared, and prophesy against it.

Now behold, I will tie you up with ropes so you cannot turn from side to side until you have finished the days of your siege.

But take wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt; put them in a single container and make them into bread for yourself. This is what you are to eat during the 390 days you lie on your side. You are to weigh out twenty shekels of food to eat each day, and you are to eat it at set times.

You are also to measure out a sixth of a hin of water to drink, and you are to drink it at set times. And you shall eat the food as you would a barley cake, after you bake it over dried human excrement in the sight of the people."

Then the LORD said, "This is how the Israelites will eat their defiled bread among the nations to which I will banish them."

"Ah, Lord GOD," I said, "I have never defiled myself. From my youth until now I have not eaten anything found dead or mauled by wild beasts. No unclean meat has ever entered my mouth."

"Look," He replied, "I will let you use cow dung instead of human excrement, and you may bake your bread over that."

Then He told me, "Son of man, I am going to cut off the supply of food in Jerusalem. They will anxiously eat bread rationed by weight, and in despair they will drink water by measure. So they will lack food and water; they will be appalled at the sight of one another wasting away in their iniquity."

"As for you, son of man, take a sharp sword, use it as a barber's razor, and shave your head and beard. Then take a set of scales and divide the hair. When the days of the siege have ended, you are to burn up a third of the hair inside the city; you are also to take a third and slash it with the sword all around the city; and you are to scatter a third to the wind. For I will unleash a sword behind them.

But you are to take a few strands of hair and secure them in the folds of your garment. Again, take a few of

these, throw them into the fire, and burn them. From there a fire will spread to the whole house of Israel.

This is what the Lord GOD says: 'This is Jerusalem, which I have set in the center of the nations, with countries all around her. But she has rebelled against My ordinances more wickedly than the nations, and against My statutes worse than the countries around her. For her people have rejected My ordinances and have not walked in My statutes.'

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: 'You have been more insubordinate than the nations around you; you have not walked in My statutes or kept My ordinances, nor have you even conformed to the ordinances of the nations around you.'

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Behold, I Myself am against you, Jerusalem, and I will execute judgments among you in the sight of the nations. Because of all your abominations, I will do to you what I have never done before and will never do again. As a result, fathers among you will eat their sons, and sons will eat their fathers. I will execute judgments against you and scatter all your remnant to every wind.'

Therefore as surely as I live, declares the Lord GOD, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable idols and abominations, I Myself will withdraw My favor; I will not look upon you with pity, nor will I spare you.

A third of your people will die by plague or be consumed by famine within you, a third will fall by the sword outside your walls, and a third I will scatter to every wind and unleash a sword behind them.

And when My anger is spent and I have vented My wrath against them, I will be appeased. And when I have spent My wrath on them, they will know that I, the LORD, in My zeal have spoken.

I will make you a ruin and a disgrace among the nations around you, in the sight of all who pass by. So you will be a reproach and a taunt, a warning and a horror to the nations around you, when I execute judgments against you in anger, wrath, and raging fury. I, the LORD, have spoken.

When I shower you with the deadly arrows of famine and destruction that I will send to destroy you, I will intensify the famine against you and cut off your supply of food. I will send famine and wild beasts against you, and they will leave you childless. Plague and bloodshed will sweep through you, and I will bring a sword against you. I, the LORD, have spoken."

And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, set your face against the mountains of Israel and prophesy against them.

You are to say: 'O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD! This is what the Lord GOD says to the mountains and hills, to the ravines and valleys: I am about to bring a sword against you, and I will destroy your high places. Your altars will be demolished and your incense altars will be smashed; and I will cast down your slain before your idols. I will lay the corpses of the Israelites before their idols and scatter your bones around your altars.

Wherever you live, the cities will be laid waste and the high places will be demolished, so that your altars will be laid waste and desecrated, your idols smashed and obliterated, your incense altars cut down, and your works blotted out. The slain will fall among you, and you will know that I am the LORD.

Yet I will leave a remnant, for some of you will escape the sword when you are scattered among the nations and throughout the lands.

Then in the nations to which they have been carried captive, your survivors will remember Me — how I have been grieved by their adulterous hearts that turned away from Me, and by their eyes that lusted after idols. So they will loathe themselves for the evil they have done and for all their abominations. And they will know that I am the LORD; I did not declare in vain that I would bring this calamity upon them.

This is what the Lord GOD says: Clap your hands, stomp your feet, and cry out "Alas!" because of all the wicked abominations of the house of Israel, who will fall by sword and famine and plague. He who is far off will die by the plague, he who is near will fall by the sword, and he who remains will die by famine. So I will vent My fury upon them.

Then you will know that I am the LORD, when their slain lie among their idols around their altars, on every high hill, on all the mountaintops, and under every green tree and leafy oak— the places where they offered fragrant incense to all their idols. I will stretch out My hand against them, and wherever they live I will make the land a desolate waste, from the wilderness to Diblah. Then they will know that I am the LORD.'"

And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "O son of man, this is what the Lord GOD says to the land of Israel:

> 'The end! The end has come upon the four corners of the land. The end is now upon you, and I will unleash My anger against you. I will judge you according to your ways and repay you for all your abominations. I will not look on you with pity, nor will I spare you, but I will punish you for your ways and for the abominations among you. Then you will know that I am the LORD.' This is what the Lord GOD says: 'Disaster! An unprecedented disaster — behold, it is coming! The end has come! The end has come! It has roused itself against you. Behold, it has come! Doom has come to you, O inhabitants of the land. The time has come; the day is near; there is panic on the mountains instead of shouts of joy. Very soon I will pour out My wrath upon you and vent My anger against you; I will judge you according to your ways and repay you for all your abominations. I will not look on you with pity, nor will I spare you, but I will punish you for your ways and for the abominations among you. Then you will know that it is I, the LORD, who strikes the blow. Behold, the day is here! It has come! Doom has gone out, the rod has budded, arrogance has bloomed. Their violence has grown into a rod to punish their wickedness. None of them will remain: none of their multitude, none of their wealth, and nothing of value. The time has come; the day has arrived. Let the buyer not rejoice and the seller not mourn, for

wrath is upon the whole multitude. The seller will surely not recover what he sold while both remain alive. For the vision concerning the whole multitude will not be revoked, and because of their iniquity, not one of them will preserve his life.

They have blown the trumpet and made everything ready, but no one goes to war, for My wrath is upon the whole multitude. The sword is outside; plague and famine are within. Those in the country will die by the sword, and those in the city will be devoured by famine and plague. The survivors will escape and live in the mountains, moaning like doves of the valley, each for his own iniquity. Every hand will go limp, and every knee will turn to water. They will put on sackcloth, and terror will overwhelm them. Shame will cover all their faces, and all their heads will be shaved. They will throw their silver into the streets, and their gold will seem unclean. Their silver and gold cannot save them in the day of the wrath of the LORD. They cannot satisfy their appetites or fill their stomachs with wealth, for it became the stumbling block that brought their iniquity. His beautiful ornaments they transformed into pride and used them to fashion their vile images and detestable idols. Therefore I will make these into something unclean for them. And I will hand these things over as plunder to foreigners and loot to the wicked of the earth, who will defile them. I will turn My face away from them, and they will defile My treasured place. Violent men will enter it, and they will defile it. Forge the chain, for the land is full of crimes of bloodshed, and the city is full of violence. So I will bring the most wicked of nations to take possession of their houses. I will end the pride of the mighty, and their holy places will be profaned. Anguish is coming! They will seek peace, but find none. Disaster upon disaster will come, and rumor after rumor. Then they will seek a vision from a prophet, but instruction from the priests will perish, as will counsel from the elders. The king will mourn, the prince will be clothed with despair, and the hands of the people of the land will tremble. I will deal with them according to their conduct, and I will judge them by their own standards. Then they will know that I am the LORD.'"

In the sixth year, on the fifth day of the sixth month, I was sitting in my house, and the elders of Judah were sitting before me; and there the hand of the Lord GOD fell upon me.

Then I looked and saw a figure like that of a man. From His waist down His appearance was like fire, and from His waist up He was as bright as the gleam of amber. He stretched out what looked like a hand and took me by the hair of my head. Then the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and carried me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the north gate of the inner court, where the idol that provokes jealousy was seated.

And there I saw the glory of the God of Israel, like the vision I had seen in the plain. "Son of man," He said to me, "now lift up your eyes to the north."

So I lifted up my eyes to the north, and in the entrance north of the Altar Gate I saw this idol of jealousy.

"Son of man," He said to me, "do you see what they are doing — the great abominations that the house of Israel is committing — to drive Me far from My sanctuary? Yet you will see even greater abominations."

Then He brought me to the entrance to the court, and I looked and saw a hole in the wall.

"Son of man," He told me, "dig through the wall."

So I dug through the wall and discovered a doorway.

Then He said to me, "Go in and see the wicked abominations they are committing here."

So I went in and looked, and engraved all around the wall was every kind of crawling creature and detestable beast, along with all the idols of the house of Israel. Before them stood seventy elders of the house of Israel, with Jaazaniah son of Shaphan standing among them. Each had a censer in his hand, and a fragrant cloud of incense was rising.

"Son of man," He said to me, "do you see what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the darkness, each at the shrine of his own idol? For they are saying, 'The LORD does not see us; the LORD has forsaken the land.'"

Again, He told me, "You will see them committing even greater abominations."

Then He brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the house of the LORD, and I saw women sitting there, weeping for Tammuz.

"Son of man," He said to me, "do you see this? Yet you will see even greater abominations than these."

So He brought me to the inner court of the house of the LORD, and there at the entrance to the temple of the LORD, between the portico and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs to the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east; and they were bowing to the east in worship of the sun.

"Son of man," He said to me, "do you see this? Is it not enough for the house of Judah to commit the abominations they are practicing here, that they must also fill the land with violence and continually provoke Me to anger? Look, they are even putting the branch to their nose! Therefore I will respond with wrath. I will not look on them with pity, nor will I spare them. Although they shout loudly in My ears, I will not listen to them."

Then I heard Him call out in a loud voice, saying, "Draw near, O executioners of the city, each with a weapon of destruction in hand."

And I saw six men coming from the direction of the Upper Gate, which faces north, each with a weapon of slaughter in his hand. With them was another man clothed in linen who had a writing kit at his side. And they came in and stood beside the bronze altar.

Then the glory of the God of Israel rose from above the cherubim, where it had been, and moved to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed in linen who had the writing kit at his side. "Go

throughout the city of Jerusalem," said the LORD, "and put a mark on the foreheads of the men sighing and groaning over all the abominations committed there."

And as I listened, He said to the others, "Follow him through the city and start killing; do not show pity or spare anyone! Slaughter the old men, the young men and maidens, the women and children; but do not go near anyone who has the mark. Now begin at My sanctuary."

So they began with the elders who were before the temple.

Then He told them, "Defile the temple and fill the courts with the slain. Go forth!"

So they went out and began killing throughout the city.

While they were killing, I was left alone. And I fell facedown and cried out, "Oh, Lord GOD, when You pour out Your wrath on Jerusalem, will You destroy the entire remnant of Israel?"

He replied, "The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great. The land is full of bloodshed, and the city is full of perversity. For they say, 'The LORD has forsaken the land; the LORD does not see.' But as for Me, I will not look on them with pity, nor will I spare them. I will bring their deeds down upon their own heads."

Then the man clothed in linen with the writing kit at his side reported back, "I have done as You commanded."

And I looked and saw above the expanse, above the heads of the cherubim, the likeness of a throne of sapphire. And the LORD said to the man clothed in linen, "Go inside the wheelwork beneath the cherubim. Fill your hands with burning coals from among the cherubim and scatter them over the city." And as I watched, he went in.

Now when the man went in, the cherubim were standing on the south side of the temple, and a cloud filled the inner court. Then the glory of the LORD rose from above the cherubim and stood over the threshold of the temple. The temple was filled with the cloud, and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of the LORD. The sound of the wings of the cherubim could be heard as far as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when He speaks.

When the LORD commanded the man clothed in linen, saying, "Take fire from within the wheelwork, from among the cherubim," the man went in and stood beside a wheel. Then one of the cherubim reached out his hand and took some of the fire that was among them. And he put it into the hands of the man clothed in linen, who received it and went out. (The cherubim appeared to have the form of human hands under their wings.)

Then I looked and saw four wheels beside the cherubim, one wheel beside each cherub. And the wheels gleamed like a beryl stone. As for their appearance, all four had the same form, like a wheel within a wheel. When they moved, they would go in any of the four directions, without turning as they moved. For wherever the head faced, the cherubim would go in that direction, without turning as they moved.

Their entire bodies, including their backs, hands, and wings, were full of eyes all around, as were their four wheels. I heard the wheels being called "the whirling wheels."

Each of the cherubim had four faces: the first face was that of a cherub, the second that of a man, the third that of a lion, and the fourth that of an eagle.

Then the cherubim rose upward. These were the living creatures I had seen by the River Kebar. When the cherubim moved, the wheels moved beside them, and even when they spread their wings to rise from the ground, the wheels did not veer away from their side. When the cherubim stood still, the wheels also stood still, and when they ascended, the wheels ascended with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

Then the glory of the LORD moved away from the threshold of the temple and stood above the cherubim. As I watched, the cherubim lifted their wings and rose up from the ground, with the wheels beside them as they went. And they stopped at the entrance of the east gate of the house of the LORD, with the glory of the God of Israel above them.

These were the living creatures I had seen beneath the God of Israel by the River Kebar, and I knew that they were cherubim. Each had four faces and four wings, with what looked like human hands under their wings. Their faces looked like the faces I had seen by the River Kebar. Each creature went straight ahead.

Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the gate of the house of the LORD that faces east. And there at the entrance of the gate were twenty-five men. Among them I saw Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, who were leaders of the people. And the LORD said to me, "Son of man, these are the men who plot evil and give wicked counsel in this city. They are saying, 'Is not the time near to build houses? The city is the cooking pot, and we are the meat.' Therefore prophesy against them; prophesy, O son of man!"

And the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me and told me to declare that this is what the LORD says: "That is what you are thinking, O house of Israel; and I know the thoughts that arise in your minds. You have multiplied those you killed in this city and filled its streets with the dead.

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: The slain you have laid within this city are the meat, and the city is the pot; but I will remove you from it. You fear the sword, so I will bring the sword against you, declares the Lord GOD. I will bring you out of the city and deliver you into the hands of foreigners, and I will execute judgments against you. You will fall by the sword, and I will judge you even to the borders of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

The city will not be a pot for you, nor will you be the meat within it. I will judge you even to the borders of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD. For you have neither followed My statutes nor practiced My ordinances, but you have conformed to the ordinances of the nations around you."

Now as I was prophesying, Pelatiah son of Benaiah died. Then I fell facedown and cried out in a loud voice,

"Oh, Lord GOD, will You bring the remnant of Israel to a complete end?"

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, your brothers — your relatives, your fellow exiles, and the whole house of Israel — are those of whom the people of Jerusalem have said, 'They are far away from the LORD; this land has been given to us as a possession.'

Therefore declare that this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet for a little while I have been a sanctuary for them in the countries to which they have gone.'

Therefore declare that this is what the Lord GOD says: 'I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you from the countries to which you have been scattered, and I will give back to you the land of Israel.'

When they return to it, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations. And I will give them singleness of heart and put a new spirit within them; I will remove their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh, so that they may follow My statutes, keep My ordinances, and practice them. Then they will be My people, and I will be their God.

But as for those whose hearts pursue detestable things and abominations, I will bring their conduct down upon their own heads, declares the Lord GOD."

Then the cherubim, with the wheels beside them, spread their wings, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. And the glory of the LORD rose up from within the city and stood over the mountain east of the city.

And the Spirit lifted me up and carried me back to Chaldea, to the exiles in the vision given by the Spirit of God. After the vision had gone up from me, I told the exiles everything the LORD had shown me.

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, you are living in a rebellious house. They have eyes to see but do not see, and ears to hear but do not hear, for they are a rebellious house.

Therefore, son of man, pack your bags for exile. In broad daylight, set out from your place and go to another as they watch. Perhaps they will understand, though they are a rebellious house. Bring out your baggage for exile by day, as they watch. Then in the evening, as they watch, go out like those who go into exile.

As they watch, dig through the wall and carry your belongings out through it. And as they watch, lift your bags to your shoulder and take them out at dusk; cover your face so that you cannot see the land. For I have made you a sign to the house of Israel."

So I did as I was commanded. I brought out my bags for exile by day, and in the evening I dug through the wall by hand. I took my belongings out at dusk, carrying them on my shoulder as they watched.

And in the morning the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, hasn't the rebellious house of Israel asked you, 'What are you doing?' Tell them that this is what the Lord GOD says: 'This burden concerns the prince in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel who are there.'

You are to say, 'I am a sign to you.' Just as it happened here, so will it be done to them; they will go into exile as captives. And at dusk the prince among them will lift his bags to his shoulder and go out. They will dig through the wall to bring him out. He will cover his face so he cannot see the land. But I will spread My net over him, and he will be caught in My snare. I will bring him to Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans; yet he will not see it, and there he will die.

And I will scatter to every wind all the attendants around him and all his troops, and I will draw a sword to chase after them. And they will know that I am the LORD, when I disperse them among the nations and scatter them throughout the countries.

But I will spare a few of them from sword and famine and plague, so that in the nations to which they go, they can recount all their abominations. Then they will know that I am the LORD."

Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, eat your bread with trembling, and drink your water with quivering and anxiety. Then tell the people of the land that this is what the Lord GOD says about those living in Jerusalem and in the land of Israel: 'They will eat their bread with anxiety and drink their water in dread, for their land will be stripped of everything in it because of the violence of all who dwell in it. The inhabited cities will be laid waste, and the land will become desolate. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'"

Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, what is this proverb that you have in the land of Israel:

'The days go by, and every vision fails'?

Therefore tell them that this is what the Lord GOD says: 'I will put an end to this proverb, and in Israel they will no longer recite it.'

But say to them: 'The days are at hand when every vision will be fulfilled. For there will be no more false visions or flattering divinations within the house of Israel, because I, the LORD, will speak whatever word I speak, and it will be fulfilled without delay. For in your days, O rebellious house, I will speak a message and bring it to pass, declares the Lord GOD.'"

Furthermore, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, take note that the house of Israel is saying, 'The vision that he sees is for many years from now; he prophesies about the distant future.'

Therefore tell them that this is what the Lord GOD says: 'None of My words will be delayed any longer. The message I speak will be fulfilled, declares the Lord GOD.'"

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who are now prophesying. Tell those who prophesy out of their own imagination: Hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Lord GOD says: Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit yet have seen nothing. Your prophets, O Israel, are like foxes among the ruins. You did not go up to the gaps or restore the wall around the house of Israel so that it would stand in the battle on the Day of the LORD.

They see false visions and speak lying divinations. They claim, 'Thus declares the LORD,' when the LORD did not send them; yet they wait for the fulfillment of their message.

Haven't you seen a false vision and spoken a lying divination when you proclaim, 'Thus declares the LORD,' even though I have not spoken?

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: Because you have uttered vain words and seen false visions, I am against you, declares the Lord GOD. My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and speak lying divinations. They will not belong to the council of My people or be recorded in the register of the house of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord GOD.

Because they have led My people astray, saying, 'Peace,' when there is no peace, and whitewashing any flimsy wall that is built, tell those whitewashing the wall that it will fall. Rain will come in torrents, I will send hailstones plunging down, and a windstorm will burst forth. Surely when the wall has fallen, you will not be asked, 'Where is the whitewash with which you covered it?'

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: In My wrath I will release a windstorm, and in My anger torrents of rain and hail will fall with destructive fury. I will tear down the wall you whitewashed and level it to the ground, so that its foundation is exposed. The city will fall, and you will be destroyed within it. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

And after I have vented My wrath against the wall and against those who whitewashed it, I will say to you: 'The wall is gone, and so are those who whitewashed it — those prophets of Israel who prophesied to Jerusalem and saw a vision of peace for her when there was no peace, declares the Lord GOD.'

Now, O son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people who prophesy out of their own imagination. Prophesy against them and tell them that this is what the Lord GOD says: Woe to the women who sew magic charms on their wrists and make veils for the heads of people of every height, in order to ensnare their souls. Will you ensnare the souls of My people but preserve your own? You have profaned Me among My people for handfuls of barley and scraps of bread. By lying to My people who would listen, you have killed those who should not have died and spared those who should not have lived.

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: See, I am against the magic charms with which you ensnare souls like birds, and I will tear them from your arms. So I will free the souls you have ensnared like birds. I will also tear off your veils and deliver My people from your hands, so that they will no longer be prey in your hands. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

Because you have disheartened the righteous with your lies, even though I have caused them no grief, and because you have encouraged the wicked not to turn from their evil ways to save their lives, therefore you will no longer see false visions or practice divination. I will deliver My people from your hands. Then you will know that I am the LORD."

Then some of the elders of Israel came and sat down before me. And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, these men have set up idols in their hearts and put wicked stumbling blocks before their faces. Should I consult with them in any way?

Therefore speak to them and tell them that this is what the Lord GOD says: 'When any Israelite sets up idols in his heart and puts a wicked stumbling block before his face, and then comes to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him according to his great idolatry, so that I may take hold of the hearts of the people of Israel. For because of their idols, they are all estranged from Me.'

Therefore tell the house of Israel that this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Repent and turn away from your idols; turn your faces away from all your abominations. For when any Israelite or any foreigner dwelling in Israel separates himself from Me, sets up idols in his heart, and puts a wicked stumbling block before his face, and then comes to the prophet to inquire of Me, I the LORD will answer him Myself. I will set My face against that man and make him a sign and a proverb; I will cut him off from among My people. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

But if the prophet is enticed to speak a message, then it was I the LORD who enticed him, and I will stretch out My hand against him and destroy him from among My people Israel. They will bear their punishment— the punishment of the inquirer will be the same as that of the prophet— in order that the house of Israel may no longer stray from Me and no longer defile themselves with all their transgressions. Then they will be My people and I will be their God, declares the Lord GOD.'"

And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, if a land sins against Me by acting unfaithfully, and I stretch out My hand against it to cut off its supply of food, to send famine upon it, and to cut off from it both man and beast, then even if these three men— Noah, Daniel, and Job— were in it, their righteousness could deliver only themselves, declares the Lord GOD.

Or if I send wild beasts through the land to leave it childless and desolate, with no man passing through it for fear of the beasts, then as surely as I live, declares the Lord GOD, even if these three men were in it, they could not deliver their own sons or daughters. They alone would be delivered, but the land would be desolate.

Or if I bring a sword against that land and say, 'Let a sword pass through it,' so that I cut off from it both man and beast, then as surely as I live, declares the Lord GOD, even if these three men were in it, they could not deliver their own sons or daughters. They alone would be delivered.

Or if I send a plague into that land and pour out My wrath upon it through bloodshed, cutting off from it both man and beast, then as surely as I live, declares the Lord GOD, even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they could not deliver their own sons or daughters. Their righteousness could deliver only themselves.

For this is what the Lord GOD says: 'How much worse will it be when I send against Jerusalem My four dire judgments— sword, famine, wild beasts, and plague— in order to cut off from it both man and beast?

Yet, behold, some survivors will be left in it — sons and daughters who will be brought out. They will come out to you, and when you see their conduct and actions, you will be comforted regarding the disaster I have

brought upon Jerusalem — all that I have brought upon it. They will bring you consolation when you see their conduct and actions, and you will know that it was not without cause that I have done all these things within it,' declares the Lord GOD."

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, how does the wood of the vine surpass any other branch among the trees in the forest? Can wood be taken from it to make something useful? Or can one make from it a peg on which to hang utensils?

No, it is cast into the fire for fuel. The fire devours both ends, and the middle is charred. Can it be useful for anything? Even when it was whole, it could not be made useful. How much less can it ever be useful when the fire has consumed it and charred it!

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so I will give up the people of Jerusalem. And I will set My face against them. Though they may have escaped the fire, yet another fire will consume them. And when I set My face against them, you will know that I am the LORD.

Thus I will make the land desolate, because they have acted unfaithfully,' declares the Lord GOD."

Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, confront Jerusalem with her abominations and tell her that this is what the Lord GOD says to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth were in the land of the Canaanites. Your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. On the day of your birth your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water for cleansing. You were not rubbed with salt or wrapped in cloths. No one cared enough for you to do even one of these things out of compassion for you. Instead, you were thrown out into the open field, because you were despised on the day of your birth.

Then I passed by and saw you wallowing in your blood, and as you lay there in your blood I said to you, 'Live!' There I said to you, 'Live!' I made you thrive like a plant of the field. You grew up and matured and became very beautiful. Your breasts were formed and your hair grew, but you were naked and bare.

Then I passed by and saw you, and you were indeed old enough for love. So I spread My cloak over you and covered your nakedness. I pledged Myself to you, entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine, declares the Lord GOD. Then I bathed you with water, rinsed off your blood, and anointed you with oil. I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of fine leather. I wrapped you in fine linen and covered you with silk. I adorned you with jewelry, and I put bracelets on your wrists and a chain around your neck. I put a ring in your nose, earrings on your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head.

So you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was made of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour, honey, and oil. You became very beautiful and rose to be queen. Your fame spread among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect in the splendor I bestowed on you, declares the Lord GOD.

But because of your fame, you trusted in your beauty and played the harlot. You lavished your favors on everyone who passed by, and your beauty was theirs for the asking. You took some of your garments and made colorful high places for yourself, and on them you prostituted yourself. Such things should not have happened; never should they have occurred!

You also took the fine jewelry of gold and silver I had given you, and you made male idols with which to prostitute yourself. You took your embroidered garments to cover them, and you set My oil and incense before them. And you set before them as a pleasing aroma the food I had given you— the fine flour, oil, and honey that I had fed you. That is what happened, declares the Lord GOD.

You even took the sons and daughters you bore to Me and sacrificed them as food to idols. Was your prostitution not enough? You slaughtered My children and delivered them up through the fire to idols.

And in all your abominations and acts of prostitution, you did not remember the days of your youth when you were naked and bare, wallowing in your own blood.

Woe! Woe to you, declares the Lord GOD. And in addition to all your other wickedness, you built yourself a mound and made yourself a lofty shrine in every public square. At the head of every street you built your lofty shrines and degraded your beauty. With increasing promiscuity, you spread your legs to all who passed by. You prostituted yourself with your lustful neighbors, the Egyptians, and increased your promiscuity to provoke Me to anger.

Therefore I stretched out My hand against you and reduced your portion. I gave you over to the desire of those who hate you, the daughters of the Philistines, who were ashamed of your lewd conduct. Then you prostituted yourself with the Assyrians, because you were not yet satisfied. Even after that, you were still not satisfied. So you extended your promiscuity to Chaldea, the land of merchants — but even with this you were not satisfied!

How weak-willed is your heart, declares the Lord GOD, while you do all these things, the acts of a shameless prostitute! But when you built your mounds at the head of every street and made your lofty shrines in every public square, you were not even like a prostitute, because you scorned payment.

You adulterous wife! You receive strangers instead of your own husband! Men give gifts to all their prostitutes, but you gave gifts to all your lovers. You bribed them to come to you from everywhere for your illicit favors. So your prostitution is the opposite of that of other women: No one solicited your favors, and you paid a fee instead of receiving one; so you are the very opposite!

Therefore, O prostitute, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Lord GOD says: Because you poured out your wealth and exposed your nakedness in your promiscuity with your lovers and with all your detestable idols, and because of the blood of your children which you gave to them, therefore I will surely gather all the lovers with whom you found pleasure, all those you loved and all those you hated. I will gather them against you from all around and expose you before them, and they will see you completely naked.

And I will sentence you to the punishment of women who commit adultery and those who shed blood; so I will bring upon you the wrath of your bloodshed and jealousy.

Then I will deliver you into the hands of your lovers, and they will level your mounds and tear down your lofty shrines. They will strip off your clothes, take your fine jewelry, and leave you naked and bare. They will bring a mob against you, who will stone you and cut you to pieces with their swords. Then they will burn down your houses and execute judgment against you in the sight of many women.

I will put an end to your prostitution, and you will never again pay your lovers. So I will lay to rest My wrath against you, and My jealousy will turn away from you. Then I will be calm and no longer angry.

Because you did not remember the days of your youth, but enraged Me with all these things, I will surely bring your deeds down upon your own head, declares the Lord GOD. Have you not committed this lewdness on top of all your other abominations?

Behold, all who speak in proverbs will quote this proverb about you:

> 'Like mother, like daughter.'

You are the daughter of your mother, who despised her husband and children. You are the sister of your sisters, who despised their husbands and children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite. Your older sister was Samaria, who lived with her daughters to your north; and your younger sister was Sodom, who lived with her daughters to your south. And you not only walked in their ways and practiced their abominations, but soon you were more depraved than they were.

As surely as I live, declares the Lord GOD, your sister Sodom and her daughters never did as you and your daughters have done. Now this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed, and complacent; they did not help the poor and needy. Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them, as you have seen.

Furthermore, Samaria did not commit half the sins you did. You have multiplied your abominations beyond theirs, and all the abominations you have committed have made your sisters appear righteous. So now you must bear your disgrace, since you have brought justification for your sisters. For they appear more righteous than you, because your sins were more vile than theirs. So you too must bear your shame and disgrace, since you have made your sisters appear righteous.

But I will restore Sodom and her daughters from captivity, as well as Samaria and her daughters. And I will restore you along with them. So you will bear your disgrace and be ashamed of all you did to comfort them.

And your sisters, Sodom with her daughters and Samaria with her daughters, will return to their former state. You and your daughters will also return to your former state. Did you not treat your sister Sodom as an object of scorn in the day of your pride, before your wickedness was uncovered? Even so, you are now scorned by the daughters of Edom and all those around her, and by the daughters of the Philistines—all those around you who despise you. You will bear the consequences of your lewdness and your abominations, declares the LORD.

For this is what the Lord GOD says: I will deal with you according to your deeds, since you have despised the oath by breaking the covenant. But I will remember the covenant I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you receive your older and younger sisters. I will give them to you as daughters, but not because of My covenant with you.

So I will establish My covenant with you, and you will know that I am the LORD, so that when I make atonement for all you have done, you will remember and be ashamed and never again open your mouth because of your disgrace, declares the Lord GOD."

Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, pose a riddle; speak a parable to the house of Israel and tell them that this is what the Lord GOD says:

> 'A great eagle with great wings and long pinions, full of feathers of many colors, came to Lebanon and took away the top of the cedar. He plucked off its topmost shoot, carried it to the land of merchants, and planted it in a city of traders. He took some of the seed of the land and planted it in fertile soil; he placed it by abundant waters and set it out like a willow. It sprouted and became a spreading vine, low in height, with branches turned toward him; yet its roots remained where it stood. So it became a vine and yielded branches and sent out shoots. But there was another great eagle with great wings and many feathers. And behold, this vine bent its roots toward him. It stretched out its branches to him from its planting bed, so that he might water it. It had been planted in good soil by abundant waters in order to yield branches and bear fruit and become a splendid vine.'

So you are to tell them that this is what the Lord GOD says:

> 'Will it flourish? Will it not be uprooted and stripped of its fruit so that it shrivels? All its foliage will wither! It will not take a strong arm or many people to pull it up by its roots. Even if it is transplanted, will it flourish? Will it not completely wither when the east wind strikes? It will wither on the bed where it sprouted.'"

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Now say to this rebellious house: 'Do you not know what these things mean?'

Tell them, 'Behold, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, carried off its king and officials, and brought them back with him to Babylon. He took a member of the royal family and made a covenant with him, putting him under oath. Then he carried away the leading men of the land, so that the kingdom would be brought low, unable to lift itself up, surviving only by keeping his covenant.

But this king rebelled against Babylon by sending his envoys to Egypt to ask for horses and a large army.

Will he flourish? Will the one who does such things escape? Can he break a covenant and yet escape?'

'As surely as I live,' declares the Lord GOD, 'he will die in Babylon, in the land of the king who enthroned him, whose oath he despised and whose covenant he broke. Pharaoh with his mighty army and vast horde will not help him in battle, when ramps are built and siege walls constructed to destroy many lives. He despised the oath by breaking the covenant. Seeing that he gave his hand in pledge yet did all these things, he will not escape!'

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: 'As surely as I live, I will bring down upon his head My oath that he despised and My covenant that he broke. I will spread My net over him and catch him in My snare. I will bring him to Babylon and execute judgment upon him there for the treason he committed against Me. All his choice troops will fall by the sword, and those who survive will be scattered to every wind. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken.'

This is what the Lord GOD says:

> 'I will take a shoot from the lofty top of the cedar, and I will set it out. I will pluck a tender sprig from its topmost shoots, and I will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. I will plant it on the mountain heights of Israel so that it will bear branches; it will yield fruit and become a majestic cedar. Birds of every kind will nest under it, taking shelter in the shade of its branches. Then all the trees of the field will know that I am the LORD. I bring the tall tree down and make the low tree tall. I dry up the green tree and make the withered tree flourish. I, the LORD, have spoken, and I have done it.'"

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel:

> 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the teeth of the children are set on edge'?

As surely as I live, declares the Lord GOD, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. Behold, every soul belongs to Me; both father and son are Mine. The soul who sins is the one who will die.

Now suppose a man is righteous and does what is just and right:

> He does not eat at the mountain or look to the idols of the house of Israel. He does not defile his neighbor's wife or approach a woman during her period. He does not oppress another, but restores the pledge to the debtor. He does not commit robbery, but gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with clothing. He does not engage in usury or take excess interest, but he withholds his hand from iniquity and executes true justice between men. He follows My statutes and faithfully keeps My ordinances. That man is righteous; surely he will live, declares the Lord GOD.

Now suppose that man has a violent son, who sheds blood or does any of these things, though the father has done none of them:

> Indeed, the son eats at the mountain and defiles his neighbor's wife. He oppresses the poor and needy; he commits robbery and does not restore a pledge. He lifts his eyes to idols; he commits abominations. He engages in usury and takes excess interest.

Will this son live? He will not! Since he has committed all these abominations, he will surely die; his blood will be on his own head.

Now suppose this son has a son who sees all the sins his father has committed, considers them, and does not do likewise:

> He does not eat at the mountain or look to the idols of the house of Israel. He does not defile his neighbor's wife. He does not oppress another, or retain a pledge, or commit robbery. He gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with clothing. He withholds his hand from harming the poor and takes no interest or usury. He keeps My ordinances and follows My statutes.

Such a man will not die for his father's iniquity. He will surely live.

As for his father, he will die for his own iniquity, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother, and did what was wrong among his people.

Yet you may ask, 'Why shouldn't the son bear the iniquity of his father?'

Since the son has done what is just and right, carefully observing all My statutes, he will surely live.

The soul who sins is the one who will die. A son will not bear the iniquity of his father, and a father will not bear the iniquity of his son. The righteousness of the righteous man will fall upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked man will fall upon him.

But if the wicked man turns from all the sins he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die. None of the transgressions he has committed will be held against him. Because of the righteousness he has practiced, he will live. Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Lord GOD. Wouldn't I prefer that he turn from his ways and live?

But if a righteous man turns from his righteousness and practices iniquity, committing the same abominations as the wicked, will he live? None of the righteous acts he did will be remembered. Because of the unfaithfulness and sin he has committed, he will die.

Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.'

Hear now, O house of Israel: Is it My way that is unjust? Is it not your ways that are unjust?

If a righteous man turns from his righteousness and practices iniquity, he will die for this. He will die because of the iniquity he has committed.

But if a wicked man turns from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he will save his life. Because he considered and turned from all the transgressions he had committed, he will surely live; he will not die.

Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not just.'

Are My ways unjust, O house of Israel? Is it not your ways that are unjust?

Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge you, each according to his ways, declares the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, so that your iniquity will not become your downfall. Cast away from yourselves all the transgressions you have committed, and fashion for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. Why should you die, O house of Israel?

For I take no pleasure in anyone's death, declares the Lord GOD. So repent and live!"

"As for you, take up a lament for the princes of Israel and say:

> 'What was your mother? A lioness among the lions! She lay down among the young lions; she reared her cubs. She brought up one of her cubs, and he became a young lion. After learning to tear his prey, he devoured men. When the nations heard of him, he was trapped in their pit. With hooks they led him away to the land of Egypt. When she saw that she had waited in vain, that her hope was lost, she took another of her cubs and made him a young lion. He prowled among the lions, and became a young lion. After learning to tear his prey, he devoured men. He broke down their strongholds and devastated their cities. The land and everything in it shuddered at the sound of his roaring. Then the nations set out against him from the provinces on every side. They spread their net over him; he was trapped in their pit. With hooks they caged him and brought him to the king of Babylon. They brought him into captivity so that his roar was heard no longer on the mountains of Israel. Your mother was like a vine in your vineyard, planted by the water; it was fruitful and full of branches because of the abundant waters. It had strong branches, fit for a ruler's scepter. It towered high above the thick branches, conspicuous for its height and for its dense foliage. But it was uprooted in fury, cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up its fruit. Its strong branches were stripped off and they withered; the fire consumed them. Now it is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty land. Fire has gone out from its main branch and devoured its fruit; on it no strong branch remains fit for a ruler's scepter.'

This is a lament and shall be used as a lament."

In the seventh year, on the tenth day of the fifth month, some of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the LORD, and they sat down before me.

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel and tell them that this is what the Lord GOD says: Have you come to inquire of Me? As surely as I live, I will not be consulted by you, declares the Lord GOD.

Will you judge them, will you judge them, son of man? Confront them with the abominations of their fathers and tell them that this is what the Lord GOD says: On the day I chose Israel, I swore an oath to the descendants of the house of Jacob and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt. With an uplifted hand I said to them, 'I am the LORD your God.'

On that day I swore to bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the glory of all lands. And I said to them: 'Each of you must throw away the abominations before his eyes, and you must not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.'

But they rebelled against Me and refused to listen. None of them cast away the abominations before their eyes, and they did not forsake the idols of Egypt. So I resolved to pour out My wrath upon them and vent My anger against them in the land of Egypt. But I acted for the sake of My name, that it should not be profaned in the eyes of the nations among whom they were living, in whose sight I had revealed Myself to Israel by bringing them out of the land of Egypt.

So I brought them out of the land of Egypt and led them into the wilderness. And I gave them My statutes and made known to them My ordinances— for the man who does these things will live by them. I also gave them My Sabbaths as a sign between us, so that they would know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them.

Yet the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness. They did not follow My statutes and they rejected My ordinances— though the man who does these things will live by them — and they utterly profaned My Sabbaths. Then I resolved to pour out My wrath upon them and put an end to them in the wilderness. But I acted for the sake of My name, so that it would not be profaned in the eyes of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out.

Moreover, with an uplifted hand I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land that I had given them— a land flowing with milk and honey, the glory of all lands — because they kept rejecting My ordinances, refusing to walk in My statutes, and profaning My Sabbaths; for their hearts continually went after their idols. Yet I looked on them with pity and did not destroy them or bring them to an end in the wilderness.

In the wilderness I said to their children: 'Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers or keep their ordinances or defile yourselves with their idols. I am the LORD your God; walk in My statutes, keep My ordinances, and practice them. Keep My Sabbaths holy, that they may be a sign between us, so that you may know that I am the LORD your God.'

But the children rebelled against Me. They did not walk in My statutes or carefully observe My ordinances — though the man who does these things will live by them — and they profaned My Sabbaths. So I resolved to pour out My wrath upon them and vent My anger against them in the wilderness. But I withheld My hand and acted for the sake of My name, so that it would not be profaned in the eyes of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out.

However, with an uplifted hand I swore to them in the wilderness that I would scatter them among the nations and disperse them throughout the lands. For they did not practice My ordinances, but they rejected My statutes and profaned My Sabbaths, fixing their eyes on the idols of their fathers.

I also gave them over to statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live. And I pronounced them unclean through their gifts — the sacrifice of every firstborn in the fire — so that I might devastate them, in order that they would know that I am the LORD.

Therefore, son of man, speak to the house of Israel, and tell them that this is what the Lord GOD says: In this way also your fathers blasphemed Me by their unfaithfulness against Me. When I brought them into the land that I swore to give them and they saw any high hill or leafy tree, there they offered their sacrifices, presented offerings that provoked Me, sent up their fragrant incense, and poured out their drink offerings. So I asked them: 'What is this high place to which you go?'

(And to this day it is called Bamah.)

Therefore tell the house of Israel that this is what the Lord GOD says: Will you defile yourselves the way your fathers did, prostituting yourselves with their abominations? When you offer your gifts, sacrificing your sons in the fire, you continue to defile yourselves with all your idols to this day. So should I be consulted by you, O house of Israel? As surely as I live, declares the Lord GOD, I will not be consulted by you!

When you say, 'Let us be like the nations, like the peoples of the lands, serving wood and stone,' what you have in mind will never come to pass.

As surely as I live, declares the Lord GOD, with a strong hand, an outstretched arm, and outpoured wrath I will rule over you. With a strong hand, an outstretched arm, and outpoured wrath I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands to which you have been scattered. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the nations, where I will enter into judgment with you face to face.

Just as I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you, declares the Lord GOD. I will make you pass under the rod and will bring you into the bond of the covenant. And I will purge you of those who rebel and transgress against Me. I will bring them out of the land in which they dwell, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

And as for you, O house of Israel, this is what the Lord GOD says: Go and serve your idols, every one of you. But afterward, you will surely listen to Me, and you will no longer defile My holy name with your gifts and idols.

For on My holy mountain, the high mountain of Israel, declares the Lord GOD, there the whole house of Israel, all of them, will serve Me in the land. There I will accept them and will require your offerings and choice gifts, along with all your holy sacrifices.

When I bring you from the peoples and gather you from the lands to which you have been scattered, I will accept you as a pleasing aroma. And I will show My holiness through you in the sight of the nations. Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the land that I swore to give your fathers.

There you will remember your ways and all the deeds with which you have defiled yourselves, and you will loathe yourselves for all the evils you have done. Then you will know, O house of Israel, that I am the LORD, when I have dealt with you for the sake of My name and not according to your wicked ways and corrupt acts, declares the Lord GOD."

Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, set your face toward the south, preach against it, and prophesy against the forest of the Negev. Say to the forest of the Negev: Hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Lord GOD says: I am about to ignite in you a fire, and it will devour all your trees, both green and dry. The blazing flame will not be quenched, and by it every face from south to north will be scorched. Then all people will see that I, the LORD, have kindled it; it will not be quenched."

Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD, they are saying of me, 'Is he not just telling parables?'"

And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, set your face against Jerusalem and preach against the sanctuaries. Prophesy against the land of Israel and tell her that this is what the LORD says: 'I am against you, and I will draw My sword from its sheath and cut off from you both the righteous and the wicked. Because I will cut off both the righteous and the wicked, My sword will be unsheathed against everyone from south to north. Then all flesh will know that I, the LORD, have taken My sword from its sheath, not to return it again.'

But you, son of man, groan! Groan before their eyes with a broken heart and bitter grief. And when they ask, 'Why are you groaning?' you are to say, 'Because of the news that is coming. Every heart will melt, and every hand will go limp. Every spirit will faint, and every knee will turn to water.' Yes, it is coming and it will surely happen, declares the Lord GOD."

Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, prophesy and tell them that this is what the Lord says:

> 'A sword, a sword, sharpened and polished — it is sharpened for the slaughter, polished to flash like lightning! Should we rejoice in the scepter of My son? The sword despises every such stick. The sword is appointed to be polished, to be grasped in the hand. It is sharpened and polished, to be placed in the hand of the slayer. Cry out and wail, O son of man, for the sword is wielded against My people; it is against all the princes of Israel! They are tossed to the sword with My people; therefore strike your thigh. Surely testing will come! And what if even the scepter, which the sword despises, does not continue?' declares the Lord GOD. 'So then, son of man, prophesy and strike your hands together. Let the sword strike two times, even three. It is a sword that slays, a sword of great slaughter closing in on every side! So that their hearts may melt and many may stumble, I have appointed at all their gates a sword for slaughter. Yes, it is ready to flash like lightning; it is drawn for slaughter. Slash to the right; set your blade to the left— wherever your blade is directed. I too will strike My hands together,

and I will satisfy My wrath.' I, the LORD, have spoken."

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Now you, son of man, mark out two roads for the sword of the king of Babylon to take, both starting from the same land. And make a signpost where the road branches off to each city. Mark out one road for the sword to come against Rabbah of the Ammonites, and another against Judah into fortified Jerusalem.

For the king of Babylon stands at the fork in the road, at the junction of the two roads, to seek an omen: He shakes the arrows, he consults the idols, he examines the liver.

In his right hand appears the portent for Jerusalem, where he is to set up battering rams, to call for the slaughter, to lift a battle cry, to direct the battering rams against the gates, to build a ramp, and to erect a siege wall. It will seem like a false omen to the eyes of those who have sworn allegiance to him, but it will draw attention to their guilt and take them captive.

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Because you have drawn attention to your guilt, exposing your transgressions, so that your sins are revealed in all your deeds — because you have come to remembrance — you shall be taken in hand.

> And you, O profane and wicked prince of Israel, the day has come for your final punishment.'

This is what the Lord GOD says:

> 'Remove the turban, and take off the crown. Things will not remain as they are: Exalt the lowly and bring low the exalted. A ruin, a ruin, I will make it a ruin! And it will not be restored until the arrival of Him to whom it belongs, to whom I have assigned the right of judgment.'

Now prophesy, son of man, and declare that this is what the Lord GOD says concerning the Ammonites and their contempt:

> 'A sword! A sword is drawn for slaughter, polished to consume, to flash like lightning— while they offer false visions for you and lying divinations about you— to be placed on the necks of the wicked who are slain, whose day has come, the time of their final punishment. Return the sword to its sheath! In the place where you were created, in the land of your origin, I will judge you. I will pour out My anger upon you; I will breathe the fire of My fury against you; I will hand you over to brutal men, skilled in destruction. You will be fuel for the fire. Your blood will stain your own land. You will not be remembered, for I, the LORD, have spoken.'"

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "As for you, son of man, will you judge her? Will you pass judgment on the city of bloodshed? Then confront her with all her abominations and tell her that this is what the Lord GOD says: 'O city who brings her own doom by shedding blood within her walls and making idols to defile herself, you are guilty of the blood you have shed, and you are defiled by the idols you have made. You have brought your days to a close and have come to the end of your years. Therefore I have made you a reproach to the nations and a mockery to all the lands. Those near and far will mock you, O infamous city, full of turmoil.

See how every prince of Israel within you has used his power to shed blood. Father and mother are treated with contempt. Within your walls the foreign resident is exploited, the fatherless and the widow are oppressed.

You have despised My holy things and profaned My Sabbaths. Among you are slanderous men bent on bloodshed; within you are those who eat on the mountain shrines and commit acts of indecency.

In you they have uncovered the nakedness of their fathers; in you they violate women during their menstrual impurity. One man commits an abomination with his neighbor's wife; another wickedly defiles his daughter-in-law; and yet another violates his sister, his own father's daughter.

In you they take bribes to shed blood. You engage in usury, take excess interest, and extort your neighbors. But Me you have forgotten, declares the Lord GOD.

Now look, I strike My hands together against your unjust gain and against the blood you have shed in your midst. Will your courage endure or your hands be strong in the day I deal with you? I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will act. I will disperse you among the nations and scatter you throughout the lands; I will purge your uncleanness. And when you have defiled yourself in the eyes of the nations, then you will know that I am the LORD.'"

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to Me. All of them are copper, tin, iron, and lead inside the furnace; they are but the dross of silver.

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Because all of you have become dross, behold, I will gather you into Jerusalem. Just as one gathers silver, copper, iron, lead, and tin into the furnace to melt with a fiery blast, so I will gather you in My anger and wrath, leave you there, and melt you.

Yes, I will gather you together and blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and you will be melted within the city. As silver is melted in a furnace, so you will be melted within the city. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have poured out My wrath upon you.'"

And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, say to her, 'In the day of indignation, you are a land that has not been cleansed, upon which no rain has fallen.'

The conspiracy of the princes in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing its prey. They devour the people, seize the treasures and precious things, and multiply the widows within her.

Her priests do violence to My law and profane My holy things. They make no distinction between the holy and the common, and they fail to distinguish between the clean and the unclean. They disregard My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them.

Her officials within her are like wolves tearing their prey, shedding blood, and destroying lives for dishonest gain.

Her prophets whitewash these deeds by false visions and lying divinations, saying, 'This is what the Lord GOD says,' when the LORD has not spoken.

The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery. They have oppressed the poor and needy and have exploited the foreign resident without justice.

I searched for a man among them to repair the wall and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, so that I should not destroy it. But I found no one. So I have poured out My indignation upon them and consumed them with the fire of My fury. I have brought their ways down upon their own heads, declares the Lord GOD."

Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, there were two women, daughters of the same mother, and they played in Egypt, prostituting themselves from their youth. Their breasts were fondled there, and their virgin bosoms caressed. The older was named Oholah, and her sister was named Oholibah. They became Mine and gave birth to sons and daughters. As for their identities, Oholah is Samaria, and Oholibah is Jerusalem.

Oholah prostituted herself while she was still Mine. She lusted after her lovers, the Assyrians — warriors clothed in blue, governors and commanders, all desirable young men, horsemen mounted on steeds. She offered sexual favors to all the elite of Assyria. She defiled herself with all the idols of those for whom she lusted.

She did not give up the prostitution she began in Egypt, when men slept with her in her youth, caressed her virgin bosom, and poured out their lust upon her. Therefore I delivered her into the hands of her lovers, the Assyrians for whom she lusted. They exposed her nakedness, seized her sons and daughters, and put her to the sword. Thus she became a byword among women, and they executed judgment against her.

Her sister Oholibah saw this, yet in her lust and prostitution she was more depraved than her sister. She too lusted after the Assyrians — governors and commanders, warriors dressed in splendor, horsemen riding on steeds, all desirable young men. And I saw that she too had defiled herself; both of them had taken the same path.

But Oholibah carried her prostitution even further. She saw the men portrayed on the wall, images of the Chaldeans, engraved in vermilion, wearing belts on their waists and flowing turbans on their heads; all of them looked like officers of the Babylonians in Chaldea, the land of their birth. At the sight of them, she lusted for them and sent messengers to them in Chaldea. Then the Babylonians came to her, to the bed of love, and in their lust they defiled her. But after she had been defiled by them, she turned away in disgust.

When Oholibah openly prostituted herself and exposed her nakedness, I turned away from her in disgust, just as I had turned away from her sister. Yet she multiplied her promiscuity, remembering the days of her youth, when she had prostituted herself in the land of Egypt and lusted after their lovers, whose genitals were like those of donkeys and whose emission was like that of stallions. So you revisited the indecency of your youth, when the Egyptians caressed your bosom and pressed your young breasts.

Therefore, Oholibah, this is what the Lord GOD says: 'I will incite your lovers against you, those from whom you turned away in disgust. And I will bring them against you from every side — the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, the men of Pekod, Shoa, and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them— all desirable young men, governors and commanders, officers and men of renown, mounted on horses.

They will come against you with a host of peoples, with weapons, chariots, and wagons. They will array themselves against you on every side with buckler and shield and helmet. I will delegate judgment to them, and they will punish you according to their own standards. And I will set My jealous rage against you, and they will deal with you in fury. They will cut off your noses and ears, and your survivors will fall by the sword. They will seize your sons and daughters, and your remnant will be consumed by fire. They will strip off your clothes and take your fine jewelry. So I will put an end to your indecency and prostitution, which began in the land of Egypt, and you will not lift your eyes to them or remember Egypt anymore.'

For this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Surely I will deliver you into the hands of those you hate, from whom you turned away in disgust. They will treat you with hatred, take all for which you have worked, and leave you naked and bare, so that the shame of your prostitution will be exposed. Your indecency and promiscuity have brought these things upon you, because you have prostituted yourself with the nations and defiled yourself with their idols. Because you have followed the path of your sister, I will put her cup into your hand.'

This is what the Lord GOD says:

> 'You will drink your sister's cup, a cup deep and wide. It will bring scorn and derision, for it holds so much. You will be filled with drunkenness and grief, with a cup of devastation and desolation, the cup of your sister Samaria. You will drink it and drain it; you will dash it to pieces, and tear your breasts. For I have spoken,' declares the Lord GOD.

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Because you have forgotten Me and have cast Me behind your back, you must bear the consequences of your indecency and prostitution.'"

Then the LORD said to me: "Son of man, will you pass judgment against Oholah and Oholibah? Then declare to them their abominations. For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands. They have committed adultery with their idols. They have even sacrificed their children, whom they bore to Me, in the fire as food for their idols.

They have also done this to Me: On that very same day, they defiled My sanctuary and profaned My Sabbaths. On the very day they slaughtered their children for their idols, they entered My sanctuary to profane it. Yes, they did this inside My house.

Furthermore, you sisters sent messengers for men who came from afar; and behold, when they arrived, you bathed for them, painted your eyes, and adorned yourself with jewelry. You sat on a couch of luxury with a table spread before it, on which you had set My incense and My oil, accompanied by the sound of a carefree crowd. Drunkards were brought in from the desert along with men from the rabble, who put

bracelets on your wrists and beautiful crowns on your head.

Then I said of her who had grown old in adulteries: 'Now let them use her as a prostitute, for that is all she is!'

And they slept with her as with a prostitute; they slept with Oholah and Oholibah, those lewd women. But righteous men will sentence them to the punishment of those who commit adultery and bloodshed, because they are adulteresses with blood on their hands.

This is what the Lord GOD says: 'Bring a mob against them and consign them to terror and plunder. The mob will stone them and cut them down with their swords. They will kill their sons and daughters and burn down their houses. So I will put an end to indecency in the land, and all the women will be admonished not to imitate your behavior. They will repay you for your indecency, and you will bear the consequences of your sins of idolatry. Then you will know that I am the Lord GOD.'"

In the ninth year, on the tenth day of the tenth month, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, write down today's date, for on this very day the king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem. Now speak a parable to this rebellious house and tell them that this is what the Lord GOD says:

> 'Put the pot on the fire; put it on and pour in the water. Put in the pieces of meat, every good piece— thigh and shoulder — fill it with choice bones. Take the choicest of the flock and pile the fuel beneath it. Bring it to a boil and cook the bones in it.'

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says:

> 'Woe to the city of bloodshed, to the pot now rusted, whose rust will not come off! Empty it piece by piece; cast no lots for its contents. For the blood she shed is still within her; she poured it out on the bare rock; she did not pour it on the ground to cover it with dust. In order to stir up wrath and take vengeance, I have placed her blood on the bare rock, so that it would not be covered.'

Yes, this is what the Lord GOD says:

> 'Woe to the city of bloodshed! I, too, will pile the kindling high. Pile on the logs and kindle the fire; cook the meat well and mix in the spices; let the bones be burned. Set the empty pot on its coals until it becomes hot and its copper glows. Then its impurity will melt within; its rust will be consumed. It has frustrated every effort; its thick rust has not been removed, even by the fire. Because of the indecency of your uncleanness I tried to cleanse you, but you would not be purified from your filthiness. You will not be pure again until My wrath against you has subsided. I, the LORD, have spoken; the time is coming, and I will act. I will not refrain or show pity, nor will I relent. I will judge you according to your ways and deeds,' declares the Lord GOD."

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, behold, I am about to take away the desire of your eyes with a fatal blow. But you must not mourn or weep or let your tears flow. Groan quietly; do not mourn for the dead. Put on your turban and strap your sandals on your feet; do not cover your lips or eat the bread of mourners."

So I spoke to the people in the morning, and in the evening my wife died. And the next morning I did as I had been commanded.

Then the people asked me, "Won't you tell us what these things you are doing mean to us?"

So I answered them, "The word of the LORD came to me, saying: Tell the house of Israel that this is what the Lord GOD says: 'I am about to desecrate My sanctuary, the pride of your power, the desire of your eyes, and the delight of your soul. And the sons and daughters you left behind will fall by the sword.'

Then you will do as I have done: You will not cover your lips or eat the bread of mourners. Your turbans will remain on your heads and your sandals on your feet. You will not mourn or weep, but you will waste away because of your sins, and you will groan among yourselves.

'Thus Ezekiel will be a sign for you; you will do everything that he has done. When this happens, you will know that I am the Lord GOD.'

And you, son of man, know that on the day I take away their stronghold, their pride and joy — the desire of their eyes which uplifted their souls — and their sons and daughters as well, on that day a fugitive will come and tell you the news. On that day your mouth will be opened to him who has escaped; you will speak and no longer be mute. So you will be a sign to them, and they will know that I am the LORD."

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, set your face against the Ammonites and prophesy against them. Tell the Ammonites to hear the word of the Lord GOD, for this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Because you exclaimed, "Aha!" when My sanctuary was profaned, when the land of Israel was laid waste, and when the house of Judah went into exile, therefore I will indeed give you as a possession to the people of the East. They will set up their camps and pitch their tents among you. They will eat your fruit and drink your milk. I will make Rabbah a pasture for camels, and Ammon a resting place for sheep. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'

For this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Because you clapped your hands and stomped your feet and rejoiced over the land of Israel with a heart full of contempt, therefore I will indeed stretch out My hand against you and give you as plunder to the nations. I will cut you off from the peoples and exterminate you from the countries. I will destroy you, and you will know that I am the LORD.'

This is what the Lord GOD says: 'Because Moab and Seir said, "Look, the house of Judah is like all the other nations," therefore I will indeed expose the flank of Moab beginning with its frontier cities — Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim — the glory of the land. I will give it along with the Ammonites as a possession to the people of the East, so that the Ammonites will no longer be remembered among the nations. So

I will execute judgments on Moab, and they will know that I am the LORD.'

This is what the Lord GOD says: 'Because Edom acted vengefully against the house of Judah, and in so doing incurred grievous guilt, therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: I will stretch out My hand against Edom and cut off from it both man and beast. I will make it a wasteland, and from Teman to Dedan they will fall by the sword. I will take My vengeance on Edom by the hand of My people Israel, and they will deal with Edom according to My anger and wrath. Then they will know My vengeance, declares the Lord GOD.'

This is what the Lord GOD says: 'Because the Philistines acted in vengeance, taking vengeance with malice of soul to destroy Judah with ancient hostility, therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: Behold, I will stretch out My hand against the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethites and destroy the remnant along the coast. I will execute great vengeance against them with furious reproof. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I lay My vengeance upon them.'"

In the eleventh month of the twelfth year, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, because Tyre has said of Jerusalem, 'Aha! The gate to the nations is broken; it has swung open to me; now that she lies in ruins I will be filled,' therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Behold, O Tyre, I am against you, and I will raise up many nations against you, as the sea brings up its waves. They will destroy the walls of Tyre and demolish her towers. I will scrape the soil from her and make her a bare rock. She will become a place to spread nets in the sea, for I have spoken, declares the Lord GOD. She will become plunder for the nations, and the villages on her mainland will be slain by the sword. Then they will know that I am the LORD.'

For this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Behold, I will bring against Tyre from the north Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses and chariots, with cavalry and a great company of troops. He will slaughter the villages of your mainland with the sword; he will set up siege works against you, build a ramp to your walls, and raise his shields against you. He will direct the blows of his battering rams against your walls and tear down your towers with his axes. His multitude of horses will cover you in their dust.

When he enters your gates as an army entering a breached city, your walls will shake from the noise of cavalry, wagons, and chariots. The hooves of his horses will trample all your streets. He will slaughter your people with the sword, and your mighty pillars will fall to the ground. They will plunder your wealth and pillage your merchandise. They will demolish your walls, tear down your beautiful homes, and throw your stones and timber and soil into the water.

So I will silence the sound of your songs, and the music of your lyres will no longer be heard. I will make you a bare rock, and you will become a place to spread the fishing nets. You will never be rebuilt, for I, the LORD, have spoken, declares the Lord GOD.'

This is what the Lord GOD says to Tyre: 'Will not the coastlands quake at the sound of your downfall, when the wounded groan at the slaughter in your midst?

All the princes of the sea will descend from their thrones, remove their robes, and strip off their embroidered garments. Clothed with terror, they will sit on the ground, trembling every moment, appalled over you. Then they will lament for you, saying,

> "How you have perished, O city of renown inhabited by seafaring men— she who was powerful on the sea, along with her people, who imposed terror on all peoples! Now the coastlands tremble on the day of your downfall; the islands in the sea are dismayed by your demise.'"

For this is what the Lord GOD says: 'When I make you a desolate city like other deserted cities, and when I raise up the deep against you so that the mighty waters cover you, then I will bring you down with those who descend to the Pit, to the people of antiquity. I will make you dwell in the earth below like the ancient ruins, with those who descend to the Pit, so that you will no longer be inhabited or set in splendor in the land of the living. I will make you an object of horror, and you will be no more. You will be sought, but will never be found,' declares the Lord GOD."

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Now you, son of man, take up a lament for Tyre. Tell Tyre, who dwells at the gateway to the sea, merchant of the peoples on many coasts, that this is what the Lord GOD says:

> You have said, O Tyre, 'I am perfect in beauty.'
> Your borders are in the heart of the seas;
> your builders perfected your beauty. They constructed all your planking with cypress from Senir. They took a cedar from Lebanon to make a mast for you. Of oaks from Bashan they made your oars; of wood from the coasts of Cyprus they made your deck, inlaid with ivory. Of embroidered fine linen from Egypt they made your sail, which served as your banner. Of blue and purple from the coasts of Elishah they made your awning. The men of Sidon and Arvad were your oarsmen. Your men of skill, O Tyre, were there as your captains. The elders of Gebal were aboard as shipwrights, repairing your leaks. All the ships of the sea and their sailors came alongside to barter for your merchandise. Men of Persia, Lydia, and Put served as warriors in your army. They hung their shields and helmets on your walls; they gave you splendor. Men of Arvad and Helech manned your walls all around, and the men of Gammad were in your towers. They hung their shields around your walls; they perfected your beauty.
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> Tarshish was your merchant because of your great wealth of goods; they exchanged silver, iron, tin, and lead for your wares.
>
> Javan, Tubal, and Meshech were your merchants. They exchanged slaves and bronze utensils for your merchandise.
>
> The men of Beth-togarmah exchanged horses, war horses, and mules for your wares.

The men of Dedan were your clients; many coastlands were your market; they paid you with ivory tusks and ebony.
Aram was your customer because of your many products; they exchanged turquoise, purple, embroidered work, fine linen, coral, and rubies for your wares.
Judah and the land of Israel traded with you; they exchanged wheat from Minnith, cakes and honey, oil and balm for your merchandise.
Because of your many products and your great wealth of goods, Damascus traded with you wine from Helbon, wool from Zahar, and casks of wine from Izal for your wares. Wrought iron, cassia, and sweet cane were exchanged for your merchandise.
Dedan was your merchant in saddlecloths for riding.
Arabia and all the princes of Kedar were your customers, trading in lambs, rams, and goats.
The merchants of Sheba and Raamah traded with you; for your wares they exchanged gold, the finest of all spices, and precious stones.
Haran, Canneh, and Eden traded with you, and so did the merchants of Sheba, Asshur, and Chilmad. In your marketplace they traded with you fine garments of blue, embroidered work, and multicolored rugs with cords tightly twisted and knotted.
The ships of Tarshish carried your merchandise. And you were filled with heavy cargo in the heart of the sea. Your oarsmen have brought you onto the high seas, but the east wind will shatter you in the heart of the sea. Your wealth, wares, and merchandise, your sailors, captains, and shipwrights, your merchants and all the warriors within you, with all the other people on board, will sink into the heart of the sea on the day of your downfall. The countryside will shake when your sailors cry out. All who handle the oars will abandon their ships. The sailors and all the captains of the sea will stand on the shore. They will raise their voices for you and cry out bitterly. They will throw dust on their heads and roll in ashes. They will shave their heads for you and wrap themselves in sackcloth. They will weep over you with anguish of soul and bitter mourning. As they wail and mourn over you, they will take up a lament for you: 'Who was ever like Tyre, silenced in the middle of the sea? When your wares went out to sea, you satisfied many nations. You enriched the kings of the earth with your abundant wealth and merchandise. Now you are shattered by the seas in the depths of the waters; your merchandise and the people among you have gone down with you. All the people of the coastlands are appalled over you. Their kings shudder with fear; their faces are contorted. Those who trade among the nations hiss at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.'"

And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, tell the ruler of Tyre that this is what the Lord GOD says:

Your heart is proud, and you have said, 'I am a god; I sit in the seat of gods in the heart of the sea.' Yet you are a man and not a god, though you have regarded your heart as that of a god. Behold, you are wiser than Daniel; no secret is hidden from you! By your wisdom and understanding you have gained your wealth and amassed gold and silver for your treasuries. By your great skill in trading you have increased your wealth, but your heart has grown proud because of it. Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: Because you regard your heart as the heart of a god, behold, I will bring foreigners against you, the most ruthless of nations. They will draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom and will defile your splendor. They will bring you down to the Pit, and you will die a violent death in the heart of the seas. Will you still say, 'I am a god,' in the presence of those who slay you? You will be only a man, not a god, in the hands of those who wound you. You will die the death of the uncircumcised at the hands of foreigners. For I have spoken, declares the Lord GOD."

Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, take up a lament for the king of Tyre and tell him that this is what the Lord GOD says:

'You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God. Every kind of precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald. Your mountings and settings were crafted in gold, prepared on the day of your creation. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for I had ordained you. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked among the fiery stones. From the day you were created you were blameless in your ways— until wickedness was found in you. By the vastness of your trade, you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mountain of God, and I banished you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart grew proud of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor; so I cast you to the earth; I made you a spectacle before kings. By the multitude of your iniquities and the dishonesty of your trading you have profaned your sanctuaries. So I made fire come from within you, and it consumed you. I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the eyes of all who saw you. All the nations who know you are appalled over you. You have come to a horrible end and will be no more.'"

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, set your face against Sidon and prophesy against her. And you are to declare that this is what the Lord GOD says:

> ‘Behold, I am against you, O Sidon, and I will be glorified within you. They will know that I am the LORD when I execute judgments against her and demonstrate My holiness through her. I will send a plague against her and shed blood in her streets; the slain will fall within her, while the sword is against her on every side. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

For the people of Israel will no longer face a pricking brier or a painful thorn from all around them who treat them with contempt. Then they will know that I am the Lord GOD.’

This is what the Lord GOD says: ‘When I gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they have been scattered, I will show Myself holy among them in the sight of the nations.

Then they will dwell in their own land, which I have given to My servant Jacob. And there they will dwell securely, build houses, and plant vineyards. They will dwell securely when I execute judgments against all those around them who treat them with contempt. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God.’”

In the tenth year, on the twelfth day of the tenth month, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt and prophesy against him and against all Egypt. Speak to him and tell him that this is what the Lord GOD says:

> Behold, I am against you, O Pharaoh king of Egypt, O great monster who lies among his rivers, who says, ‘The Nile is mine; I made it myself.’ But I will put hooks in your jaws and cause the fish of your streams to cling to your scales. I will haul you up out of your rivers, and all the fish of your streams will cling to your scales. I will leave you in the desert, you and all the fish of your streams. You will fall on the open field and will not be taken away or gathered for burial. I have given you as food to the beasts of the earth and the birds of the air. Then all the people of Egypt will know that I am the LORD. For you were only a staff of reeds to the house of Israel. When Israel took hold of you with their hands, you splintered, tearing all their shoulders; when they leaned on you, you broke, and their backs were wrenched.

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: I will bring a sword against you and cut off from you man and beast. The land of Egypt will become a desolate wasteland. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

Because you said, ‘The Nile is mine; I made it,’ therefore I am against you and against your rivers. I will turn the land of Egypt into a ruin, a desolate wasteland from Migdol to Syene, and as far as the border of Cush. No foot of man or beast will pass through, and it will be uninhabited for forty years.

I will make the land of Egypt a desolation among desolate lands, and her cities will lie desolate for forty years among the ruined cities. And I will disperse the Egyptians among the nations and scatter them throughout the countries.

For this is what the Lord GOD says: At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the nations to which they were scattered. I will restore Egypt from captivity and bring them back to the land of Pathros, the land of their origin. There they will be a lowly kingdom.

Egypt will be the lowliest of kingdoms and will never again exalt itself above the nations. For I will diminish Egypt so that it will never again rule over the nations. Egypt will never again be an object of trust for the house of Israel, but will remind them of their iniquity in turning to the Egyptians. Then they will know that I am the Lord GOD.”

In the twenty-seventh year, on the first day of the first month, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to labor strenuously against Tyre. Every head was made bald and every shoulder made raw. But he and his army received no wages from Tyre for the labor they expended on it.

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: I will give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, who will carry off its wealth, seize its spoil, and remove its plunder. This will be the wages for his army. I have given him the land of Egypt as the reward for his labor, because it was done for Me, declares the Lord GOD.

In that day I will cause a horn to sprout for the house of Israel, and I will open your mouth to speak among them. Then they will know that I am the LORD.”

Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Son of man, prophesy and declare that this is what the Lord GOD says:

> Wail, ‘Alas for that day!’ For the day is near, the Day of the LORD is near. It will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations. A sword will come against Egypt, and there will be anguish in Cush when the slain fall in Egypt, its wealth is taken away, and its foundations are torn down. Cush, Put, and Lud, and all the various peoples, as well as Libya and the men of the covenant land, will fall with Egypt by the sword. For this is what the LORD says: The allies of Egypt will fall, and her proud strength will collapse. From Migdol to Syene they will fall by the sword within her, declares the Lord GOD. They will be desolate among desolate lands, and their cities will lie among ruined cities. Then they will know that I am the LORD when I set fire to Egypt and all her helpers are shattered.
>
> On that day messengers will go out from Me in ships to frighten Cush out of complacency. Anguish will come upon them on the day of Egypt’s doom. For it is indeed coming.
>
> > This is what the Lord GOD says: I will put an end to the hordes of Egypt by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. He and his people with him, the most ruthless of the nations, will be brought in to destroy the land. They will draw their swords against Egypt and fill the land with the slain. I will make the streams dry up and sell the land to the wicked. By the hands of foreigners I will bring desolation upon the land and everything in it. I, the LORD, have spoken. This is what the Lord GOD says: I will destroy the idols and put an end to the images

in Memphis. There will no longer be a prince in Egypt, and I will instill fear in that land. I will lay waste Pathros, set fire to Zoan, and execute judgment on Thebes. I will pour out My wrath on Pelusium, the stronghold of Egypt, and cut off the crowds of Thebes. I will set fire to Egypt, Pelusium will writhe in anguish, Thebes will be split open, and Memphis will face daily distress. The young men of On and Pi-beseth will fall by the sword, and those cities will go into captivity. The day will be darkened in Tahpanhes when I break the yoke of Egypt and her proud strength comes to an end. A cloud will cover her, and her daughters will go into captivity. So I will execute judgment on Egypt, and they will know that I am the LORD."

In the eleventh year, on the seventh day of the first month, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt. See, it has not been bound up for healing, or splinted for strength to hold the sword.

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt. I will break his arms, both the strong one and the one already broken, and will make the sword fall from his hand. I will disperse the Egyptians among the nations and scatter them throughout the lands.

I will strengthen the arms of Babylon's king and place My sword in his hand, but I will break the arms of Pharaoh, who will groan before him like a mortally wounded man. I will strengthen the arms of Babylon's king, but Pharaoh's arms will fall limp.

Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I place My sword in the hand of Babylon's king, and he wields it against the land of Egypt. I will disperse the Egyptians among the nations and scatter them throughout the lands. Then they will know that I am the LORD."

In the eleventh year, on the first day of the third month, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his multitude:

'Who can be compared to your greatness? Look at Assyria, a cedar in Lebanon, with beautiful branches that shaded the forest. It towered on high; its top was among the clouds. The waters made it grow; the deep springs made it tall, directing their streams all around its base and sending their channels to all the trees of the field. Therefore it towered higher than all the trees of the field. Its branches multiplied, and its boughs grew long as it spread them out because of the abundant waters. All the birds of the air nested in its branches, and all the beasts of the field gave birth beneath its boughs; all the great nations lived in its shade. It was beautiful in its greatness, in the length of its limbs, for its roots extended to abundant waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not rival it; the cypresses could not compare with its branches, nor the plane trees match its boughs. No tree in the garden of God could compare with its beauty. I made it beautiful with its many branches, the envy of all the trees of Eden, which were in the garden of God.'

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Since it became great in height and set its top among the clouds, and it grew proud on account of its height, I delivered it into the hand of the ruler of the nations, for him to deal with it according to its wickedness. I have banished it.

Foreigners, the most ruthless of the nations, cut it down and left it. Its branches have fallen on the mountains and in every valley; its boughs lay broken in all the earth's ravines. And all the peoples of the earth left its shade and abandoned it.

All the birds of the air nested on its fallen trunk, and all the beasts of the field lived among its boughs. This happened so that no other trees by the waters would become great in height and set their tops among the clouds, and no other well-watered trees would reach them in height. For they have all been consigned to death, to the depths of the earth, among the mortals who descend to the Pit.'

This is what the Lord GOD says: 'On the day it was brought down to Sheol, I caused mourning. I covered the deep because of it; I held back its rivers; its abundant waters were restrained. I made Lebanon mourn for it, and all the trees of the field fainted because of it. I made the nations quake at the sound of its downfall, when I cast it down to Sheol with those who descend to the Pit.

Then all the trees of Eden, the choicest and best of Lebanon, all the well-watered trees, were consoled in the earth below. They too descended with it to Sheol, to those slain by the sword. As its allies they had lived in its shade among the nations.

Who then is like you in glory and greatness among the trees of Eden? You also will be brought down to the depths of the earth to be with the trees of Eden. You will lie among the uncircumcised, with those slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, declares the Lord GOD.'"

In the twelfth year, on the first day of the twelfth month, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, take up a lament for Pharaoh king of Egypt and say to him:

'You are like a lion among the nations; you are like a monster in the seas. You thrash about in your rivers, churning up the waters with your feet and muddying the streams.' This is what the Lord GOD says: 'I will spread My net over you with a company of many peoples, and they will draw you up in My net. I will abandon you on the land and hurl you into the open field. I will cause all the birds of the air to settle upon you, and all the beasts of the earth to eat their fill of you. I will put your flesh on the mountains and fill the valleys with your remains. I will drench the land with the flow of your blood, all the way to the mountains — the ravines will be filled. When I extinguish you, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars. I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon will not give its light. All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you, and I will bring darkness upon your land,' declares the

Lord GOD. ‘I will trouble the hearts of many peoples, when I bring about your destruction among the nations, in countries you do not know. I will cause many peoples to be appalled over you, and their kings will shudder in horror because of you when I brandish My sword before them. On the day of your downfall each of them will tremble every moment for his life.’ For this is what the Lord GOD says: ‘The sword of the king of Babylon will come against you! I will make your hordes fall by the swords of the mighty, the most ruthless of all nations. They will ravage the pride of Egypt and all her multitudes will be destroyed. I will slaughter all her cattle beside the abundant waters. No human foot will muddy them again, and no cattle hooves will disturb them. Then I will let her waters settle and will make her rivers flow like oil,’ declares the Lord GOD. ‘When I make the land of Egypt a desolation and empty it of all that filled it, when I strike down all who live there, then they will know that I am the LORD.’

This is the lament they will chant for her; the daughters of the nations will chant it. Over Egypt and all her multitudes they will chant it, declares the Lord GOD.”

In the twelfth year, on the fifteenth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Son of man, wail for the multitudes of Egypt, and consign her and the daughters of the mighty nations to the depths of the earth with those who descend to the Pit:

Whom do you surpass in beauty? Go down and be placed with the uncircumcised! They will fall among those slain by the sword. The sword is appointed! Let them drag her away along with all her multitudes. Mighty chiefs will speak from the midst of Sheol about Egypt and her allies: ‘They have come down and lie with the uncircumcised, with those slain by the sword.’ Assyria is there with her whole company; her graves are all around her. All of them are slain, fallen by the sword. Her graves are set in the depths of the Pit, and her company is all around her grave. All of them are slain, fallen by the sword— those who once spread terror in the land of the living. Elam is there with all her multitudes around her grave. All of them are slain, fallen by the sword— those who went down uncircumcised to the earth below, who once spread their terror in the land of the living. They bear their disgrace with those who descend to the Pit. Among the slain they prepare a resting place for Elam with all her hordes, with her graves all around her. All of them are uncircumcised, slain by the sword, although their terror was once spread in the land of the living. They bear their disgrace with those who descend to the Pit. They are placed among the slain. Meshech and Tubal are there with all their multitudes, with their graves all around them. All of them are uncircumcised, slain by the sword, because they spread their terror in the land of the living. They do not lie down with the fallen warriors of old, who went down to Sheol with their weapons of war, whose swords were placed under their heads, whose shields rested on their bones, although the terror of the mighty was once in the land of the living. But you too will be shattered and lie down among the uncircumcised, with those slain by the sword. Edom is there, and all her kings and princes, who despite their might are laid among those slain by the sword. They lie down with the uncircumcised, with those who descend to the Pit. All the leaders of the north and all the Sidonians are there; they went down in disgrace with the slain, despite the terror of their might. They lie uncircumcised with those slain by the sword and bear their shame with those who descend to the Pit. Pharaoh will see them and be comforted over all his multitude— Pharaoh and all his army, slain by the sword, declares the Lord GOD. For I will spread My terror in the land of the living, so that Pharaoh and all his multitude will be laid to rest among the uncircumcised, with those slain by the sword, declares the Lord GOD.”

Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Son of man, speak to your people and tell them: ‘Suppose I bring the sword against a land, and the people of that land choose a man from among them, appointing him as their watchman, and he sees the sword coming against that land and blows the ram’s horn to warn the people.

Then if anyone hears the sound of the horn but fails to heed the warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood will be on his own head. Since he heard the sound of the horn but failed to heed the warning, his blood will be on his own head. If he had heeded the warning, he would have saved his life.

But if the watchman sees the sword coming and fails to blow the horn to warn the people, and the sword comes and takes away a life, then that one will be taken away in his iniquity, but I will hold the watchman accountable for his blood.’

As for you, O son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word from My mouth and give them the warning from Me. If I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will surely die,’ but you do not speak out to dissuade him from his way, then that wicked man will die in his iniquity, yet I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you warn the wicked man to turn from his way, and he does not turn from it, he will die in his iniquity, but you will have saved your life.

Now as for you, son of man, tell the house of Israel that this is what they have said: ‘Our transgressions and our sins are heavy upon us, and we are wasting away because of them! How can we live?’

Say to them: ‘As surely as I live, declares the Lord GOD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked should turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’

Therefore, son of man, say to your people: ‘The righteousness of the righteous man will not deliver him

in the day of his transgression; neither will the wickedness of the wicked man cause him to stumble on the day he turns from his wickedness. Nor will the righteous man be able to survive by his righteousness on the day he sins.'

If I tell the righteous man that he will surely live, but he then trusts in his righteousness and commits iniquity, then none of his righteous works will be remembered; he will die because of the iniquity he has committed.

But if I tell the wicked man, 'You will surely die,' and he turns from his sin and does what is just and right — if he restores a pledge, makes restitution for what he has stolen, and walks in the statutes of life without practicing iniquity— then he will surely live; he will not die. None of the sins he has committed will be held against him. He has done what is just and right; he will surely live.

Yet your people say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' But it is their way that is not just. If a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he will die for it. But if a wicked man turns from his wickedness and does what is just and right, he will live because of this.

Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' But I will judge each of you according to his ways, O house of Israel."

In the twelfth year of our exile, on the fifth day of the tenth month, a fugitive from Jerusalem came to me and reported, "The city has been taken!"

Now the evening before the fugitive arrived, the hand of the LORD was upon me, and He opened my mouth before the man came to me in the morning. So my mouth was opened and I was no longer mute.

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, those living in the ruins in the land of Israel are saying, 'Abraham was only one man, yet he possessed the land. But we are many; surely the land has been given to us as a possession.'

Therefore tell them that this is what the Lord GOD says: 'You eat meat with the blood in it, lift up your eyes to your idols, and shed blood. Should you then possess the land? You have relied on your swords, you have committed detestable acts, and each of you has defiled his neighbor's wife. Should you then possess the land?'

Tell them that this is what the Lord GOD says: 'As surely as I live, those in the ruins will fall by the sword, those in the open field I will give to be devoured by wild animals, and those in the strongholds and caves will die by plague. I will make the land a desolate waste, and the pride of her strength will come to an end. The mountains of Israel will become desolate, so that no one will pass through. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have made the land a desolate waste because of all the abominations they have committed.'

As for you, son of man, your people are talking about you near the city walls and in the doorways of their houses. One speaks to another, each saying to his brother, 'Come and hear the message that has come from the LORD!'

So My people come to you as usual, sit before you, and hear your words; but they do not put them into practice. Although they express love with their mouths, their hearts pursue dishonest gain. Indeed, you are to them like a singer of love songs with a beautiful voice, who skillfully plays an instrument. They hear your words but do not put them into practice. So when it comes to pass— and surely it will come— then they will know that a prophet has been among them."

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and tell them that this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Woe to the shepherds of Israel, who only feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed their flock? You eat the fat, wear the wool, and butcher the fattened sheep, but you do not feed the flock.

You have not strengthened the weak, healed the sick, bound up the injured, brought back the strays, or searched for the lost. Instead, you have ruled them with violence and cruelty. They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild beasts. My flock went astray on all the mountains and every high hill. They were scattered over the face of all the earth, with no one to search for them or seek them out.'

Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: 'As surely as I live, declares the Lord GOD, because My flock lacks a shepherd and has become prey and food for every wild beast, and because My shepherds did not search for My flock but fed themselves instead, therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD!'

This is what the Lord GOD says: 'Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will demand from them My flock and remove them from tending the flock, so that they can no longer feed themselves. For I will deliver My flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.'

For this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Behold, I Myself will search for My flock and seek them out. As a shepherd looks for his scattered sheep when he is among the flock, so I will look for My flock.

I will rescue them from all the places to which they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples, gather them from the countries, and bring them into their own land. I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines, and in all the settlements of the land. I will feed them in good pasture, and the lofty mountains of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in a good grazing land; they will feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.

I will tend My flock and make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. I will seek the lost, bring back the strays, bind up the broken, and strengthen the weak; but the sleek and strong I will destroy. I will shepherd them with justice.'

This is what the Lord GOD says to you, My flock: 'I will judge between one sheep and another, between the rams and the goats. Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of the pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink the clear waters? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet? Why must My flock feed on what your feet have trampled, and drink what your feet have muddied?'

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says to them: 'Behold, I Myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Since you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak ones with your horns until you have scattered them abroad, I will save My flock, and they will no longer be prey. I will judge between one sheep and another. I will appoint over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them. He will feed them and be their shepherd. I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be a prince among them. I, the LORD, have spoken.

I will make with them a covenant of peace and rid the land of wild animals, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the forest. I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. I will send down showers in season— showers of blessing. The trees of the field will give their fruit, and the land will yield its produce; My flock will be secure in their land. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bars of their yoke and delivered them from the hands that enslaved them.

They will no longer be prey for the nations, and the beasts of the earth will not consume them. They will dwell securely, and no one will frighten them.

And I will raise up for them a garden of renown, and they will no longer be victims of famine in the land or bear the scorn of the nations. Then they will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are My people,' declares the Lord GOD.

'You are My flock, the sheep of My pasture, My people, and I am your God,' declares the Lord GOD."

Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir and prophesy against it, and declare that this is what the Lord GOD says:

> Behold, I am against you, O Mount Seir. I will stretch out My hand against you and make you a desolate waste. I will turn your cities into ruins, and you will become a desolation. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

Because you harbored an ancient hatred and delivered the Israelites over to the sword in the time of their disaster at the final stage of their punishment, therefore as surely as I live, declares the Lord GOD, I will give you over to bloodshed and it will pursue you. Since you did not hate bloodshed, it will pursue you.

I will make Mount Seir a desolate waste and will cut off from it those who come and go. I will fill its mountains with the slain; those killed by the sword will fall on your hills, in your valleys, and in all your ravines. I will make you a perpetual desolation, and your cities will not be inhabited. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

Because you have said, 'These two nations and countries will be ours, and we will possess them,' even though the LORD was there, therefore as surely as I live, declares the Lord GOD, I will treat you according to the anger and jealousy you showed in your hatred against them, and I will make Myself known among them when I judge you.

Then you will know that I, the LORD, have heard every contemptuous word you uttered against the mountains of Israel when you said, 'They are desolate; they are given to us to devour!' You boasted against Me with your mouth and multiplied your words against Me. I heard it Myself!

This is what the Lord GOD says: While the whole earth rejoices, I will make you desolate. As you rejoiced when the inheritance of the house of Israel became desolate, so will I do to you. You will become a desolation, O Mount Seir, and so will all of Edom. Then they will know that I am the LORD.''

"And you, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel and say: O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD. This is what the Lord GOD says: Because the enemy has said of you, 'Aha! The ancient heights have become our possession,' therefore prophesy and declare that this is what the Lord GOD says: Because they have made you desolate and have trampled you on every side, so that you became a possession of the rest of the nations and were taken up in slander by the lips of their talkers, therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD.

This is what the Lord GOD says to the mountains and hills, to the ravines and valleys, to the desolate ruins and abandoned cities, which have become a spoil and a mockery to the rest of the nations around you. Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: Surely in My burning zeal I have spoken against the rest of the nations, and against all Edom, who took My land as their own possession with wholehearted joy and utter contempt, so that its pastureland became plunder.

Therefore, prophesy concerning the land of Israel and tell the mountains and hills, the ravines and valleys, that this is what the Lord GOD says: Behold, I have spoken in My burning zeal because you have endured the reproach of the nations.

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: I have sworn with an uplifted hand that surely the nations around you will endure reproach of their own. But you, O mountains of Israel, will produce branches and bear fruit for My people Israel, for they will soon come home.

For behold, I am on your side; I will turn toward you, and you will be tilled and sown. I will multiply the people upon you — the house of Israel in its entirety. The cities will be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt. I will fill you with people and animals, and they will multiply and be fruitful. I will make you as inhabited as you once were, and I will make you prosper more than before. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

Yes, I will cause My people Israel to walk upon you; they will possess you, and you will be their inheritance, and you will no longer deprive them of their children.

For this is what the Lord GOD says: Because people say to you, 'You devour men and deprive your nation of its children,' therefore you will no longer devour men or deprive your nation of its children, declares the Lord GOD. I will no longer allow the taunts of the nations to be heard against you, and you will no longer endure the reproach of the peoples or cause your nation to stumble, declares the Lord GOD."

Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, when the people of Israel lived in their land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds. Their behavior before Me was like the uncleanness of

a woman's impurity. So I poured out My wrath upon them because of the blood they had shed on the land, and because they had defiled it with their idols.

I dispersed them among the nations, and they were scattered throughout the lands. I judged them according to their ways and deeds. And wherever they went among the nations, they profaned My holy name, because it was said of them, 'These are the people of the LORD, yet they had to leave His land.' But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they had gone.

Therefore tell the house of Israel that this is what the Lord GOD says: It is not for your sake that I will act, O house of Israel, but for My holy name, which you profaned among the nations to which you went. I will show the holiness of My great name, which has been profaned among the nations— the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when I show My holiness in you before their eyes.

For I will take you from among the nations and gather you out of all the countries, and I will bring you back into your own land. I will also sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your impurities and all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and to carefully observe My ordinances.

Then you will live in the land that I gave your forefathers; you will be My people, and I will be your God. I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will summon the grain and make it plentiful, and I will not bring famine upon you. I will also make the fruit of the trees and the crops of the field plentiful, so that you will no longer bear reproach among the nations on account of famine.

Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and abominations. It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord GOD — let it be known to you. Be ashamed and disgraced for your ways, O house of Israel!

This is what the Lord GOD says: On the day I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be resettled and the ruins to be rebuilt. The desolate land will be cultivated instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass through. Then they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden. The cities that were once ruined, desolate, and destroyed are now fortified and inhabited.'

Then the nations around you that remain will know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt what was destroyed, and I have replanted what was desolate. I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will do it.

This is what the Lord GOD says: Once again I will hear the plea of the house of Israel and do for them this: I will multiply their people like a flock. Like the numerous flocks for sacrifices at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts, so the ruined cities will be filled with flocks of people. Then they will know that I am the LORD."

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and He brought me out by His Spirit and set me down in the middle of the valley, and it was full of bones. He led me all around among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, and indeed, they were very dry.

Then He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones come to life?"

"O Lord GOD," I replied, "only You know."

And He said to me, "Prophesy concerning these bones and tell them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Lord GOD says to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh grow upon you and cover you with skin. I will put breath within you so that you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'"

So I prophesied as I had been commanded. And as I prophesied, there was suddenly a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to bone. As I looked on, tendons appeared on them, flesh grew, and skin covered them; but there was no breath in them.

Then He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and tell the breath that this is what the Lord GOD says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, so that they may live!"

So I prophesied as He had commanded me, and the breath entered them, and they came to life and stood on their feet — a vast army.

Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Look, they are saying, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished; we are cut off.'

Therefore prophesy and tell them that this is what the Lord GOD says: 'O My people, I will open your graves and bring you up from them, and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, My people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put My Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.'"

Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "And you, son of man, take a single stick and write on it: 'Belonging to Judah and to the Israelites associated with him.' Then take another stick and write on it: 'Belonging to Joseph— the stick of Ephraim— and to all the house of Israel associated with him.' Then join them together into one stick, so that they become one in your hand.

When your people ask you, 'Won't you explain to us what you mean by these?' you are to tell them that this is what the Lord GOD says: 'I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel associated with him, and I will put them together with the stick of Judah. I will make them into a single stick, and they will become one in My hand.'

When the sticks on which you write are in your hand and in full view of the people, you are to tell them that this is what the Lord GOD says: 'I will take the Israelites out of the nations to which they have gone, and I will gather them from all around and bring them into their own land. I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel, and one king will rule over

all of them. Then they will no longer be two nations and will never again be divided into two kingdoms.

They will no longer defile themselves with their idols or detestable images, or with any of their transgressions. I will save them from all their apostasies by which they sinned, and I will cleanse them. Then they will be My people, and I will be their God. My servant David will be king over them, and there will be one shepherd for all of them. They will follow My ordinances and keep and observe My statutes.

They will live in the land that I gave to My servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They will live there forever with their children and grandchildren, and My servant David will be their prince forever. And I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be My people. Then the nations will know that I the LORD sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is among them forever.'"

And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, set your face against Gog of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. Prophesy against him and declare that this is what the Lord GOD says: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws, and bring you out with all your army — your horses, your horsemen in full armor, and a great company armed with shields and bucklers, all brandishing their swords. Persia, Cush, and Put will accompany them, all with shields and helmets, as well as Gomer with all its troops, and Beth-togarmah from the far north with all its troops— the many nations with you.

Get ready; prepare yourself, you and all your company gathered around you; you will be their guard. After a long time you will be summoned. In the latter years you will enter a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. They had been brought out from the nations, and all now dwell securely. You and all your troops, and many peoples with you will go up, advancing like a thunderstorm; you will be like a cloud covering the land.

This is what the Lord GOD says: On that day, thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will devise an evil plan. You will say, 'I will go up against a land of unwalled villages; I will come against a quiet people who dwell securely, all of them living without walls or bars or gates— in order to seize the spoil and carry off the plunder, to turn a hand against the desolate places now inhabited and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and possessions and who live at the center of the land.'

Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish with all its villages will ask, 'Have you come to capture the plunder? Have you assembled your hordes to carry away loot, to make off with silver and gold, to take cattle and goods, to seize great spoil?'

Therefore prophesy, son of man, and tell Gog that this is what the Lord GOD says: On that day when My people Israel are dwelling securely, will you not take notice of this? And you will come from your place out of the far north— you and many peoples with you, all riding horses— a mighty horde, a huge army. You will advance against My people Israel like a cloud covering the land. It will happen in the latter days, O Gog, that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me when I show Myself holy in you before their eyes.

This is what the Lord GOD says: Are you the one of whom I have spoken in former days through My servants, the prophets of Israel, who in those times prophesied for years that I would bring you against them? Now on that day when Gog comes against the land of Israel, declares the Lord GOD, My wrath will flare up.

In My zeal and fiery rage I proclaim that on that day there will be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. The fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, every creature that crawls upon the ground, and all mankind on the face of the earth will tremble at My presence. The mountains will be thrown down, the cliffs will collapse, and every wall will fall to the ground.

And I will summon a sword against Gog on all My mountains, declares the Lord GOD, and every man's sword will be against his brother. I will execute judgment upon him with plague and bloodshed. I will pour out torrents of rain, hailstones, fire, and sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him. I will magnify and sanctify Myself, and I will reveal Myself in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD."

"As for you, O son of man, prophesy against Gog and declare that this is what the Lord GOD says: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around, drive you along, bring you up from the far north, and send you against the mountains of Israel. Then I will strike the bow from your left hand and dash down the arrows from your right hand.

On the mountains of Israel you will fall — you and all your troops and the nations with you. I will give you as food to every kind of ravenous bird and wild beast. You will fall in the open field, for I have spoken, declares the Lord GOD.

I will send fire on Magog and on those who dwell securely in the coastlands, and they will know that I am the LORD. So I will make My holy name known among My people Israel and will no longer allow it to be profaned. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. Yes, it is coming, and it will surely happen, declares the Lord GOD. This is the day of which I have spoken.

Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out, kindle fires, and burn up the weapons— the bucklers and shields, the bows and arrows, the clubs and spears. For seven years they will use them for fuel. They will not gather wood from the countryside or cut it from the forests, for they will use the weapons for fuel. They will loot those who looted them and plunder those who plundered them, declares the Lord GOD.

And on that day I will give Gog a burial place in Israel, the Valley of the Travelers, east of the Sea. It

will block those who travel through, because Gog and all his hordes will be buried there. So it will be called the Valley of Hamon-gog. For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land. All the people of the land will bury them, and it will bring them renown on the day I display My glory, declares the Lord GOD.

And men will be employed to continually pass through the land to cleanse it by burying the invaders who remain on the ground. At the end of the seven months they will begin their search. As they pass through the land, anyone who sees a human bone will set up a pillar next to it, until the gravediggers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon-gog. (Even the city will be named Hamonah.) And so they will cleanse the land.

And as for you, son of man, this is what the Lord GOD says: Call out to every kind of bird and to every beast of the field: 'Assemble and come together from all around to the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you, a great feast on the mountains of Israel. There you will eat flesh and drink blood. You will eat the flesh of the mighty and drink the blood of the princes of the earth as though they were rams, lambs, goats, and bulls — all the fattened animals of Bashan. At the sacrifice I am preparing, you will eat fat until you are gorged and drink blood until you are drunk. And at My table you will eat your fill of horses and riders, of mighty men and warriors of every kind,' declares the Lord GOD.

I will display My glory among the nations, and all the nations will see the judgment that I execute and the hand that I lay upon them. From that day forward the house of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God. And the nations will know that the house of Israel went into exile for their iniquity, because they were unfaithful to Me. So I hid My face from them and delivered them into the hands of their enemies, so that they all fell by the sword. I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and transgressions, and I hid My face from them.

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: Now I will restore Jacob from captivity and will have compassion on the whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for My holy name. They will forget their disgrace and all the treachery they committed against Me, when they dwell securely in their land, with no one to frighten them. When I bring them back from the peoples and gather them out of the lands of their enemies, I will show My holiness in them in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God, when I regather them to their own land, not leaving any of them behind after their exile among the nations. And I will no longer hide My face from them, for I will pour out My Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD."

In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month — in the fourteenth year after Jerusalem had been struck down — on that very day the hand of the LORD was upon me, and He took me there. In visions of God He took me to the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain, on whose southern slope was a structure that resembled a city.

So He took me there, and I saw a man whose appearance was like bronze. He was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a measuring rod in his hand. "Son of man," he said to me, "look with your eyes, hear with your ears, and pay attention to everything I am going to show you, for that is why you have been brought here. Report to the house of Israel everything you see."

And I saw a wall surrounding the temple area. Now the length of the measuring rod in the man's hand was six long cubits (each measuring a cubit and a handbreadth), and he measured the wall to be one rod thick and one rod high.

Then he came to the gate facing east and climbed its steps. He measured the threshold of the gate to be one rod deep. Each gate chamber was one rod long and one rod wide, and there were five cubits between the gate chambers. The inner threshold of the gate by the portico facing inward was one rod deep. Then he measured the portico of the gateway inside; it was eight cubits deep, and its jambs were two cubits thick. And the portico of the gateway faced the temple.

There were three gate chambers on each side of the east gate, each with the same measurements, and the gateposts on either side also had the same measurements. And he measured the width of the gateway entrance to be ten cubits, and its length was thirteen cubits.

In front of each gate chamber was a wall one cubit high, and the gate chambers were six cubits square. Then he measured the gateway from the roof of one gate chamber to the roof of the opposite one; the distance was twenty-five cubits from doorway to doorway.

Next he measured the gateposts to be sixty cubits high. The gateway extended around to the gatepost of the courtyard. And the distance from the entrance of the gateway to the far end of its inner portico was fifty cubits.

The gate chambers and their side pillars had beveled windows all around the inside of the gateway. The porticos also had windows all around on the inside. Each side pillar was decorated with palm trees.

Then he brought me into the outer court, and there were chambers and a pavement laid out all around the court. Thirty chambers faced the pavement, which flanked the gateways and corresponded to the length of the gates; this was the lower pavement.

Then he measured the distance from the front of the lower gateway to the outside of the inner court; it was a hundred cubits on the east side as well as on the north.

He also measured the length and width of the gateway of the outer court facing north. Its three gate chambers on each side, its side pillars, and its portico all had the same measurements as the first gate: fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. Its windows, portico, and palm trees had the same measurements as those of the gate facing east. Seven steps led up to it, with its portico opposite them.

There was a gate to the inner court facing the north gate, just as there was on the east. He measured the distance from gateway to gateway to be a hundred cubits.

Then he led me to the south side, and I saw a gateway facing south. He measured its side pillars and portico, and they had the same measurements as the others. Both the gateway and its portico had windows all around, like the other windows. It was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. Seven steps led up to it, and its portico was opposite them; it had palm trees on its side pillars, one on each side.

The inner court also had a gate facing south, and he measured the distance from gateway to gateway toward the south to be a hundred cubits.

Next he brought me into the inner court through the south gate, and he measured the south gate; it had the same measurements as the others. Its gate chambers, side pillars, and portico had the same measurements as the others. Both the gateway and its portico had windows all around; it was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. (The porticoes around the inner court were twenty-five cubits long and five cubits deep.) Its portico faced the outer court, and its side pillars were decorated with palm trees. Eight steps led up to it.

And he brought me to the inner court on the east side, and he measured the gateway; it had the same measurements as the others. Its gate chambers, side pillars, and portico had the same measurements as the others. Both the gateway and its portico had windows all around. It was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. Its portico faced the outer court, and its side pillars were decorated with palm trees on each side. Eight steps led up to it.

Then he brought me to the north gate and measured it. It had the same measurements as the others, as did its gate chambers, side pillars, and portico. It also had windows all around. It was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. Its portico faced the outer court, and its side pillars were decorated with palm trees on each side. Eight steps led up to it.

There was a chamber with a doorway by the portico in each of the inner gateways. There the burnt offering was to be washed. Inside the portico of the gateway were two tables on each side, on which the burnt offerings, sin offerings, and guilt offerings were to be slaughtered.

Outside, as one goes up to the entrance of the north gateway, there were two tables on one side and two more tables on the other side of the gate's portico. So there were four tables inside the gateway and four outside — eight tables in all — on which the sacrifices were to be slaughtered.

There were also four tables of dressed stone for the burnt offering, each a cubit and a half long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit high. On these were placed the utensils used to slaughter the burnt offerings and the other sacrifices.

The double-pronged hooks, each a handbreadth long, were fastened all around the inside of the room, and the flesh of the offering was to be placed on the tables.

Outside the inner gate, within the inner court, were two chambers, one beside the north gate and facing south, and another beside the south gate and facing north.

Then the man said to me: "The chamber that faces south is for the priests who keep charge of the temple, and the chamber that faces north is for the priests who keep charge of the altar. These are the sons of Zadok, the only Levites who may approach the LORD to minister before Him."

Next he measured the court. It was square, a hundred cubits long and a hundred cubits wide. And the altar was in front of the temple.

Then he brought me to the portico of the temple and measured the side pillars of the portico to be five cubits on each side. The width of the gateway was fourteen cubits and its sidewalls were three cubits on either side. The portico was twenty cubits wide and twelve cubits deep, and ten steps led up to it. There were columns by the side pillars, one on each side.

Then the man brought me into the outer sanctuary and measured the side pillars to be six cubits wide on each side. The width of the entrance was ten cubits, and the sides of the entrance were five cubits on each side. He also measured the length of the outer sanctuary to be forty cubits, and the width to be twenty cubits.

And he went into the inner sanctuary and measured the side pillars at the entrance to be two cubits wide. The entrance was six cubits wide, and the walls on each side were seven cubits wide. Then he measured the room adjacent to the inner sanctuary to be twenty cubits long and twenty cubits wide. And he said to me, "This is the Most Holy Place."

Next he measured the wall of the temple to be six cubits thick, and the width of each side room around the temple was four cubits. The side rooms were arranged one above another in three levels of thirty rooms each. There were ledges all around the wall of the temple to serve as supports for the side rooms, so that the supports would not be fastened into the wall of the temple itself. The side rooms surrounding the temple widened at each successive level, because the structure surrounding the temple ascended by stages corresponding to the narrowing of the temple wall as it rose upward. And so a stairway went up from the lowest story to the highest, through the middle one.

I saw that the temple had a raised base all around it, forming the foundation of the side rooms. It was the full length of a rod, six long cubits. The outer wall of the side rooms was five cubits thick, and the open area between the side rooms of the temple and the outer chambers was twenty cubits wide all around the temple. The side rooms opened into this area, with one entrance on the north and another on the south. The open area was five cubits wide all around.

Now the building that faced the temple courtyard on the west was seventy cubits wide, and the wall of the building was five cubits thick all around, with a length of ninety cubits.

Then he measured the temple to be a hundred cubits long, and the temple courtyard and the building with its walls were also a hundred cubits long. The width of the temple courtyard on the east, including the front of the temple, was a hundred cubits.

Next he measured the length of the building facing the temple courtyard at the rear of the temple, including its galleries on each side; it was a hundred cubits.

The outer sanctuary, the inner sanctuary, and the porticoes facing the court, as well as the thresholds and the beveled windows and the galleries all around with their three levels opposite the threshold, were overlaid with wood on all sides. They were paneled from the ground to the windows, and the windows were covered.

In the space above the outside of the entrance to the inner sanctuary on all the walls, spaced evenly around the inner and outer sanctuary, were alternating carved cherubim and palm trees. Each cherub had two faces: the face of a man was toward the palm tree on one side, and the face of a young lion was toward the palm tree on the other side. They were carved all the way around the temple. Cherubim and palm trees were carved on the wall of the outer sanctuary from the floor to the space above the entrance.

The outer sanctuary had a rectangular doorframe, and the doorframe of the sanctuary was similar.

There was an altar of wood three cubits high and two cubits square. Its corners, base, and sides were of wood. And the man told me, “This is the table that is before the LORD.”

Both the outer sanctuary and the inner sanctuary had double doors, and each door had two swinging panels. There were two panels for one door and two for the other. Cherubim and palm trees like those on the walls were carved on the doors of the outer sanctuary, and there was a wooden canopy outside, on the front of the portico. There were beveled windows and palm trees on the sidewalls of the portico. The side rooms of the temple also had canopies.

Then the man led me out northward into the outer court, and he brought me to the group of chambers opposite the temple courtyard and the outer wall on the north side. The building with the door facing north was a hundred cubits long and fifty cubits wide. Gallery faced gallery in three levels opposite the twenty cubits that belonged to the inner court and opposite the pavement that belonged to the outer court.

In front of the chambers was an inner walkway ten cubits wide and a hundred cubits long. Their doors were on the north.

Now the upper chambers were smaller because the galleries took more space from the chambers on the lower and middle floors of the building. For they were arranged in three stories, and unlike the courts, they had no pillars. So the upper chambers were set back further than the lower and middle floors. An outer wall in front of the chambers was fifty cubits long and ran parallel to the chambers and the outer court. For the chambers on the outer court were fifty cubits long, while those facing the temple were a hundred cubits long. And below these chambers was the entrance on the east side as one enters them from the outer court.

On the south side along the length of the wall of the outer court were chambers adjoining the courtyard and opposite the building, with a passageway in front of them, just like the chambers that were on the north. They had the same length and width, with similar exits and dimensions. And corresponding to the doors of the chambers that were facing south, there was a door in front of the walkway that was parallel to the wall extending eastward.

Then the man said to me, “The north and south chambers facing the temple courtyard are the holy chambers where the priests who approach the LORD will eat the most holy offerings. There they will place the most holy offerings— the grain offerings, the sin offerings, and the guilt offerings— for the place is holy. Once the priests have entered the holy area, they must not go out into the outer court until they have left behind the garments in which they minister, for these are holy. They are to put on other clothes before they approach the places that are for the people.”

Now when the man had finished measuring the interior of the temple area, he led me out by the gate that faced east, and he measured the area all around:

With a measuring rod he measured the east side to be five hundred cubits long.

He measured the north side to be five hundred cubits long.

He measured the south side to be five hundred cubits long.

And he came around and measured the west side to be five hundred cubits long.

So he measured the area on all four sides. It had a wall all around, five hundred cubits long and five hundred cubits wide, to separate the holy from the common.

Then the man brought me back to the gate that faces east, and I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of many waters, and the earth shone with His glory.

The vision I saw was like the vision I had seen when He came to destroy the city and like the visions I had seen by the River Kebar. I fell facedown, and the glory of the LORD entered the temple through the gate facing east. Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

While the man was standing beside me, I heard someone speaking to me from inside the temple, and He said to me, “Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place for the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the Israelites forever. The house of Israel will never again defile My holy name — neither they nor their kings — by their prostitution and by the funeral offerings for their kings at their deaths. When they placed their threshold next to My threshold and their doorposts beside My doorposts, with only a wall between Me and them, they defiled My holy name by the abominations they committed. Therefore I have consumed them in My anger. Now let them remove far from Me their prostitution and the funeral offerings for their kings, and I will dwell among them forever.

As for you, son of man, describe the temple to the people of Israel, so that they may be ashamed of their iniquities. Let them measure the plan, and if they are ashamed of all they have done, then make known to them the design of the temple— its arrangement and its exits and entrances— its whole design along with all its statutes, forms, and laws. Write it down in their sight, so that they may keep its complete design and all its statutes and may carry them out.

This is the law of the temple: All its surrounding territory on top of the mountain will be most holy. Yes, this is the law of the temple.

These are the measurements of the altar in long cubits (a cubit and a handbreadth): Its gutter shall be a cubit deep and a cubit wide, with a rim of one span around its edge.

And this is the height of the altar: The space from the gutter on the ground to the lower ledge shall be two cubits, and the ledge one cubit wide. The space from the smaller ledge to the larger ledge shall be four cubits, and the ledge one cubit wide.

The altar hearth shall be four cubits high, and four horns shall project upward from the hearth. The altar hearth shall be square at its four corners, twelve cubits long and twelve cubits wide. The ledge shall also be square, fourteen cubits long and fourteen cubits wide, with a rim of half a cubit and a gutter of a cubit all around it. The steps of the altar shall face east."

Then He said to me: "Son of man, this is what the Lord GOD says: 'These are the statutes for the altar on the day it is constructed, so that burnt offerings may be sacrificed on it and blood may be splattered on it: You are to give a young bull from the herd as a sin offering to the Levitical priests who are of the family of Zadok, who approach Me to minister before Me, declares the Lord GOD. You are to take some of its blood and put it on the four horns of the altar, on the four corners of the ledge, and all around the rim; thus you will cleanse the altar and make atonement for it. Then you are to take away the bull for the sin offering and burn it in the appointed part of the temple area outside the sanctuary.

On the second day you are to present an unblemished male goat as a sin offering, and the altar is to be cleansed as it was with the bull. When you have finished the purification, you are to present a young, unblemished bull and an unblemished ram from the flock. You must present them before the LORD; the priests are to sprinkle salt on them and sacrifice them as a burnt offering to the LORD.

For seven days you are to provide a male goat daily for a sin offering; you are also to provide a young bull and a ram from the flock, both unblemished. For seven days the priests are to make atonement for the altar and cleanse it; so they shall consecrate it. At the end of these days, from the eighth day on, the priests are to present your burnt offerings and peace offerings on the altar. Then I will accept you, declares the Lord GOD.'"

The man then brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary that faced east, but it was shut. And the LORD said to me, "This gate is to remain shut. It shall not be opened, and no man shall enter through it, because the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered through it. Therefore it will remain shut. Only the prince himself may sit inside the gateway to eat in the presence of the LORD. He must enter by way of the portico of the gateway and go out the same way."

Then the man brought me to the front of the temple by way of the north gate. I looked and saw the glory of the LORD filling His temple, and I fell facedown. The LORD said to me: "Son of man, pay attention; look carefully with your eyes and listen closely with your ears to everything I tell you concerning all the statutes and laws of the house of the LORD. Take careful note of the entrance to the temple, along with all the exits of the sanctuary.

Tell the rebellious house of Israel that this is what the Lord GOD says: 'I have had enough of all your abominations, O house of Israel. In addition to all your other abominations, you brought in foreigners uncircumcised in both heart and flesh to occupy My sanctuary; you defiled My temple when you offered My food— the fat and the blood; you broke My covenant. And you have not kept charge of My holy things, but have appointed others to keep charge of My sanctuary for you.'

This is what the Lord GOD says: No foreigner uncircumcised in heart and flesh may enter My sanctuary — not even a foreigner who lives among the Israelites.

Surely the Levites who wandered away from Me when Israel went astray, and who wandered away from Me after their idols, will bear the consequences of their iniquity. Yet they shall be ministers in My sanctuary, having charge of the gates of the temple and ministering there. They shall slaughter the burnt offerings and other sacrifices for the people and stand before them to minister to them.

Because they ministered before their idols and became a stumbling block of iniquity to the house of Israel, therefore I swore with an uplifted hand concerning them that they would bear the consequences of their iniquity, declares the Lord GOD. They must not approach Me to serve Me as priests or come near any of My holy things or the most holy things. They will bear the shame of the abominations they have committed. Yet I will appoint them to keep charge of all the work for the temple and everything to be done in it.

But the Levitical priests, who are descended from Zadok and who kept charge of My sanctuary when the Israelites went astray from Me, are to approach Me to minister before Me. They will stand before Me to offer Me fat and blood, declares the Lord GOD. They alone shall enter My sanctuary and draw near to My table to minister before Me. They will keep My charge.

When they enter the gates of the inner court, they are to wear linen garments; they must not wear anything made of wool when they minister at the gates of the inner court or inside the temple. They are to wear linen turbans on their heads and linen undergarments around their waists. They must not wear anything that makes them perspire.

When they go out to the outer court, to the people, they are to take off the garments in which they have ministered, leave them in the holy chambers, and dress in other clothes so that they do not transmit holiness to the people with their garments.

They must not shave their heads or let their hair grow long, but must carefully trim their hair. No priest may drink wine before he enters the inner court. And they shall not marry a widow or a divorced woman, but must marry a virgin of the descendants of the house of Israel, or a widow of a priest. They are to teach My people the difference between the holy and the common and show them how to discern between the clean and the unclean.

In any dispute, they shall officiate as judges and judge according to My ordinances. They must keep My laws and statutes regarding all My appointed feasts, and they must keep My Sabbaths holy.

A priest must not defile himself by going near a dead person. However, for a father, a mother, a son, a daughter, a brother, or an unmarried sister, he may do so, and after he is cleansed, he must count off seven days for himself. And on the day he goes into the sanctuary, into the inner court, to minister in the sanctuary, he must present his sin offering, declares the Lord GOD.

In regard to their inheritance, I am their inheritance. You are to give them no possession in Israel, for I am their possession.

They shall eat the grain offerings, the sin offerings, and the guilt offerings. Everything in Israel devoted to the LORD will belong to them. The best of all the firstfruits and of every contribution from all your offerings will belong to the priests. You are to give your first batch of dough to the priest, so that a blessing may rest upon your homes. The priests may not eat any bird or animal found dead or torn by wild beasts."

"When you divide the land by lot as an inheritance, you are to set aside a portion for the LORD, a holy portion of the land 25,000 cubits long and 20,000 cubits wide. This entire tract of land will be holy.

Within this area there is to be a section for the sanctuary 500 cubits square, with 50 cubits around it for open land.

From this holy portion, you are to measure off a length of 25,000 cubits and a width of 10,000 cubits, and in it will be the sanctuary, the Most Holy Place. It will be a holy portion of the land to be used by the priests who minister in the sanctuary, who draw near to minister before the LORD. It will be a place for their houses, as well as a holy area for the sanctuary.

An adjacent area 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 cubits wide shall belong to the Levites who minister in the temple; it will be their possession for towns in which to live.

As the property of the city, you are to set aside an area 5,000 cubits wide and 25,000 cubits long, adjacent to the holy district. It will belong to the whole house of Israel.

Now the prince will have the area bordering each side of the area formed by the holy district and the property of the city, extending westward from the western side and eastward from the eastern side, running lengthwise from the western boundary to the eastern boundary and parallel to one of the tribal portions. This land will be his possession in Israel.

And My princes will no longer oppress My people, but will give the rest of the land to the house of Israel according to their tribes. For this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Enough, O princes of Israel! Cease your violence and oppression, and do what is just and right. Stop dispossessing My people, declares the Lord GOD.'

You must use honest scales, a just ephah, and a just bath.

The ephah and the bath shall be the same quantity so that the bath will contain a tenth of a homer, and the ephah a tenth of a homer; the homer will be the standard measure for both.

The shekel will consist of twenty gerahs. Twenty shekels plus twenty-five shekels plus fifteen shekels will equal one mina.

This is the contribution you are to offer: a sixth of an ephah from each homer of wheat, and a sixth of an ephah from each homer of barley. The prescribed portion of oil, measured by the bath, is a tenth of a bath from each cor (a cor consists of ten baths or one homer, since ten baths are equivalent to a homer). And one sheep shall be given from each flock of two hundred from the well-watered pastures of Israel. These are for the grain offerings, burnt offerings, and peace offerings, to make atonement for the people, declares the Lord GOD.

All the people of the land must participate in this contribution for the prince in Israel. And it shall be the prince's part to provide the burnt offerings, grain offerings, and drink offerings for the feasts, New Moons, and Sabbaths— for all the appointed feasts of the house of Israel. He will provide the sin offerings, grain offerings, burnt offerings, and peace offerings to make atonement for the house of Israel.

This is what the Lord GOD says: 'On the first day of the first month you are to take a young bull without blemish and purify the sanctuary. And the priest is to take some of the blood from the sin offering and put it on the doorposts of the temple, on the four corners of the ledge of the altar, and on the gateposts of the inner court. You must do the same thing on the seventh day of the month for anyone who strays unintentionally or in ignorance. In this way you will make atonement for the temple.

On the fourteenth day of the first month you are to observe the Passover, a feast of seven days, during which unleavened bread shall be eaten. On that day the prince shall provide a bull as a sin offering for himself and for all the people of the land. Each day during the seven days of the feast, he shall provide seven bulls and seven rams without blemish as a burnt offering to the LORD, along with a male goat for a sin offering. He shall also provide as a grain offering an ephah for each bull and an ephah for each ram, along with a hin of olive oil for each ephah of grain. During the seven days of the feast that begins on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, he is to make the same provision for sin offerings, burnt offerings, grain offerings, and oil.'"

"This is what the Lord GOD says: 'The gate of the inner court that faces east must be kept shut during the six days of work, but on the Sabbath day and on the day of the New Moon it shall be opened. The prince is to enter from the outside through the portico of the gateway and stand by the gatepost, while the priests sacrifice his burnt offerings and peace offerings. He is to bow in worship at the threshold of the gate and then depart, but the gate must not be shut until evening. On the Sabbaths and New Moons the people of the land are also to bow in worship before the LORD at the entrance to that gateway.

The burnt offering that the prince presents to the LORD on the Sabbath day shall be six unblemished male lambs and an unblemished ram. The grain offering with the ram shall be one ephah, and the grain offering with the lambs shall be as much as he is able,

along with a hin of oil per ephah. On the day of the New Moon he shall offer a young, unblemished bull, six lambs, and a ram without blemish. He is to provide a grain offering of an ephah with the bull, an ephah with the ram, and as much as he is able with the lambs, along with a hin of oil per ephah. When the prince enters, he shall go in through the portico of the gateway, and he shall go out the same way.

When the people of the land come before the LORD at the appointed feasts, whoever enters by the north gate to worship must go out by the south gate, and whoever enters by the south gate must go out by the north gate. No one is to return through the gate by which he entered, but each must go out by the opposite gate.

When the people enter, the prince shall go in with them, and when they leave, he shall leave. At the festivals and appointed feasts, the grain offering shall be an ephah with a bull, an ephah with a ram, and as much as one is able to give with the lambs, along with a hin of oil per ephah.

When the prince makes a freewill offering to the LORD, whether a burnt offering or a peace offering, the gate facing east must be opened for him. He is to offer his burnt offering or peace offering just as he does on the Sabbath day. Then he shall go out, and the gate must be closed after he goes out.

And you shall provide an unblemished year-old lamb as a daily burnt offering to the LORD; you are to offer it every morning. You are also to provide with it every morning a grain offering of a sixth of an ephah with a third of a hin of oil to moisten the fine flour— a grain offering to the LORD. This is a permanent statute. Thus they shall provide the lamb, the grain offering, and the oil every morning as a regular burnt offering.'

This is what the Lord GOD says: 'If the prince gives a gift to any of his sons as an inheritance, it will belong to his descendants. It will become their property by inheritance. But if he gives a gift from his inheritance to one of his servants, it will belong to that servant until the year of freedom; then it will revert to the prince. His inheritance belongs only to his sons; it shall be theirs.

The prince must not take any of the inheritance of the people by evicting them from their property. He is to provide an inheritance for his sons from his own property, so that none of My people will be displaced from his property.'"

Then the man brought me through the entrance at the side of the gate into the holy chambers facing north, which belonged to the priests, and he showed me a place there at the far western end and said to me, "This is the place where the priests shall boil the guilt offering and the sin offering, and where they shall bake the grain offering, so that they do not bring them into the outer court and transmit holiness to the people."

Then he brought me into the outer court and led me around to its four corners, and I saw a separate court in each of its corners. In the four corners of the outer court there were enclosed courts, each forty cubits long and thirty cubits wide. Each of the four corner areas had the same dimensions. Around the inside of each of the four courts was a row of masonry with ovens built at the base of the walls on all sides.

And he said to me, "These are the kitchens where those who minister at the temple will cook the sacrifices offered by the people."

Then the man brought me back to the entrance of the temple, and I saw water flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar.

Next he brought me out through the north gate and led me around the outside to the outer gate facing east, and there I saw the water trickling out from the south side.

As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and led me through ankle-deep water.

Then he measured off a thousand cubits and led me through knee-deep water.

Again he measured a thousand cubits and led me through waist-deep water.

Once again he measured off a thousand cubits, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough for swimming — a river that could not be crossed on foot.

"Son of man, do you see this?" he asked. Then he led me back to the bank of the river.

When I arrived, I saw a great number of trees along both banks of the river. And he said to me, "This water flows out to the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah. When it empties into the Dead Sea, the water there becomes fresh. Wherever the river flows, there will be swarms of living creatures and a great number of fish, because it flows there and makes the waters fresh; so wherever the river flows, everything will flourish.

Fishermen will stand by the shore; from En-gedi to En-eglaim they will spread their nets to catch fish of many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea.

But the swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt.

Along both banks of the river, fruit trees of all kinds will grow. Their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. Each month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will be used for food and their leaves for healing."

This is what the Lord GOD says: "These are the boundaries by which you are to divide the land as an inheritance among the twelve tribes of Israel; Joseph shall receive two portions. You are to divide it equally among them. Because I swore with an uplifted hand to give it to your forefathers, this land will fall to you as an inheritance.

This shall be the boundary of the land:

On the north side it will extend from the Great Sea by way of Hethlon through Lebo-hamath to Zedad, Berothah, and Sibraim (which is on the border between Damascus and Hamath), as far as Hazer-hatticon, which is on the border of Hauran. So the border will run from the Sea to Hazar-enan, along the northern border of Damascus, with the territory of Hamath to the north. This will be the northern boundary.

On the east side the border will run between Hauran and Damascus, along the Jordan between Gilead and the land of Israel, to the Eastern Sea

and as far as Tamar. This will be the eastern boundary.
On the south side it will run from Tamar to the waters of Meribath-kadesh, and along the Brook of Egypt to the Great Sea. This will be the southern boundary.
And on the west side, the Great Sea will be the boundary up to a point opposite Lebo-hamath. This will be the western boundary.

You are to divide this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the foreigners who dwell among you and who have children. You are to treat them as native-born Israelites; along with you, they shall be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. In whatever tribe a foreigner dwells, you are to assign his inheritance there," declares the Lord GOD.

"Now these are the names of the tribes:
At the northern frontier, Dan will have one portion bordering the road of Hethlon to Lebo-hamath and running on to Hazar-enan on the border of Damascus with Hamath to the north, and extending from the east side to the west side.
Asher will have one portion bordering the territory of Dan from east to west.
Naphtali will have one portion bordering the territory of Asher from east to west.
Manasseh will have one portion bordering the territory of Naphtali from east to west.
Ephraim will have one portion bordering the territory of Manasseh from east to west.
Reuben will have one portion bordering the territory of Ephraim from east to west.
Judah will have one portion bordering the territory of Reuben from east to west.

Bordering the territory of Judah, from east to west, will be the portion you are to set apart. It will be 25,000 cubits wide, and the length of a tribal portion from east to west. In the center will be the sanctuary.

The special portion you set apart to the LORD shall be 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 cubits wide.

This will be the holy portion for the priests. It will be 25,000 cubits long on the north side, 10,000 cubits wide on the west side, 10,000 cubits wide on the east side, and 25,000 cubits long on the south side. In the center will be the sanctuary of the LORD. It will be for the consecrated priests, the descendants of Zadok, who kept My charge and did not go astray as the Levites did when the Israelites went astray. It will be a special portion for them set apart from the land, a most holy portion adjacent to the territory of the Levites.

Bordering the territory of the priests, the Levites shall have an area 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 cubits wide. The whole length will be 25,000 cubits, and the width 10,000 cubits. They must not sell or exchange any of it, and they must not transfer this best part of the land, for it is holy to the LORD.

The remaining area, 5,000 cubits wide and 25,000 cubits long, will be for common use by the city, for houses, and for pastureland. The city will be in the center of it and will have these measurements: 4,500 cubits on the north side, 4,500 cubits on the south side, 4,500 cubits on the east side, and 4,500 cubits on the west side.

The pastureland of the city will extend 250 cubits to the north, 250 cubits to the south, 250 cubits to the east, and 250 cubits to the west.

The remainder of the length bordering the holy portion and running adjacent to it will be 10,000 cubits on the east side and 10,000 cubits on the west side. Its produce will supply food for the workers of the city. The workers of the city who cultivate it will come from all the tribes of Israel.

The entire portion will be a square, 25,000 cubits by 25,000 cubits. You are to set apart the holy portion, along with the city property.

The remaining area on both sides of the holy portion and of the property of the city will belong to the prince. He will own the land adjacent to the tribal portions, extending eastward from the 25,000 cubits of the holy district toward the eastern border, and westward from the 25,000 cubits to the western border. And in the center of them will be the holy portion and the sanctuary of the temple.

So the Levitical property and the city property will lie in the center of the area belonging to the prince—the area between the borders of Judah and Benjamin.

As for the rest of the tribes:
Benjamin will have one portion extending from the east side to the west side.
Simeon will have one portion bordering the territory of Benjamin from east to west.
Issachar will have one portion bordering the territory of Simeon from east to west.
Zebulun will have one portion bordering the territory of Issachar from east to west.
And Gad will have one portion bordering the territory of Zebulun from east to west.

The southern border of Gad will run from Tamar to the waters of Meribath-kadesh, then along the Brook of Egypt and out to the Great Sea. This is the land you are to allot as an inheritance to the tribes of Israel, and these will be their portions," declares the Lord GOD.

"These will be the exits of the city:
Beginning on the north side, which will be 4,500 cubits long, the gates of the city will be named after the tribes of Israel. On the north side there will be three gates: the gate of Reuben, the gate of Judah, and the gate of Levi.
On the east side, which will be 4,500 cubits long, there will be three gates: the gate of Joseph, the gate of Benjamin, and the gate of Dan.
On the south side, which will be 4,500 cubits long, there will be three gates: the gate of Simeon, the gate of Issachar, and the gate of Zebulun.
And on the west side, which will be 4,500 cubits long, there will be three gates: the gate of Gad, the gate of Asher, and the gate of Naphtali.

The perimeter of the city will be 18,000 cubits, and from that day on the name of the city will be:

THE LORD IS THERE."

Daniel

Book of Daniel

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord delivered into his hand Jehoiakim king of Judah, along with some of the articles from the house of God. He carried these off to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, where he put them in the treasury of his god.

Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his court officials, to bring in some Israelites from the royal family and the nobility— young men without blemish, handsome, gifted in all wisdom, knowledgeable, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace— and to teach them the language and literature of the Chaldeans.

The king assigned them daily provisions of the royal food and wine. They were to be trained for three years, after which they were to enter the king's service.

Among these young men were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. The chief official gave them new names: To Daniel he gave the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's food or wine. So he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself.

Now God had granted Daniel favor and compassion from the chief official, but he said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking thinner than those of the other young men your age? You would endanger my head before the king!"

Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, "Please test your servants for ten days. Let us be given only vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearances with those of the young men who are eating the royal food, and deal with your servants according to what you see."

So he consented to this and tested them for ten days. And at the end of ten days, they looked healthier and better nourished than all the young men who were eating the king's food. So the steward continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and he gave them vegetables instead.

To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding in every kind of literature and wisdom. And Daniel had insight into all kinds of visions and dreams.

Now at the end of the time specified by the king, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. And the king spoke with them, and among all the young men he found no one equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they entered the king's service.

In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his entire kingdom. And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams that troubled his spirit, and sleep escaped him. So the king gave orders to summon the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers to explain his dreams. When they came and stood before the king, he said to them, "I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to understand it."

Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic, "O king, may you live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation."

The king replied to the astrologers, "My word is final: If you do not tell me the dream and its interpretation, you will be cut into pieces and your houses will be reduced to rubble. But if you tell me the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. So tell me the dream and its interpretation."

They answered a second time, "Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will give the interpretation."

The king replied, "I know for sure that you are stalling for time because you see that my word is final. If you do not tell me the dream, there is only one decree for you. You have conspired to speak before me false and fraudulent words, hoping the situation will change. Therefore tell me the dream, and I will know that you can give me its interpretation."

The astrologers answered the king, "No one on earth can do what the king requests! No king, however great and powerful, has ever asked anything like this of any magician, enchanter, or astrologer. What the king requests is so difficult that no one can tell it to him except the gods, whose dwelling is not with mortals."

This response made the king so angry and furious that he gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. So the decree went out that the wise men were to be executed, and men went to look for Daniel and his friends to execute them.

When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, went out to execute the wise men of Babylon, Daniel responded with discretion and tact. "Why is the decree from the king so harsh?" he asked.

Then Arioch explained the situation to Daniel. So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him some time, so that he could give him the interpretation.

Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, urging them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends would not be killed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

During the night, the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision, and he blessed the God of heaven and declared:

> "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,
> for wisdom and power belong to Him. He
> changes the times and seasons; He removes
> kings and establishes them. He gives wisdom
> to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.
> He reveals the deep and hidden things; He
> knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells
> with Him. To You, O God of my fathers, I give

thanks and praise, because You have given me wisdom and power. And now You have made known to me what we have requested, for You have made known to us the dream of the king."

Therefore Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon, and said to him, "Do not execute the wise men of Babylon! Bring me before the king, and I will give him the interpretation."

Arioch hastily brought Daniel before the king and said to him, "I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who will tell the king the interpretation."

The king responded to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to tell me what I saw in the dream, as well as its interpretation?"

Daniel answered the king, "No wise man, enchanter, medium, or magician can explain to the king the mystery of which he inquires. But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the latter days. Your dream and the visions that came into your mind as you lay on your bed were these:

As you lay on your bed, O king, your thoughts turned to the future, and the Revealer of Mysteries made known to you what will happen. And to me this mystery has been revealed, not because I have more wisdom than any man alive, but in order that the interpretation might be made known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.

As you, O king, were watching, a great statue appeared. A great and dazzling statue stood before you, and its form was awesome. The head of the statue was pure gold, its chest and arms were silver, its belly and thighs were bronze, its legs were iron, and its feet were part iron and part clay.

As you watched, a stone was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay, and crushed them. Then the iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold were shattered and became like chaff on the threshing floor in summer. The wind carried them away, and not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that had struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

This was the dream; now we will tell the king its interpretation.

You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given sovereignty, power, strength, and glory. Wherever the sons of men or beasts of the field or birds of the air dwell, He has given them into your hand and has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold.

But after you, there will arise another kingdom, inferior to yours.

Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule the whole earth.

Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; for iron shatters and crushes all things, and like iron that crushes all things, it will shatter and crush all the others. And just as you saw that the feet and toes were made partly of fired clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom, yet some of the strength of iron will be in it — just as you saw the iron mixed with clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. As you saw the iron mixed with clay, so the peoples will mix with one another but will not hold together any more than iron mixes with clay.

In the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will shatter all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, but will itself stand forever. And just as you saw a stone being cut out of the mountain without human hands, and it shattered the iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold, so the great God has told the king what will happen in the future.

The dream is true, and its interpretation is trustworthy."

At this, King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, paid homage to Daniel, and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. The king said to Daniel, "Your God is truly the God of gods and Lord of kings, the Revealer of Mysteries, since you were able to reveal this mystery."

Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many generous gifts. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon. And at Daniel's request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to manage the province of Babylon, while Daniel remained in the king's court.

King Nebuchadnezzar made a golden statue sixty cubits high and six cubits wide, and he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to assemble the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the other officials of the provinces to attend the dedication of the statue he had set up.

So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the rulers of the provinces assembled for the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.

Then the herald loudly proclaimed, "O people of every nation and language, this is what you are commanded: As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. And whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into the blazing fiery furnace."

Therefore, as soon as all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, and all kinds of music, the people of every nation and language would fall down and worship the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

At this time some astrologers came forward and maliciously accused the Jews, saying to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, may you live forever! You, O king, have issued a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the golden statue, and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into the blazing fiery furnace. But there are some Jews you have appointed to manage the province of Babylon — Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego — who have ignored you, O king, and have refused to

serve your gods or worship the golden statue you have set up."

Then Nebuchadnezzar, furious with rage, summoned Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, is it true that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden statue I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the statue I have made, very good. But if you refuse to worship, you will be thrown at once into the blazing fiery furnace. Then what god will be able to deliver you from my hands?"

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If the God whom we serve exists, then He is able to deliver us from the blazing fiery furnace and from your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden statue you have set up."

At this, Nebuchadnezzar was filled with rage, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He gave orders to heat the furnace seven times hotter than usual, and he commanded some mighty men of valor in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing fiery furnace.

So they were tied up, wearing robes, trousers, turbans, and other clothes, and they were thrown into the blazing fiery furnace.

The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the fiery flames killed the men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, firmly bound, fell into the blazing fiery furnace.

Suddenly King Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and asked his advisers, "Did we not throw three men, firmly bound, into the fire?"

"Certainly, O king," they replied.

"Look!" he exclaimed. "I see four men, unbound and unharmed, walking around in the fire — and the fourth looks like a son of the gods!"

Then Nebuchadnezzar approached the door of the blazing fiery furnace and called out, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out!"

So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire, and when the satraps, prefects, governors, and royal advisers had gathered around, they saw that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men. Not a hair of their heads was singed, their robes were unaffected, and there was no smell of fire on them.

Nebuchadnezzar declared, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him. They violated the king's command and risked their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will be cut into pieces and their houses reduced to rubble. For there is no other god who can deliver in this way."

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

King Nebuchadnezzar,

To the people of every nation and language who dwell in all the earth:

May your prosperity be multiplied. I am pleased to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me.

> How great are His signs, how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; His dominion endures from generation to generation.

I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace. I had a dream, and it frightened me; while I was in my bed, the images and visions in my mind alarmed me. So I issued a decree that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before me to interpret the dream for me. When the magicians, enchanters, astrologers, and diviners came in, I told them the dream, but they could not interpret it for me.

But at last, into my presence came Daniel (whose name is Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods). And I told him the dream: "O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery baffles you. So explain to me the visions I saw in my dream, and their interpretation. In these visions of my mind as I was lying in bed, I saw this come to pass:

> There was a tree in the midst of the land, and its height was great. The tree grew large and strong; its top reached the sky, and it was visible to the ends of the earth. Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit was abundant, and upon it was food for all. Under it the beasts of the field found shelter, in its branches the birds of the air nested, and from it every creature was fed.

As I lay on my bed, I also saw in the visions of my mind a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven. He called out in a loud voice:

> 'Cut down the tree and chop off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it, and the birds from its branches. But leave the stump with its roots in the ground, with a band of iron and bronze around it, in the tender grass of the field. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven and graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth. Let his mind be changed from that of a man, and let him be given the mind of a beast till seven times pass him by. This decision is the decree of the watchers, the verdict declared by the holy ones, so that the living will know that the Most High rules over the kingdom of mankind and gives it to whom He wishes, setting over it the lowliest of men.'

This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. Now, Belteshazzar, tell me the interpretation, because none of the wise men of my kingdom can interpret it for me. But you are able, because the spirit of the holy gods is in you."

For a time, Daniel, who was also known as Belteshazzar, was perplexed, and his thoughts alarmed him.

So the king said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you."

"My lord," replied Belteshazzar, "may the dream apply to those who hate you, and its interpretation to your enemies!

The tree you saw that grew large and strong, whose top reached the sky and was visible to all the earth, whose foliage was beautiful and whose fruit was abundant, providing food for all, under which the beasts of the field lived, and in whose branches the birds of the air nested— you, O king, are that tree! For you have become great and strong; your greatness has grown to reach the sky, and your dominion extends to the ends of the earth.

And you, O king, saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying:

> 'Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump with its roots in the ground, with a band of iron and bronze around it, in the tender grass of the field. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and graze with the beasts of the field till seven times pass him by.'

This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree that the Most High has issued against my lord the king:

You will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling will be with the beasts of the field. You will feed on grass like an ox and be drenched with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass you by, until you acknowledge that the Most High rules over the kingdom of mankind and gives it to whom He wishes.

As for the command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots, your kingdom will be restored to you as soon as you acknowledge that Heaven rules. Therefore, may my advice be pleasing to you, O king. Break away from your sins by doing what is right, and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed. Perhaps there will be an extension of your prosperity."

All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. Twelve months later, as he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, the king exclaimed, "Is this not Babylon the Great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?"

While the words were still in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven: "It is decreed to you, King Nebuchadnezzar, that the kingdom has departed from you. You will be driven away from mankind to live with the beasts of the field, and you will feed on grass like an ox. And seven times will pass you by, until you acknowledge that the Most High rules over the kingdom of mankind and gives it to whom He wishes."

At that moment the sentence against Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from mankind. He ate grass like an ox, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.

But at the end of those days I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven, and my sanity was restored to me. Then I praised the Most High, and I honored and glorified Him who lives forever:

> "For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are counted as nothing, and He does as He pleases with the army of heaven and the peoples of the earth. There is no one who can restrain His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'"

At the same time my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne, and surpassing greatness was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, for all His works are true and all His ways are just. And He is able to humble those who walk in pride.

Later, King Belshazzar held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he drank wine with them. Under the influence of the wine, Belshazzar gave orders to bring in the gold and silver vessels that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king could drink from them, along with his nobles, his wives, and his concubines.

Thus they brought in the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king drank from them, along with his nobles, his wives, and his concubines. As they drank the wine, they praised their gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone.

At that moment the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. As the king watched the hand that was writing, his face grew pale and his thoughts so alarmed him that his hips gave way and his knees knocked together.

The king called out for the enchanters, astrologers, and diviners to be brought in, and he said to these wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this inscription and tells me its interpretation will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around his neck, and he will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom."

So all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the inscription or interpret it for him. Then King Belshazzar became even more terrified, his face grew even more pale, and his nobles were bewildered.

Hearing the outcry of the king and his nobles, the queen entered the banquet hall. "O king, may you live forever!" she said. "Do not let your thoughts terrify you, or your face grow pale. There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the days of your father he was found to have insight, intelligence, and wisdom like that of the gods.

Your father, King Nebuchadnezzar, appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers, and diviners. Your own father, the king, did this because Daniel, the one he named Belteshazzar, was found to have an extraordinary spirit, as well as knowledge, understanding, and the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve difficult problems. Summon Daniel, therefore, and he will give you the interpretation."

So Daniel was brought before the king, who asked him, “Are you Daniel, one of the exiles my father the king brought from Judah? I have heard that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that you have insight, intelligence, and extraordinary wisdom.

Now the wise men and enchanters were brought before me to read this inscription and interpret it for me, but they could not give its interpretation. But I have heard about you, that you are able to give interpretations and solve difficult problems. Therefore, if you can read this inscription and give me its interpretation, you will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around your neck, and you will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom.”

In response, Daniel said to the king, “You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the inscription for the king and interpret it for him. As for you, O king, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness, glory and honor. Because of the greatness that He bestowed on him, the people of every nation and language trembled in fear before him. He killed whom he wished and kept alive whom he wished; he exalted whom he wished and humbled whom he wished.

But when his heart became arrogant and his spirit was hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne, and his glory was taken from him. He was driven away from mankind, and his mind was like that of a beast. He lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like an ox, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until he acknowledged that the Most High God rules over the kingdom of mankind, setting over it whom He wishes.

But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this. Instead, you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven. The vessels from His house were brought to you, and as you drank wine from them with your nobles, wives, and concubines, you praised your gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you have failed to glorify the God who holds in His hand your very breath and all your ways. Therefore He sent the hand that wrote the inscription.

Now this is the inscription that was written:

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN.

And this is the interpretation of the message:

MENE means that God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end.

TEKEL means that you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient.

PERES means that your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians.”

Then Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel in purple, placed a gold chain around his neck, and proclaimed him the third highest ruler in the kingdom.

That very night Belshazzar king of the Chaldeans was slain, and Darius the Mede received the kingdom at the age of sixty-two.

Now it pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, and over them three administrators, including Daniel, to whom these satraps were accountable so that the king would not suffer loss. Soon, by his extraordinary spirit, Daniel distinguished himself among the administrators and satraps. So the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.

Thus the administrators and satraps sought a charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom, but they could find no charge or corruption, because he was trustworthy, and no negligence or corruption was found in him. Finally these men said, “We will never find any charge against this Daniel unless we find something against him concerning the law of his God.”

So the administrators and satraps went together to the king and said, “O King Darius, may you live forever! All the royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers, and governors have agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce a decree that for thirty days anyone who petitions any god or man except you, O king, will be thrown into the den of lions. Therefore, O king, establish the decree and sign the document so that it cannot be changed — in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.”

Therefore King Darius signed the written decree.

Now when Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he went into his house, where the windows of his upper room opened toward Jerusalem, and three times a day he got down on his knees, prayed, and gave thanks to his God, just as he had done before. Then these men went as a group and found Daniel petitioning and imploring his God. So they approached the king and asked about his royal decree: “Did you not sign a decree that for thirty days any man who petitions any god or man except you, O king, will be thrown into the den of lions?”

The king replied, “According to the law of the Medes and Persians the order stands, and it cannot be repealed.”

Then they told the king, “Daniel, one of the exiles from Judah, shows no regard for you, O king, or for the decree that you have signed. He still makes his petition three times a day.”

As soon as the king heard this, he was deeply distressed and set his mind on delivering Daniel, and he labored until sundown to rescue him.

Then the men approached the king together and said to him, “Remember, O king, that by the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or ordinance established by the king can be changed.”

So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the den of lions.

The king said to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!”

A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that nothing concerning Daniel could be changed.

Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting. No entertainment was brought before him, and sleep fled from him.

At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the den of lions. When he reached the den, he cried out in a voice of anguish, “O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?”

Then Daniel replied, “O king, may you live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, for I was found innocent in His sight, and I have done no wrong against you, O king.”

The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den, and when Daniel was lifted out of the den, no wounds whatsoever were found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

At the command of the king, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought and thrown into the den of lions— they and their children and wives. And before they had reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

Then King Darius wrote to the people of every nation and language throughout the land: “May your prosperity abound. I hereby decree that in every part of my kingdom, men are to tremble in fear before the God of Daniel:

> For He is the living God, and He endures forever; His kingdom will never be destroyed, and His dominion will never end. He delivers and rescues; He performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth, for He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.”

So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

In the first year of the reign of Belshazzar over Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he lay on his bed. He wrote down the dream, and this is the summary of his account.

Daniel declared: “In my vision in the night I looked, and suddenly the four winds of heaven were churning up the great sea. Then four great beasts came up out of the sea, each one different from the others:

> The first beast was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man and given the mind of a man.
>
> Suddenly another beast appeared, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. So it was told, ‘Get up and gorge yourself on flesh!’
>
> Next, as I watched, suddenly another beast appeared. It was like a leopard, and on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and it was given authority to rule.
>
> After this, as I watched in my vision in the night, suddenly a fourth beast appeared, and it was terrifying — dreadful and extremely strong — with large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed; then it trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the beasts before it, and it had ten horns. While I was contemplating the horns, suddenly another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like those of a man and a mouth that spoke words of arrogance.
>
> As I continued to watch,
>
> > thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took His seat. His clothing was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from His presence. Thousands upon thousands attended Him, and myriads upon myriads stood before Him. The court was convened, and the books were opened.
>
> Then I kept watching because of the arrogant words the horn was speaking. As I continued to watch, the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was removed, but they were granted an extension of life for a season and a time.
>
> In my vision in the night I continued to watch,
>
> > and I saw One like the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into His presence. And He was given dominion, glory, and kingship, that the people of every nation and language should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.
>
> I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit, and the visions in my mind alarmed me. I approached one of those who were standing there, and I asked him the true meaning of all this.
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> So he told me the interpretation of these things: ‘These four great beasts are four kings who will arise from the earth. But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and possess it forever — yes, forever and ever.’
>
> Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others — extremely terrifying — devouring and crushing with iron teeth and bronze claws, then trampling underfoot whatever was left. I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell— the horn whose appearance was more imposing than the others, with eyes and with a mouth that spoke words of arrogance. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days arrived and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for them to possess the kingdom.
>
> This is what he said: ‘The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on the earth, different from all the other kingdoms, and it will devour the whole earth, trample it down, and crush it. And the ten horns are ten kings who will rise from this kingdom. After them another king, different from the earlier ones, will rise and subdue three kings. He will speak out against the Most High and oppress the saints of the Most High, intending to change the appointed times and laws; and the saints will be given into his hand for a time, and times, and half a time.
>
> But the court will convene, and his dominion will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, dominion, and greatness of the kingdoms under all of heaven will be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will serve and obey Him.’

Thus ends the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts troubled me greatly, and my face turned pale. But I kept the matter to myself."

In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar, a vision appeared to me, Daniel, subsequent to the one that had appeared to me earlier. And in the vision I saw myself in the citadel of Susa, in the province of Elam. I saw in the vision that I was beside the Ulai Canal.

Then I lifted up my eyes and saw a ram with two horns standing beside the canal. The horns were long, but one was longer than the other, and the longer one grew up later. I saw the ram charging toward the west and the north and the south. No animal could stand against him, and there was no deliverance from his power. He did as he pleased and became great.

As I was contemplating all this, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between his eyes came out of the west, crossing the surface of the entire earth without touching the ground. He came toward the two-horned ram I had seen standing beside the canal and rushed at him with furious power. I saw him approach the ram in a rage against him, and he struck the ram and shattered his two horns. The ram was powerless to stand against him, and the goat threw him to the ground and trampled him, and no one could deliver the ram from his power.

Thus the goat became very great, but at the height of his power, his large horn was broken off, and four prominent horns came up in its place, pointing toward the four winds of heaven.

From one of these horns a little horn emerged and grew extensively toward the south and the east and toward the Beautiful Land. It grew as high as the host of heaven, and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the earth and trampled them. It magnified itself, even to the Prince of the host; it removed His daily sacrifice and overthrew the place of His sanctuary. And in the rebellion, the host and the daily sacrifice were given over to the horn, and it flung truth to the ground and prospered in whatever it did.

Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, "How long until the fulfillment of the vision of the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host to be trampled?"

He said to me, "It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be properly restored."

While I, Daniel, was watching the vision and trying to understand it, there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. And I heard the voice of a man calling from between the banks of the Ulai: "Gabriel, explain the vision to this man."

As he came near to where I stood, I was terrified and fell facedown.

"Son of man," he said to me, "understand that the vision concerns the time of the end."

While he was speaking with me, I fell into a deep sleep, with my face to the ground.

Then he touched me, helped me to my feet, and said, "Behold, I will make known to you what will happen in the latter time of wrath, because it concerns the appointed time of the end.

The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia. The shaggy goat represents the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes is the first king. The four horns that replaced the broken one represent four kingdoms that will rise from that nation but will not have the same power.

In the latter part of their reign, when the rebellion has reached its full measure, an insolent king, skilled in intrigue, will come to the throne. His power will be great, but it will not be his own. He will cause terrible destruction and succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the mighty men along with the holy people. Through his craft and by his hand, he will cause deceit to prosper, and in his own mind he will make himself great. In a time of peace he will destroy many, and he will even stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be broken off, but not by human hands.

The vision of the evenings and the mornings that has been spoken is true. Now you must seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future."

I, Daniel, was exhausted and lay ill for days. Then I got up and went about the king's business. I was confounded by the vision; it was beyond understanding.

In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes, a Mede by descent, who was made ruler over the kingdom of the Chaldeans — in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the sacred books, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. So I turned my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and petition, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

And I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed, "O, Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant of loving devotion to those who love Him and keep His commandments, we have sinned and done wrong. We have acted wickedly and rebelled. We have turned away from Your commandments and ordinances. We have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, leaders, fathers, and all the people of the land.

To You, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but this day we are covered with shame— the men of Judah, the people of Jerusalem, and all Israel near and far, in all the countries to which You have driven us because of our unfaithfulness to You. O LORD, we are covered with shame — our kings, our leaders, and our fathers — because we have sinned against You.

To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, even though we have rebelled against Him and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God to walk in His laws, which He set before us through His servants the prophets.

All Israel has transgressed Your law and turned away, refusing to obey Your voice; so the oath and the curse written in the Law of Moses the servant of God has been poured out on us, because we have sinned against You. You have carried out the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing upon us a great disaster. For under all of heaven, nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem.

Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our

iniquities and giving attention to Your truth. Therefore the LORD has kept the calamity in store and brought it upon us. For the LORD our God is righteous in all He does; yet we have not obeyed His voice.

Now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and who made for Yourself a name renowned to this day, we have sinned; we have acted wickedly. O Lord, in keeping with all Your righteous acts, I pray that Your anger and wrath may turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are a reproach to all around us.

So now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of Your servant. For Your sake, O Lord, cause Your face to shine upon Your desolate sanctuary. Incline Your ear, O my God, and hear; open Your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears Your name. For we are not presenting our petitions before You because of our righteous acts, but because of Your great compassion.

O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For Your sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people bear Your name."

While I was speaking, praying, confessing my sin and that of my people Israel, and presenting my petition before the LORD my God concerning His holy mountain— while I was still praying, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. He instructed me and spoke with me, saying: "O Daniel, I have come now to give you insight and understanding. At the beginning of your petitions, an answer went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are highly precious. So consider the message and understand the vision:

Seventy weeks are decreed for your people and your holy city to stop their transgression, to put an end to sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy Place.

Know and understand this: From the issuance of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Messiah, the Prince, there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of distress.

Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and will have nothing.

Then the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood, and until the end there will be war; desolations have been decreed. And he will confirm a covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of the temple will come the abomination that causes desolation, until the decreed destruction is poured out upon him."

In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a message was revealed to Daniel, who was called Belteshazzar. The message was true, and it concerned a great conflict. And the understanding of the message was given to him in a vision.

In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three full weeks. I ate no rich food, no meat or wine entered my mouth, and I did not anoint myself with oil until the three weeks were completed.

On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, I lifted up my eyes, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. His body was like beryl, his face like the brilliance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of polished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.

Only I, Daniel, saw the vision; the men with me did not see it, but a great terror fell upon them, and they ran and hid themselves.

So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision. No strength remained in me; my face grew deathly pale, and I was powerless. I heard the sound of his words, and as I listened, I fell into a deep sleep, with my face to the ground.

Suddenly, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. He said to me, "Daniel, you are a man who is highly precious. Consider carefully the words that I am about to say to you. Stand up, for I have now been sent to you."

And when he had said this to me, I stood up trembling.

"Do not be afraid, Daniel," he said, "for from the first day that you purposed to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. However, the prince of the kingdom of Persia opposed me for twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia. Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision concerns those days."

While he was speaking these words to me, I set my face toward the ground and became speechless. And suddenly one with the likeness of a man touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and said to the one standing before me, "My lord, because of the vision, I am overcome with anguish, and I have no strength. How can I, your servant, speak with you, my lord? Now I have no strength, nor is any breath left in me."

Again the one with the likeness of a man touched me and strengthened me. "Do not be afraid, you who are highly precious," he said. "Peace be with you! Be strong now; be very strong!"

As he spoke with me, I was strengthened and said, "Speak, my lord, for you have strengthened me."

"Do you know why I have come to you?" he said. "I must return at once to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I have gone forth, behold, the prince of Greece will come. But first I will tell you what is inscribed in the Book of Truth. Yet no one has the courage to support me against these, except Michael your prince.''

"And I, in the first year of Darius the Mede, stood up to strengthen and protect him.

Now then, I will tell you the truth: Three more kings will arise in Persia, and then a fourth, who will be far richer than all the others. By the power of his wealth, he will stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece.

Then a mighty king will arise, who will rule with great authority and do as he pleases. But as soon as

he is established, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four winds of heaven. It will not go to his descendants, nor will it have the authority with which he ruled, because his kingdom will be uprooted and given to others.

The king of the South will grow strong, but one of his commanders will grow even stronger and will rule his own kingdom with great authority.

After some years they will form an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the South will go to the king of the North to seal the agreement. But his daughter will not retain her position of power, nor will his strength endure. At that time she will be given up, along with her royal escort and her father and the one who supported her.

But one from her family line will rise up in his place, come against the army of the king of the North, and enter his fortress, fighting and prevailing. He will take even their gods captive to Egypt, with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold. For some years he will stay away from the king of the North, who will invade the realm of the king of the South and then return to his own land.

But his sons will stir up strife and assemble a great army, which will advance forcefully, sweeping through like a flood, and will again carry the battle as far as his fortress. In a rage, the king of the South will march out to fight the king of the North, who will raise a large army, but it will be delivered into the hand of his enemy.

When the army is carried off, the king of the South will be proud in heart and will cast down tens of thousands, but he will not triumph. For the king of the North will raise another army, larger than the first, and after some years he will advance with a great army and many supplies.

In those times many will rise up against the king of the South. Violent ones among your own people will exalt themselves in fulfillment of the vision, but they will fail.

Then the king of the North will come, build up a siege ramp, and capture a fortified city. The forces of the South will not stand; even their best troops will not be able to resist. The invader will do as he pleases, and no one will stand against him. He will establish himself in the Beautiful Land, with destruction in his hand. He will resolve to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and will reach an agreement with the king of the South. He will give him a daughter in marriage in order to overthrow the kingdom, but his plan will not succeed or help him.

Then he will turn his face to the coastlands and capture many of them. But a commander will put an end to his reproach and will turn it back upon him. After this, he will turn back toward the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall and be no more.

In his place one will arise who will send out a tax collector for the glory of the kingdom; but within a few days he will be destroyed, though not in anger or in battle.

In his place a despicable person will arise; royal honors will not be given to him, but he will come in a time of peace and seize the kingdom by intrigue. Then a flood of forces will be swept away before him and destroyed, along with a prince of the covenant.

After an alliance is made with him, he will act deceitfully; for he will rise to power with only a few people. In a time of peace, he will invade the richest provinces and do what his fathers and forefathers never did. He will lavish plunder, loot, and wealth on his followers, and he will plot against the strongholds — but only for a time.

And with a large army he will stir up his power and his courage against the king of the South, who will mobilize a very large and powerful army but will not withstand the plots devised against him. Those who eat from his provisions will seek to destroy him; his army will be swept away, and many will fall slain.

And the two kings, with their hearts bent on evil, will speak lies at the same table, but to no avail, for still the end will come at the appointed time. The king of the North will return to his land with great wealth, but his heart will be set against the holy covenant; so he will do damage and return to his own land.

At the appointed time he will invade the South again, but this time will not be like the first. Ships of Kittim will come against him, and he will lose heart. Then he will turn back and rage against the holy covenant and do damage. So he will return and show favor to those who forsake the holy covenant. His forces will rise up and desecrate the temple fortress. They will abolish the daily sacrifice and set up the abomination of desolation.

With flattery he will corrupt those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him. Those with insight will instruct many, though for a time they will fall by sword or flame, or be captured or plundered.

Now when they fall, they will be granted a little help, but many will join them insincerely. Some of the wise will fall so that they may be refined, purified, and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time.

Then the king will do as he pleases and will exalt and magnify himself above every god, and he will speak monstrous things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been decreed must be accomplished. He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers, nor for the one desired by women, nor for any other god, because he will magnify himself above them all.

And in their place, he will honor a god of fortresses — a god his fathers did not know— with gold, silver, precious stones, and riches. He will attack the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him, making them rulers over many and distributing the land for a price.

At the time of the end, the king of the South will engage him in battle, but the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots, horsemen, and many ships, invading many countries and sweeping through them like a flood. He will also invade the Beautiful Land, and many countries will fall. But these will be delivered from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the leaders of the Ammonites.

He will extend his power over many countries, and not even the land of Egypt will escape. He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and over all the riches of Egypt, and the Libyans and Cushites will also submit to him.

But news from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will go out with great fury to destroy many and devote them to destruction. He will pitch his royal tents between the sea and the beautiful holy mountain, but he will meet his end with no one to help him.''

"At that time Michael, the great prince who stands watch over your people, will rise up. There will be a time of distress, the likes of which will not have occurred from the beginning of nations until that time. But at that time your people — everyone whose name is found written in the book — will be delivered.

And many who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, but others to shame and everlasting contempt. Then the wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever and ever.

But you, Daniel, shut up these words and seal the book until the time of the end. Many will roam to and fro, and knowledge will increase."

Then I, Daniel, looked and saw two others standing there, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank. One of them said to the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long until the fulfillment of these wonders?"

And the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by Him who lives forever, saying, "It will be for a time, and times, and half a time. When the power of the holy people has finally been shattered, all these things will be completed."

I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will be the outcome of these things?"

"Go on your way, Daniel," he replied, "for the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. Many will be purified, made spotless, and refined, but the wicked will continue to act wickedly. None of the wicked will understand, but the wise will understand.

And from the time the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is he who waits and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.

But as for you, go on your way until the end. You will rest, and then you will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days."

Hosea

Book of Hosea

This is the word of the LORD that came to Hosea son of Beeri in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and of Jeroboam son of Jehoash, king of Israel.

When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, He told him, “Go, take a prostitute as your wife and have children of adultery, because this land is flagrantly prostituting itself by departing from the LORD.”

So Hosea went and married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

Then the LORD said to Hosea, “Name him Jezreel, for soon I will bring the bloodshed of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel. And on that day I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel.”

Gomer again conceived and gave birth to a daughter, and the LORD said to Hosea, “Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that I should ever forgive them. Yet I will have compassion on the house of Judah, and I will save them — not by bow or sword or war, not by horses and cavalry, but by the LORD their God.”

After she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, Gomer conceived and gave birth to a son. And the LORD said, “Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people, and I am not your God.

Yet the number of the Israelites will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or counted. And it will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’ Then the people of Judah and of Israel will be gathered together, and they will appoint for themselves one leader, and will go up out of the land. For great will be the day of Jezreel.’’

> “Say of your brothers, ‘My people,’ and of your sisters, ‘My loved one.’ Rebuke your mother, rebuke her, for she is not My wife, and I am not her husband. Let her remove the adultery from her face and the unfaithfulness from between her breasts. Otherwise, I will strip her naked and expose her like the day of her birth. I will make her like a desert and turn her into a parched land, and I will let her die of thirst. I will have no compassion on her children, because they are the children of adultery. For their mother has played the harlot and has conceived them in disgrace. For she thought, ‘I will go after my lovers, who give me bread and water, wool and linen, oil and drink.’ Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her path with thorns; I will enclose her with a wall, so she cannot find her way. She will pursue her lovers but not catch them; she will seek them but not find them. Then she will say, ‘I will return to my first husband, for then I was better off than now.’ For she does not acknowledge that it was I who gave her grain, new wine, and oil, who lavished on her silver and gold — which they crafted for Baal. Therefore I will take back My grain in its time and My new wine in its season; I will take away My wool and linen, which were given to cover her nakedness. And then I will expose her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and no one will deliver her out of My hands. I will put an end to all her exultation: her feasts, New Moons, and Sabbaths— all her appointed feasts. I will destroy her vines and fig trees, which she thinks are the wages paid by her lovers. So I will make them into a thicket, and the beasts of the field will devour them. I will punish her for the days of the Baals when she burned incense to them, when she adorned herself with rings and jewelry, and went after her lovers. But Me she forgot,” declares the LORD.
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> “Therefore, behold, I will allure her and lead her to the wilderness, and speak to her tenderly. There I will give back her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor into a gateway of hope. There she will respond as she did in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt. In that day,” declares the LORD, “you will call Me ‘my Husband,’ and no longer call Me ‘my Master.’ For I will remove from her lips the names of the Baals; no longer will their names be invoked. On that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the creatures that crawl on the ground. And I will abolish bow and sword and battle in the land, and will make them lie down in safety. So I will betroth you to Me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in loving devotion and compassion. And I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will know the LORD.” “On that day I will respond —” declares the LORD — “I will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth. And the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine and oil, and they will respond to Jezreel. And I will sow her as My own in the land, and I will have compassion on ‘No Compassion.’ I will say to those called ‘Not My People,’ ‘You are My people,’ and they will say, ‘You are my God.’”

Then the LORD said to me, “Go show love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love to offer raisin cakes to idols.”

So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley. Then I said to her, “You must live with me for many days; you must not be promiscuous or belong to another, and I will do the same for you.”

For the Israelites must live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, and without ephod or idol. Afterward, the people of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their

king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.

Hear the word of the LORD, O children of Israel, for the LORD has a case against the people of the land: “There is no truth, no loving devotion, and no knowledge of God in the land! Cursing and lying, murder and stealing, and adultery are rampant; one act of bloodshed follows another. Therefore the land mourns, and all who dwell in it will waste away with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air; even the fish of the sea disappear. But let no man contend; let no man offer reproof; for your people are like those who contend with a priest. You will stumble by day, and the prophet will stumble with you by night; so I will destroy your mother — My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you as My priests. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children. The more they multiplied, the more they sinned against Me; they exchanged their Glory for a thing of disgrace. They feed on the sins of My people and set their hearts on iniquity. And it shall be like people, like priest. I will punish both of them for their ways and repay them for their deeds. They will eat but not be satisfied; they will be promiscuous but not multiply. For they have abandoned the LORD to give themselves to promiscuity, wine, and new wine, which take away understanding. My people consult their wooden idols, and their divining rods inform them. For a spirit of prostitution leads them astray and they have played the harlot against their God. They sacrifice on the mountaintops and burn offerings on the hills, under oak, poplar, and terebinth, because their shade is pleasant. And so your daughters turn to prostitution and your daughters-in-law to adultery. I will not punish your daughters when they prostitute themselves, nor your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery. For the men themselves go off with prostitutes and offer sacrifices with shrine prostitutes. So a people without understanding will come to ruin. Though you prostitute yourself, O Israel, may Judah avoid such guilt! Do not journey to Gilgal, do not go up to Beth-aven, and do not swear on oath, ‘As surely as the LORD lives!’ For Israel is as obstinate as a stubborn heifer. Can the LORD now shepherd them like lambs in an open meadow? Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone! When their liquor is gone, they turn to prostitution; their rulers dearly love disgrace. The whirlwind has wrapped them in its wings, and their sacrifices will bring them shame.”

“Hear this, O priests! Take heed, O house of Israel! Give ear, O royal house! For this judgment is against you because you have been a snare at Mizpah, a net spread out on Tabor. The rebels are deep in slaughter; but I will chastise them all. I know all about Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from Me. For now, O Ephraim, you have turned to prostitution; Israel is defiled. Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God, for a spirit of prostitution is within them, and they do not know the LORD. Israel’s arrogance testifies against them; Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity; even Judah stumbles with them. They go with their flocks and herds to seek the LORD, but they do not find Him; He has withdrawn Himself from them. They have been unfaithful to the LORD; for they have borne illegitimate children. Now the New Moon will devour them along with their land. Blow the ram’s horn in Gibeah, the trumpet in Ramah; raise the battle cry in Beth-aven: Lead on, O Benjamin! Ephraim will be laid waste on the day of rebuke. Among the tribes of Israel I proclaim what is certain. The princes of Judah are like those who move boundary stones; I will pour out My fury upon them like water. Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgment, for he is determined to follow worthless idols. So I am like a moth to Ephraim, and like decay to the house of Judah. When Ephraim saw his sickness and Judah his wound, then Ephraim turned to Assyria and sent to the great king. But he cannot cure you or heal your wound. For I am like a lion to Ephraim and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear them to pieces and then go away. I will carry them off where no one can rescue them. Then I will return to My place until they admit their guilt and seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.”

Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us to pieces, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bind up our wounds. After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His presence. So let us know — let us press on to know the LORD. As surely as the sun rises, He will appear; He will come to us like the rain, like the spring showers that water the earth. What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? For your loyalty is like a morning mist, like the early dew that vanishes. Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of My mouth, and My judgments go forth like lightning. For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. But they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant; there they were unfaithful to Me. Gilead is a city of evildoers, tracked with footprints of blood. Like raiders who lie in ambush, so does a band of priests; they murder on the way to Shechem; surely they have committed atrocities. In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing: Ephraim practices prostitution there, and Israel is defiled. Also for you, O

Judah, a harvest is appointed, when I restore My people from captivity.
When I heal Israel, the iniquity of Ephraim will be exposed, as well as the crimes of Samaria. For they practice deceit and thieves break in; bandits raid in the streets. But they fail to consider in their hearts that I remember all their evil. Now their deeds are all around them; they are before My face. They delight the king with their evil, and the princes with their lies. They are all adulterers, like an oven heated by a baker who needs not stoke the fire from the kneading to the rising of the dough. The princes are inflamed with wine on the day of our king; so he joins hands with those who mock him. For they prepare their heart like an oven while they lie in wait; all night their anger smolders; in the morning it blazes like a flaming fire. All of them are hot as an oven, and they devour their rulers. All their kings fall; not one of them calls upon Me. Ephraim mixes with the nations; Ephraim is an unturned cake. Foreigners consume his strength, but he does not notice. Even his hair is streaked with gray, but he does not know. Israel's arrogance testifies against them, yet they do not return to the LORD their God; despite all this, they do not seek Him. So Ephraim has become like a silly, senseless dove — calling out to Egypt, then turning to Assyria. As they go, I will spread My net over them; I will bring them down like birds of the air. I will chastise them when I hear them flocking together. Woe to them, for they have strayed from Me! Destruction to them, for they have rebelled against Me! Though I would redeem them, they speak lies against Me. They do not cry out to Me from their hearts when they wail upon their beds. They slash themselves for grain and new wine, but turn away from Me. Although I trained and strengthened their arms, they plot evil against Me. They turn, but not to the Most High; they are like a faulty bow. Their leaders will fall by the sword for the cursing of their tongue; for this they will be ridiculed in the land of Egypt.
Put the ram's horn to your lips! An eagle looms over the house of the LORD, because the people have transgressed My covenant and rebelled against My law. Israel cries out to Me, "O our God, we know You!" But Israel has rejected good; an enemy will pursue him. They set up kings, but not by Me. They make princes, but without My approval. With their silver and gold they make themselves idols, to their own destruction. He has rejected your calf, O Samaria. My anger burns against them. How long will they be incapable of innocence? For this thing is from Israel— a craftsman made it, and it is not God. It will be broken to pieces, that calf of Samaria. For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind. There is no standing grain; what sprouts fails to yield flour. Even if it should produce, the foreigners would swallow it up. Israel is swallowed up! Now they are among the nations like a worthless vessel. For they have gone up to Assyria like a wild donkey on its own. Ephraim has hired lovers. Though they hire allies among the nations, I will now round them up, and they will begin to diminish under the oppression of the king of princes. Though Ephraim multiplied the altars for sin, they became his altars for sinning. Though I wrote for them the great things of My law, they regarded them as something strange. Though they offer sacrifices as gifts to Me, and though they eat the meat, the LORD does not accept them. Now He will remember their iniquity and punish their sins: They will return to Egypt. Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces; Judah has multiplied its fortified cities. But I will send fire upon their cities, and it will consume their citadels.
Do not rejoice, O Israel, with exultation like the nations, for you have played the harlot against your God; you have made love for hire on every threshing floor. The threshing floor and winepress will not feed them, and the new wine will fail them. They will not remain in the land of the LORD; Ephraim will return to Egypt and eat unclean food in Assyria. They will not pour out wine offerings to the LORD, and their sacrifices will not please Him, but will be to them like the bread of mourners; all who eat will be defiled. For their bread will be for themselves; it will not enter the house of the LORD. What will you do on the appointed day, on the day of the LORD's feast? For even if they flee destruction, Egypt will gather them and Memphis will bury them. Their precious silver will be taken over by thistles, and thorns will overrun their tents. The days of punishment have come; the days of retribution have arrived — let Israel know it. The prophet is called a fool, and the inspired man insane, because of the greatness of your iniquity and hostility. The prophet is Ephraim's watchman, along with my God, yet the snare of the fowler lies on all his paths. Hostility is in the house of his God! They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah; He will remember their guilt; He will punish their sins. I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness. I saw your fathers as the firstfruits of the fig tree in its first season. But they went to Baal-peor, and consecrated themselves to Shame; so they became as detestable as the thing they loved. Ephraim's glory will fly away like a bird, with no birth, no pregnancy, and no conception. Even if they raise their children, I will bereave them of each one. Yes, woe be to them when I turn away from them! I have seen Ephraim, like Tyre, planted in a meadow. But Ephraim will bring out his children for slaughter. Give them, O LORD— what will You give? Give them wombs that miscarry and breasts that dry up! All their evil appears at Gilgal, for there I hated them. I will drive them from

My house for the wickedness of their deeds. I will no longer love them; all their leaders are rebellious. Ephraim is struck down; their root is withered; they cannot bear fruit. Even if they bear children, I will slay the darlings of their wombs. My God will reject them because they have not obeyed Him; and they shall be wanderers among the nations.

Israel was a luxuriant vine, yielding fruit for himself. The more his fruit increased, the more he increased the altars. The better his land produced, the better he made the sacred pillars. Their hearts are devious; now they must bear their guilt. The LORD will break down their altars and demolish their sacred pillars. Surely now they will say, "We have no king, for we do not revere the LORD. What can a king do for us?" They speak mere words; with false oaths they make covenants. So judgment springs up like poisonous weeds in the furrows of a field. The people of Samaria will fear for the calf of Beth-aven. Indeed, its people will mourn over it with its idolatrous priests — those who rejoiced in its glory — for it has been taken from them into exile. Yes, it will be carried to Assyria as tribute to the great king. Ephraim will be seized with shame; Israel will be ashamed of its wooden idols. Samaria will be carried off with her king like a twig on the surface of the water. The high places of Aven will be destroyed— it is the sin of Israel; thorns and thistles will overgrow their altars. Then they will say to the mountains, "Cover us!" and to the hills, "Fall on us!" Since the days of Gibeah you have sinned, O Israel, and there you have remained. Did not the battle in Gibeah overtake the sons of iniquity? I will chasten them when I please; nations will be gathered against them to put them in bondage for their double transgression. Ephraim is a well-trained heifer that loves to thresh; but I will place a yoke on her fair neck. I will harness Ephraim, Judah will plow, and Jacob will break the hard ground. Sow for yourselves righteousness and reap the fruit of loving devotion; break up your unplowed ground. For it is time to seek the LORD until He comes and sends righteousness upon you like rain. You have plowed wickedness and reaped injustice; you have eaten the fruit of lies. Because you have trusted in your own way and in the multitude of your mighty men, the roar of battle will rise against your people, so that all your fortresses will be demolished as Shalman devastated Beth-arbel in the day of battle, when mothers were dashed to pieces along with their children. Thus it will be done to you, O Bethel, because of your great wickedness. When the day dawns, the king of Israel will be utterly cut off.

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son. But the more I called Israel, the farther they departed from Me. They sacrificed to the Baals and burned incense to carved images. It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms, but they never realized that it was I who healed them. I led them with cords of kindness, with ropes of love; I lifted the yoke from their necks and bent down to feed them. Will they not return to the land of Egypt and be ruled by Assyria because they refused to repent? A sword will flash through their cities; it will destroy the bars of their gates and consume them in their own plans. My people are bent on turning from Me. Though they call to the Most High, He will by no means exalt them.

How could I give you up, O Ephraim? How could I surrender you, O Israel? How could I make you like Admah? How could I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart is turned within Me; My compassion is stirred! I will not execute the full fury of My anger; I will not destroy Ephraim again. For I am God and not man — the Holy One among you — and I will not come in wrath. They will walk after the LORD; He will roar like a lion. When He roars, His children will come trembling from the west. They will come trembling like birds from Egypt and like doves from the land of Assyria. Then I will settle them in their homes, declares the LORD. Ephraim surrounds Me with lies, the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah still walks with God and is faithful to the Holy One.

Ephraim feeds on the wind and pursues the east wind all day long; he multiplies lies and violence; he makes a covenant with Assyria and sends olive oil to Egypt. The LORD has a charge to bring against Judah. He will punish Jacob according to his ways and repay him according to his deeds. In the womb he grasped his brother's heel, and in his vigor he wrestled with God. Yes, he struggled with the angel and prevailed; he wept and sought His favor; he found Him at Bethel and spoke with Him there — the LORD God of Hosts, the LORD is His name of renown. But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and always wait on your God. A merchant loves to defraud with dishonest scales in his hands. And Ephraim boasts: "How rich I have become! I have found wealth for myself. In all my labors, they can find in me no iniquity that is sinful." But I am the LORD your God ever since the land of Egypt. I will again make you dwell in tents, as in the days of the appointed feast. I spoke through the prophets and multiplied their visions; I gave parables through the prophets. Is there iniquity in Gilead? They will surely come to nothing. Do they sacrifice bulls in Gilgal? Indeed, their altars will be heaps of stones in the furrows of the field. Jacob fled to the land of Aram and Israel worked for a wife — for a wife he tended sheep. But by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet he was preserved. Ephraim has provoked bitter anger, so his Lord will leave

his bloodguilt upon him and repay him for his contempt.
When Ephraim spoke, there was trembling; he was exalted in Israel. But he incurred guilt through Baal, and he died. Now they sin more and more and make for themselves cast images, idols skillfully made from their silver, all of them the work of craftsmen. People say of them, “They offer human sacrifice and kiss the calves!” Therefore they will be like the morning mist, like the early dew that vanishes, like chaff blown from a threshing floor, like smoke through an open window. Yet I am the LORD your God ever since the land of Egypt; you know no God but Me, for there is no Savior besides Me. I knew you in the wilderness, in the land of drought. When they had pasture, they became satisfied; when they were satisfied, their hearts became proud, and as a result they forgot Me. So like a lion I will pounce on them; like a leopard I will lurk by the path. Like a bear robbed of her cubs I will attack them, and I will tear open their chests. There I will devour them like a lion, like a wild beast tearing them apart.
You are destroyed, O Israel, because you are against Me — against your helper. Where is your king now to save you in all your cities, and the rulers to whom you said, “Give me a king and princes”? So in My anger I gave you a king, and in My wrath I took him away. The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is stored up. Labor pains come upon him, but he is an unwise son. When the time arrives, he fails to present himself at the opening of the womb. I will ransom them from the power of Sheol; I will redeem them from Death. Where, O Death, are your plagues? Where, O Sheol, is your sting? Compassion is hidden from My eyes.
Although he flourishes among his brothers, an east wind will come — a wind from the LORD rising up from the desert. His fountain will fail, and his spring will run dry. The wind will plunder his treasury of every precious article. Samaria will bear her guilt because she has rebelled against her God. They will fall by the sword; their little ones will be dashed to pieces, and their pregnant women ripped open.
Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled by your iniquity. Bring your confessions and return to the LORD. Say to Him: “Take away all our iniquity and receive us graciously, that we may present the fruit of our lips. Assyria will not save us, nor will we ride on horses. We will never again say, ‘Our gods!’ to the work of our own hands. For in You the fatherless find compassion.”
I will heal their apostasy; I will freely love them, for My anger has turned away from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like the lily and take root like the cedars of Lebanon. His shoots will sprout, and his splendor will be like the olive tree, his fragrance like the cedars of Lebanon. They will return and dwell in his shade; they will grow grain and blossom like the vine. His renown will be like the wine of Lebanon. O Ephraim, what have I to do anymore with idols? It is I who answer and watch over him. I am like a flourishing cypress; your fruit comes from Me. Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right, and the righteous walk in them but the rebellious stumble in them.

Joel

Book of Joel

This is the word of the LORD that came to Joel son of Pethuel:

Hear this, O elders; and give ear, all who dwell in the land. Has anything like this ever happened in your days or in the days of your fathers? Tell it to your children; let your children tell it to their children, and their children to the next generation. What the devouring locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten; what the swarming locust has left, the young locust has eaten; and what the young locust has left, the destroying locust has eaten. Wake up, you drunkards, and weep; wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the sweet wine, for it has been cut off from your mouth. For a nation has invaded My land, powerful and without number; its teeth are the teeth of a lion, and its fangs are the fangs of a lioness. It has laid waste My grapevine and splintered My fig tree. It has stripped off the bark and thrown it away; the branches have turned white.

Wail like a virgin dressed in sackcloth, grieving for the husband of her youth. Grain and drink offerings have been cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests are in mourning, those who minister before the LORD. The field is ruined; the land mourns. For the grain is destroyed, the new wine is dried up, and the oil fails. Be dismayed, O farmers, wail, O vinedressers, over the wheat and barley, because the harvest of the field has perished. The grapevine is dried up, and the fig tree is withered; the pomegranate, palm, and apple — all the trees of the orchard— are withered. Surely the joy of mankind has dried up.

Put on sackcloth and lament, O priests; wail, O ministers of the altar. Come, spend the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God, because the grain and drink offerings are withheld from the house of your God. Consecrate a fast; proclaim a solemn assembly! Gather the elders and all the residents of the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD. Alas for the day! For the Day of the LORD is near, and it will come as destruction from the Almighty. Has not the food been cut off before our very eyes — joy and gladness from the house of our God? The seeds lie shriveled beneath the clods; the storehouses are in ruins; the granaries are broken down, for the grain has withered away. How the cattle groan! The herds wander in confusion because they have no pasture. Even the flocks of sheep are suffering. To You, O LORD, I call, for fire has consumed the open pastures and flames have scorched all the trees of the field. Even the beasts of the field pant for You, for the streams of water have dried up, and fire has consumed the open pastures.

Blow the ram's horn in Zion; sound the alarm on My holy mountain! Let all who dwell in the land tremble, for the Day of the LORD is coming; indeed, it is near— a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like the dawn overspreading the mountains a great and strong army appears, such as never was of old, nor will ever be in ages to come. Before them a fire devours, and behind them a flame scorches. The land before them is like the Garden of Eden, but behind them, it is like a desert wasteland — surely nothing will escape them. Their appearance is like that of horses, and they gallop like swift steeds. With a sound like that of chariots they bound over the mountaintops, like the crackling of fire consuming stubble, like a mighty army deployed for battle. Nations writhe in horror before them; every face turns pale. They charge like mighty men; they scale the walls like men of war. Each one marches in formation, not swerving from the course. They do not jostle one another; each proceeds in his path. They burst through the defenses, never breaking ranks. They storm the city; they run along the wall; they climb into houses, entering through windows like thieves. Before them the earth quakes; the heavens tremble. The sun and moon grow dark, and the stars lose their brightness. The LORD raises His voice in the presence of His army. Indeed, His camp is very large, for mighty are those who obey His command. For the Day of the LORD is great and very dreadful. Who can endure it?

"Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to Me with all your heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning." So rend your hearts and not your garments, and return to the LORD your God. For He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in loving devotion. And He relents from sending disaster. Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave a blessing behind Him — grain and drink offerings for the LORD your God. Blow the ram's horn in Zion, consecrate a fast, proclaim a sacred assembly. Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the aged, gather the children, even those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber. Let the priests who minister before the LORD weep between the portico and the altar, saying, "Spare Your people, O LORD, and do not make Your heritage a reproach, an object of scorn among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

Then the LORD became jealous for His land, and He spared His people. And the LORD answered His people: "Behold, I will send you

grain, new wine, and oil, and by them you will be satisfied. I will never again make you a reproach among the nations. The northern army I will drive away from you, banishing it to a barren and desolate land, its front ranks into the Eastern Sea, and its rear guard into the Western Sea. And its stench will rise; its foul odor will ascend. For He has done great things. Do not be afraid, O land; rejoice and be glad, for the LORD has done great things. Do not be afraid, O beasts of the field, for the open pastures have turned green, the trees bear their fruit, and the fig tree and vine yield their best. Be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God, for He has given you the autumn rains for your vindication. He sends you showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before. The threshing floors will be full of grain, and the vats will overflow with new wine and oil. I will repay you for the years eaten by locusts — the swarming locust, the young locust, the destroying locust, and the devouring locust — My great army that I sent against you. You will have plenty to eat, until you are satisfied. You will praise the name of the LORD your God, who has worked wonders for you. My people will never again be put to shame. Then you will know that I am present in Israel and that I am the LORD your God, and there is no other. My people will never again be put to shame.

And afterward, I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on My menservants and maidservants, I will pour out My Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and awesome Day of the LORD. And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has promised, among the remnant called by the LORD.''

"Yes, in those days and at that time, when I restore Judah and Jerusalem from captivity, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment against them concerning My people, My inheritance, Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations as they divided up My land. They cast lots for My people; they bartered a boy for a prostitute and sold a girl for wine to drink.

Now what do you have against Me, O Tyre, Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Are you rendering against Me a recompense? If you retaliate against Me, I will swiftly and speedily return your recompense upon your heads. For you took My silver and gold and carried off My finest treasures to your temples. You sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks, to send them far from their homeland.

Behold, I will rouse them from the places to which you sold them; I will return your recompense upon your heads. I will sell your sons and daughters into the hands of the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans — to a distant nation."

Indeed, the LORD has spoken.

Proclaim this among the nations:

"Prepare for war; rouse the mighty men; let all the men of war advance and attack! Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weak say, 'I am strong!' Come quickly, all you surrounding nations, and gather yourselves. Bring down Your mighty ones, O LORD. Let the nations be roused and advance to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit down to judge all the nations on every side. Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full; the wine vats overflow because their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the Day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will no longer shine. The LORD will roar from Zion and raise His voice from Jerusalem; heaven and earth will tremble. But the LORD will be a refuge for His people, a stronghold for the people of Israel.

Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who dwells in Zion, My holy mountain. Jerusalem will be holy, never again to be overrun by foreigners. And in that day the mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk. All the streams of Judah will run with water, and a spring will flow from the house of the LORD to water the Valley of Acacias. Egypt will become desolate, and Edom a desert wasteland, because of the violence done to the people of Judah, in whose land they shed innocent blood. But Judah will be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. For I will avenge their blood, which I have not yet avenged." For the LORD dwells in Zion.

Amos

Book of Amos

These are the words of Amos, who was among the sheepherders of Tekoa— what he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, in the days when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel. He said:

> "The LORD roars from Zion and raises His voice from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the summit of Carmel withers."

This is what the LORD says:

> "For three transgressions of Damascus, even four, I will not revoke My judgment, because they threshed Gilead with sledges of iron. So I will send fire upon the house of Hazael to consume the citadels of Ben-hadad. I will break down the gates of Damascus; I will cut off the ruler from the Valley of Aven and the one who wields the scepter in Beth-eden. The people of Aram will be exiled to Kir," says the LORD.

This is what the LORD says:

> "For three transgressions of Gaza, even four, I will not revoke My judgment, because they exiled a whole population, delivering them up to Edom. So I will send fire upon the walls of Gaza, to consume its citadels. I will cut off the ruler of Ashdod and the one who wields the scepter in Ashkelon. I will turn My hand against Ekron, and the remnant of the Philistines will perish," says the Lord GOD.

This is what the LORD says:

> "For three transgressions of Tyre, even four, I will not revoke My judgment, because they delivered up a whole congregation of exiles to Edom and broke a covenant of brotherhood. So I will send fire upon the walls of Tyre to consume its citadels."

This is what the LORD says:

> "For three transgressions of Edom, even four, I will not revoke My judgment, because he pursued his brother with the sword and stifled all compassion; his anger raged continually, and his fury flamed incessantly. So I will send fire upon Teman to consume the citadels of Bozrah."

This is what the LORD says:

> "For three transgressions of the Ammonites, even four, I will not revoke My judgment, because they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to enlarge their territory. So I will kindle a fire in the walls of Rabbah to consume its citadels amid war cries on the day of battle and a violent wind on the day of tempest. Their king will go into exile — he and his princes together," says the LORD.

This is what the LORD says:

> "For three transgressions of Moab, even four, I will not revoke My judgment, because he burned to lime the bones of Edom's king. So I will send fire against Moab to consume the citadels of Kerioth. Moab will die in tumult, amid war cries and the sound of the ram's horn. I will cut off the ruler of Moab and kill all the officials with him," says the LORD.

This is what the LORD says:

> "For three transgressions of Judah, even four, I will not revoke My judgment, because they reject the Law of the LORD and fail to keep His statutes; they are led astray by the lies in which their fathers walked. So I will send fire upon Judah to consume the citadels of Jerusalem."

This is what the LORD says:

> "For three transgressions of Israel, even four, I will not revoke My judgment, because they sell the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as on the dust of the earth; they push the needy out of their way. A man and his father have relations with the same girl and so profane My holy name. They lie down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge. And in the house of their God, they drink wine obtained through fines. Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, though his height was like that of the cedars, and he was as strong as the oaks. Yet I destroyed his fruit above and his roots below. And I brought you up from the land of Egypt and led you forty years in the wilderness, that you might take possession of the land of the Amorite. I raised up prophets from your sons and Nazirites from your young men. Is this not true, O children of Israel?" declares the LORD. "But you made the Nazirites drink wine and commanded the prophets not to prophesy. Behold, I am about to crush you in your place as with a cart full of grain. Escape will fail the swift, the strong will not prevail by his strength, and the mighty will not save his life. The archer will not stand his ground, the fleet of foot will not escape, and the horseman will not save his life. Even the bravest of mighty men will flee naked on that day," declares the LORD.

Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt:

> "Only you have I known from all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Can two walk together without agreeing where to go? Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey? Does a young lion growl in his den if he has caught nothing? Does a bird land in a snare where no bait has been set? Does a trap spring from the ground when it has nothing to catch? If a ram's horn sounds in a city, do the people not tremble? If calamity comes to a city, has not the LORD caused it? Surely the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing His plan to His servants the prophets. The lion has roared — who will not

fear? The Lord GOD has spoken — who will not prophesy? Proclaim to the citadels of Ashdod and to the citadels of Egypt: "Assemble on the mountains of Samaria; see the great unrest in the city and the acts of oppression in her midst." "For they know not how to do right," declares the LORD. "They store up violence and destruction in their citadels."

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says:

"An enemy will surround the land; he will pull down your strongholds and plunder your citadels."

This is what the LORD says:

"As the shepherd snatches from the mouth of the lion two legs or a piece of an ear, so the Israelites dwelling in Samaria will be rescued having just the corner of a bed or the cushion of a couch. Hear and testify against the house of Jacob, declares the Lord GOD, the God of Hosts. On the day I punish Israel for their transgressions, I will visit destruction on the altars of Bethel; the horns of the altar will be cut off, and they will fall to the ground. I will tear down the winter house along with the summer house; the houses of ivory will also perish, and the great houses will come to an end," declares the LORD.

Hear this word, you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy, who say to your husbands, "Bring us more to drink."

The Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness:

"Behold, the days are coming when you will be taken away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks. You will go out through broken walls, each one straight ahead of her, and you will be cast out toward Harmon," declares the LORD. "Go to Bethel and transgress; rebel even more at Gilgal! Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days. Offer leavened bread as a thank offering, and loudly proclaim your freewill offerings. For that is what you children of Israel love to do," declares the Lord GOD. "I afflicted all your cities with cleanness of teeth and all your towns with lack of bread, yet you did not return to Me," declares the LORD. "I also withheld the rain from you when the harvest was three months away. I sent rain on one city but withheld it from another. One field received rain; another without rain withered. People staggered from city to city for water to drink, but they were not satisfied; yet you did not return to Me," declares the LORD. "I struck you with blight and mildew in your growing gardens and vineyards; the locust devoured your fig and olive trees, yet you did not return to Me," declares the LORD. "I sent plagues among you like those of Egypt; I killed your young men with the sword, along with your captured horses. I filled your nostrils with the stench of your camp, yet you did not return to Me," declares the LORD. "Some of you I overthrew as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a firebrand snatched from a blaze, yet you did not return to Me," declares the LORD. "Therefore, that is what I will do to you, O Israel, and since I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel! For behold, He who forms the mountains, who creates the wind and reveals His thoughts to man, who turns the dawn to darkness and strides on the heights of the earth— the LORD, the God of Hosts, is His name."

Hear this word, O house of Israel, this lamentation I take up against you:

"Fallen is Virgin Israel, never to rise again. She lies abandoned on her land, with no one to raise her up."

This is what the Lord GOD says:

"The city that marches out a thousand strong will have but a hundred left, and the one that marches out a hundred strong will have but ten left in the house of Israel."

For this is what the LORD says to the house of Israel:

"Seek Me and live! Do not seek Bethel or go to Gilgal; do not journey to Beersheba, for Gilgal will surely go into exile, and Bethel will come to nothing. Seek the LORD and live, or He will sweep like fire through the house of Joseph; it will devour everything, with no one at Bethel to extinguish it. There are those who turn justice into wormwood and cast righteousness to the ground. He who made the Pleiades and Orion, who turns darkness into dawn and darkens day into night, who summons the waters of the sea and pours them over the face of the earth — the LORD is His name — He flashes destruction on the strong, so that fury comes upon the stronghold. There are those who hate the one who reproves in the gate and despise him who speaks with integrity. Therefore, because you trample on the poor and exact from him a tax of grain, you will never live in the stone houses you have built; you will never drink the wine from the lush vineyards you have planted. For I know that your transgressions are many and your sins are numerous. You oppress the righteous by taking bribes; you deprive the poor of justice in the gate. Therefore, the prudent keep silent in such times, for the days are evil. Seek good, not evil, so that you may live. And the LORD, the God of Hosts, will be with you, as you have claimed. Hate evil and love good; establish justice in the gate. Perhaps the LORD, the God of Hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph."

Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Hosts, the Lord, says:

"There will be wailing in all the public squares and cries of 'Alas! Alas!' in all the streets. The farmer will be summoned to mourn, and the mourners to wail. There will be wailing in all the vineyards, for I will pass through your midst," says the LORD. Woe to you who long for the Day of the LORD! What will the Day of the LORD be for you? It will be darkness

and not light. It will be like a man who flees from a lion, only to encounter a bear, or who enters his house and rests his hand against the wall, only to be bitten by a snake. Will not the Day of the LORD be darkness and not light, even gloom with no brightness in it? “I hate, I despise your feasts! I cannot stand the stench of your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer Me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; for your peace offerings of fattened cattle I will have no regard. Take away from Me the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Did you bring Me sacrifices and offerings forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You have taken along Sakkuth your king and Kaiwan your star god, the idols you made for yourselves. Therefore I will send you into exile beyond Damascus,” says the LORD, whose name is the God of Hosts.

Woe to those at ease in Zion and those secure on Mount Samaria, the distinguished ones of the foremost nation, to whom the house of Israel comes. Cross over to Calneh and see; go from there to the great Hamath; then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are you better than these kingdoms? Is their territory larger than yours? You dismiss the day of calamity and bring near a reign of violence. You lie on beds inlaid with ivory, and lounge upon your couches. You dine on lambs from the flock and calves from the stall. You improvise songs on the harp like David and invent your own musical instruments. You drink wine by the bowlful and anoint yourselves with the finest oils, but you fail to grieve over the ruin of Joseph. Therefore, you will now go into exile as the first of the captives, and your feasting and lounging will come to an end.

The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself— the LORD, the God of Hosts, has declared:

> “I abhor Jacob’s pride and detest his citadels, so I will deliver up the city and everything in it.”

And if there are ten men left in one house, they too will die. And when the relative who is to burn the bodies picks them up to remove them from the house, he will call to one inside, “Is anyone else with you?”

“None,” that person will answer.

“Silence,” the relative will retort, “for the name of the LORD must not be invoked.”

For the LORD gives a command:

> “The great house will be smashed to pieces, and the small house to rubble.” “Do horses gallop on the cliffs? Does one plow the sea with oxen? But you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood — you who rejoice in Lo-debar and say, ‘Did we not take Karnaim by our own strength?’ For behold, I will raise up a nation against you, O house of Israel,” declares the LORD, the God of Hosts, “and they will oppress you from Lebo-hamath to the Brook of the Arabah.”

This is what the Lord GOD showed me: He was preparing swarms of locusts just after the king’s harvest, as the late spring crop was coming up. And when the locusts had eaten every green plant in the land, I said, “Lord GOD, please forgive! How will Jacob survive, since he is so small?”

So the LORD relented from this plan. “It will not happen,” He said.

This is what the Lord GOD showed me: The Lord GOD was calling for judgment by fire. It consumed the great deep and devoured the land. Then I said, “Lord GOD, please stop! How will Jacob survive, since he is so small?”

So the LORD relented from this plan. “It will not happen either,” said the Lord GOD.

This is what He showed me: Behold, the Lord was standing by a wall true to plumb, with a plumb line in His hand. “Amos, what do you see?” asked the LORD.

“A plumb line,” I replied.

“Behold,” said the Lord, “I am setting a plumb line among My people Israel; I will no longer spare them:

> The high places of Isaac will be deserted, and the sanctuaries of Israel will be laid waste; and I will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with My sword.”

Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent word to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land cannot bear all his words, for this is what Amos has said:

> ‘Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will surely go into exile, away from their homeland.’”

And Amaziah said to Amos, “Go away, you seer! Flee to the land of Judah; earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. But never prophesy at Bethel again, because it is the sanctuary of the king and the temple of the kingdom.”

“I was not a prophet,” Amos replied, “nor was I the son of a prophet; rather, I was a herdsman and a tender of sycamore-fig trees. But the LORD took me from following the flock and said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to My people Israel.’

Now, therefore, hear the word of the LORD. You say:

> ‘Do not prophesy against Israel; do not preach against the house of Isaac.’

Therefore this is what the LORD says:

> ‘Your wife will become a prostitute in the city, and your sons and daughters will fall by the sword. Your land will be divided by a measuring line, and you yourself will die on pagan soil. And Israel will surely go into exile, away from their homeland.’”

This is what the Lord GOD showed me: I saw a basket of summer fruit.

“Amos, what do you see?” He asked.

“A basket of summer fruit,” I replied.

So the LORD said to me, “The end has come for My people Israel; I will no longer spare them.”

"In that day," declares the Lord GOD, "the songs of the temple will turn to wailing. Many will be the corpses, strewn in silence everywhere!"

Hear this, you who trample the needy, who do away with the poor of the land, asking, "When will the New Moon be over, that we may sell grain? When will the Sabbath end, that we may market wheat? Let us reduce the ephah and increase the shekel; let us cheat with dishonest scales. Let us buy the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the chaff with the wheat!"

The LORD has sworn by the Pride of Jacob:

"I will never forget any of their deeds. Will not the land quake for this, and all its dwellers mourn? All of it will swell like the Nile; it will surge and then subside like the Nile in Egypt. And in that day, declares the Lord GOD, I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the daytime. I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation. I will cause everyone to wear sackcloth and every head to be shaved. I will make it like a time of mourning for an only son, and its outcome like a bitter day. Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord GOD, when I will send a famine on the land — not a famine of bread or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD. People will stagger from sea to sea and roam from north to east, seeking the word of the LORD, but they will not find it. In that day the lovely young women — the young men as well — will faint from thirst. Those who swear by the guilt of Samaria and say, 'As surely as your god lives, O Dan,' or, 'As surely as the way of Beersheba lives'— they will fall, never to rise again."

I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and He said:

"Strike the tops of the pillars so that the thresholds shake. Topple them on the heads of all the people, and I will kill the rest with the sword. None of those who flee will get away; none of the fugitives will escape. Though they dig down to Sheol, from there My hand will take them; and though they climb up to heaven, from there I will pull them down. Though they hide themselves atop Carmel, there I will track them and seize them; and though they hide from Me at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent to bite them. Though they are driven by their enemies into captivity, there I will command the sword to slay them. I will fix My eyes upon them for harm and not for good." The Lord GOD of Hosts, He who touches the earth and it melts, and all its dwellers mourn — all the land rises like the Nile, then sinks like the river of Egypt — He builds His upper rooms in the heavens and founds His vault upon the earth. He summons the waters of the sea and pours them over the face of the earth. The LORD is His name. "Are you not like the Cushites to Me, O children of Israel?" declares the LORD. "Did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Arameans from Kir? Surely the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth. Yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob," declares the LORD. "For surely I will give the command, and I will shake the house of Israel among all the nations as grain is sifted in a sieve; but not a pebble will reach the ground. All the sinners among My people will die by the sword — all those who say, 'Disaster will never draw near or confront us.'"

"In that day I will restore the fallen tent of David. I will repair its gaps, restore its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old, that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear My name," declares the LORD, who will do this. "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the plowman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes, the sower of seed. The mountains will drip with sweet wine, with which all the hills will flow. I will restore My people Israel from captivity; they will rebuild and inhabit the ruined cities. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will firmly plant them in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land that I have given them," says the LORD your God.

Obadiah

Book of Obadiah

This is the vision of Obadiah:

This is what the Lord GOD says about Edom —
We have heard a message from the LORD; an envoy has been sent among the nations to say, "Rise up, and let us go to battle against her!"—
"Behold, I will make you small among the nations; you will be deeply despised. The pride of your heart has deceived you, O dwellers in the clefts of the rocks whose habitation is the heights, who say in your heart, 'Who can bring me down to the ground?' Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, even from there I will bring you down," declares the LORD. "If thieves came to you, if robbers by night — oh, how you will be ruined — would they not steal only what they wanted? If grape gatherers came to you, would they not leave some gleanings? But how Esau will be pillaged, his hidden treasures sought out! All the men allied with you will drive you to the border; the men at peace with you will deceive and overpower you. Those who eat your bread will set a trap for you without your awareness of it. In that day, declares the LORD, will I not destroy the wise men of Edom and the men of understanding in the mountains of Esau? Then your mighty men, O Teman, will be terrified, so that everyone in the mountains of Esau will be cut down in the slaughter. Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame and cut off forever. On the day you stood aloof while strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gate and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were just like one of them. But you should not gloat in that day, your brother's day of misfortune, nor rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their destruction, nor boast proudly in the day of their distress. You should not enter the gate of My people in the day of their disaster, nor gloat over their affliction in the day of their disaster, nor loot their wealth in the day of their disaster. Nor should you stand at the crossroads to cut off their fugitives, nor deliver up their survivors in the day of their distress.
For the Day of the LORD is near for all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your recompense will return upon your own head. For as you drank on My holy mountain, so all the nations will drink continually. They will drink and gulp it down; they will be as if they had never existed. But on Mount Zion there will be deliverance, and it will be holy, and the house of Jacob will reclaim their possession. Then the house of Jacob will be a blazing fire, and the house of Joseph a burning flame; but the house of Esau will be stubble — Jacob will set it ablaze and consume it. Therefore no survivor will remain from the house of Esau." For the LORD has spoken. Those from the Negev will possess the mountains of Esau; those from the foothills will possess the land of the Philistines. They will occupy the fields of Ephraim and Samaria, and Benjamin will possess Gilead. And the exiles of this host of the Israelites will possess the land of the Canaanites as far as Zarephath; and the exiles from Jerusalem who are in Sepharad will possess the cities of the Negev. The deliverers will ascend Mount Zion to rule over the mountains of Esau. And the kingdom will belong to the LORD.

Jonah

Book of Jonah

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, “Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before Me.”

Jonah, however, got up to flee to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship bound for Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went aboard to sail for Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.

Then the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship was in danger of breaking apart. The sailors were afraid, and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the ship’s cargo into the sea to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down to the lowest part of the vessel, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep.

The captain approached him and said, “How can you sleep? Get up and call upon your God. Perhaps this God will consider us, so that we may not perish.”

“Come!” said the sailors to one another. “Let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity that is upon us.”

So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.

“Tell us now,” they demanded, “who is to blame for this calamity that is upon us? What is your occupation, and where have you come from? What is your country, and who are your people?”

“I am a Hebrew,” replied Jonah. “I worship the LORD, the God of the heavens, who made the sea and the dry land.”

Then the men were even more afraid and said to him, “What have you done?” The men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

Now the sea was growing worse and worse, so they said to Jonah, “What must we do to you to calm this sea for us?”

“Pick me up,” he answered, “and cast me into the sea, so it may quiet down for you. For I know that I am to blame for this violent storm that has come upon you.”

Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea was raging against them more and more.

So they cried out to the LORD: “Please, O LORD, do not let us perish on account of this man’s life! Do not charge us with innocent blood! For You, O LORD, have done as You pleased.”

Then they picked up Jonah and cast him into the sea, and the raging sea grew calm.

Then the men feared the LORD greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows to Him.

Now the LORD had appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of the fish.

From inside the fish, Jonah prayed to the LORD his God, saying:

> “In my distress I called to the LORD, and He answered me. From the belly of Sheol I called for help, and You heard my voice. For You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the current swirled about me; all Your breakers and waves swept over me. At this, I said, ‘I have been banished from Your sight; yet I will look once more toward Your holy temple.’ The waters engulfed me to take my life; the watery depths closed around me; the seaweed wrapped around my head. To the roots of the mountains I descended; the earth beneath me barred me in forever! But You raised my life from the pit, O LORD my God! As my life was fading away, I remembered the LORD. My prayer went up to You, to Your holy temple. Those who cling to worthless idols forsake His loving devotion. But I, with the voice of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to You. I will fulfill what I have vowed. Salvation is from the LORD!”

And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: “Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message that I give you.”

This time Jonah got up and went to Nineveh, in accordance with the word of the LORD.

Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, requiring a three-day journey. On the first day of his journey, Jonah set out into the city and proclaimed, “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned!”

And the Ninevites believed God. They proclaimed a fast and dressed in sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least.

When word reached the king of Nineveh, he got up from his throne, took off his royal robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh:
“By the decree of the king and his nobles:
Let no man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything at all. They must not eat or drink. Furthermore, let both man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and have everyone call out earnestly to God. Let each one turn from his evil ways and from the violence in his hands. Who knows? God may turn and relent; He may turn from His fierce anger, so that we will not perish.”

When God saw their actions— that they had turned from their evil ways— He relented from the disaster He had threatened to bring upon them.

Jonah, however, was greatly displeased, and he became angry. So he prayed to the LORD, saying, “O LORD, is this not what I said while I was still in my own country? This is why I was so quick to flee toward Tarshish. I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger, abounding in loving devotion — One who relents from sending disaster. And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.”

But the LORD replied, “Have you any right to be angry?”

Then Jonah left the city and sat down east of it, where he made himself a shelter and sat in its shade to see what would happen to the city. So the LORD God appointed a vine, and it grew up to provide shade over

Jonah's head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was greatly pleased with the plant.

When dawn came the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant so that it withered.

As the sun was rising, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he grew faint and wished to die, saying, "It is better for me to die than to live."

Then God asked Jonah, "Have you any right to be angry about the plant?"

"I do," he replied. "I am angry enough to die!"

But the LORD said, "You cared about the plant, which you neither tended nor made grow. It sprang up in a night and perished in a night. So should I not care about the great city of Nineveh, which has more than 120,000 people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well?"

Micah

Book of Micah

This is the word of the LORD that came to Micah the Moreshite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah — what he saw regarding Samaria and Jerusalem:

> Hear, O peoples, all of you; listen, O earth, and everyone in it! May the Lord GOD bear witness against you, the Lord from His holy temple. For behold, the LORD comes forth from His dwelling place; He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth. The mountains will melt beneath Him, and the valleys will split apart, like wax before the fire, like water rushing down a slope. All this is for the transgression of Jacob and the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem? Therefore I will make Samaria a heap of rubble in the open field, a planting area for a vineyard. I will pour her stones into the valley and expose her foundations. All her carved images will be smashed to pieces; all her wages will be burned in the fire, and I will destroy all her idols. Since she collected the wages of a prostitute, they will be used again on a prostitute.
>
> Because of this I will lament and wail; I will walk barefoot and naked. I will howl like a jackal and mourn like an ostrich. For her wound is incurable; it has reached even Judah; it has approached the gate of my people, as far as Jerusalem itself. Do not tell it in Gath; do not weep at all. Roll in the dust in Beth-leaphrah. Depart in shameful nakedness, O dwellers of Shaphir. The dwellers of Zaanan will not come out. Beth-ezel is in mourning; its support is taken from you. For the dwellers of Maroth pined for good, but calamity came down from the LORD, even to the gate of Jerusalem. Harness your chariot horses, O dweller of Lachish. You were the beginning of sin to the Daughter of Zion, for the transgressions of Israel were found in you. Therefore, send farewell gifts to Moresheth-gath; the houses of Achzib will prove deceptive to the kings of Israel. I will again bring a conqueror against you, O dweller of Mareshah. The glory of Israel will come to Adullam. Shave yourselves bald and cut off your hair in mourning for your precious children; make yourselves as bald as an eagle, for they will go from you into exile.
>
> Woe to those who devise iniquity and plot evil on their beds! At morning's light they accomplish it because the power is in their hands. They covet fields and seize them; they take away houses. They deprive a man of his home, a fellow man of his inheritance.

Therefore this is what the LORD says:

> "I am planning against this nation a disaster from which you cannot free your necks. Then you will not walk so proudly, for it will be a time of calamity. In that day they will take up a proverb against you and taunt you with this bitter lamentation: 'We are utterly ruined! He has changed the portion of my people. How He has removed it from me! He has allotted our fields to traitors.'" Therefore, you will have no one in the assembly of the LORD to divide the land by lot.
>
> "Do not preach," they preach. "Do not preach these things; disgrace will not overtake us." Should it be said, O house of Jacob, "Is the Spirit of the LORD impatient? Are these the things He does?" Do not My words bring good to him who walks uprightly? But of late My people have risen up like an enemy: You strip off the splendid robe from unsuspecting passersby like men returning from battle. You drive the women of My people from their pleasant homes. You take away My blessing from their children forever. Arise and depart, for this is not your place of rest, because its defilement brings destruction— a grievous destruction! If a man of wind were to come and say falsely, "I will preach to you of wine and strong drink," he would be just the preacher for this people!
>
> I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob; I will collect the remnant of Israel. I will bring them together like sheep in a pen, like a flock in the midst of its pasture — a noisy throng. One who breaks open the way will go up before them; they will break through the gate, and go out by it. Their King will pass through before them, the LORD as their leader.

Then I said:

> "Hear now, O leaders of Jacob, you rulers of the house of Israel. Should you not know justice? You hate good and love evil. You tear the skin from my people and strip the flesh from their bones. You eat the flesh of my people after stripping off their skin and breaking their bones. You chop them up like flesh for the cooking pot, like meat in a cauldron." Then they will cry out to the LORD, but He will not answer them. At that time He will hide His face from them because of the evil they have done.

This is what the LORD says:

> "As for the prophets who lead My people astray, who proclaim peace while they chew with their teeth, but declare war against one who puts nothing in their mouths: Therefore night will come over you without visions, and darkness without divination. The sun will set on these prophets, and the daylight will turn black over them. Then the seers will be ashamed and the diviners will be disgraced. They will all cover their mouths because there is no answer from God." As for me, however, I am filled with power by the Spirit of the LORD,

with justice and courage, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin. Now hear this, O leaders of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who despise justice and pervert all that is right, who build Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with iniquity. Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets practice divination for money. Yet they lean upon the LORD, saying, "Is not the LORD among us? No disaster can come upon us." Therefore, because of you, Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, and the temple mount a wooded ridge.

In the last days the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and the peoples will stream to it. And many nations will come and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways, so that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. Then He will judge between many peoples and arbitrate for strong nations far and wide. Then they will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer take up the sword against nation, nor will they train anymore for war. And each man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree, with no one to frighten him. For the mouth of the LORD of Hosts has spoken. Though all the nations may walk in the name of their gods, yet we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever.

"On that day," declares the LORD, "I will gather the lame; I will assemble the outcast, even those whom I have afflicted. And I will make the lame into a remnant, the outcast into a strong nation. Then the LORD will rule over them in Mount Zion from that day and forever. And you, O watchtower of the flock, O stronghold of the Daughter of Zion — the former dominion will be restored to you; sovereignty will come to the Daughter of Jerusalem." Why do you now cry aloud? Is there no king among you? Has your counselor perished so that anguish grips you like a woman in labor? Writhe in agony, O Daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor. For now you will leave the city and camp in the open fields. You will go to Babylon; there you will be rescued; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies! But now many nations have assembled against you, saying, "Let her be defiled, and let us feast our eyes on Zion." But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD or understand His plan, for He has gathered them like sheaves to the threshing floor. Rise and thresh, O Daughter of Zion, for I will give you horns of iron and hooves of bronze to break to pieces many peoples. Then you will devote their gain to the LORD, their wealth to the Lord of all the earth. Now, O daughter of troops, mobilize your troops; for a siege is laid against us! With a rod they will strike the cheek of the judge of Israel.

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come forth for Me One to be ruler over Israel— One whose origins are of old, from the days of eternity. Therefore Israel will be abandoned until she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of His brothers will return to the children of Israel. He will stand and shepherd His flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majestic name of the LORD His God. And they will dwell securely, for then His greatness will extend to the ends of the earth. And He will be our peace when Assyria invades our land and tramples our citadels. We will raise against it seven shepherds, even eight leaders of men. And they will rule the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod with the blade drawn. So He will deliver us when Assyria invades our land and marches into our borders.

Then the remnant of Jacob will be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the LORD, like showers on the grass, which do not wait for man or linger for mankind. Then the remnant of Jacob will be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among flocks of sheep, which tramples and tears as it passes through, with no one to rescue them. Your hand will be lifted over your foes, and all your enemies will be cut off. "In that day," declares the LORD, "I will remove your horses from among you and wreck your chariots. I will remove the cities of your land and tear down all your strongholds. I will cut the sorceries from your hand, and you will have no fortune-tellers. I will also cut off the carved images and sacred pillars from among you, so that you will no longer bow down to the work of your own hands. I will root out the Asherah poles from your midst and demolish your cities. I will take vengeance in anger and wrath upon the nations that have not obeyed Me."

Hear now what the LORD says:

"Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, O mountains, the LORD's indictment, you enduring foundations of the earth. For the LORD has a case against His people, and He will argue it against Israel: 'My people, what have I done to you? Testify against Me how I have wearied you! For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery. I sent Moses before you, as well as Aaron and Miriam. My people, remember what Balak king of Moab counseled and what Balaam son of Beor answered. Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, so that you may acknowledge the righteousness of the LORD.'"

With what shall I come before the LORD when
I bow before the God on high? Should I come
to Him with burnt offerings, with year-old
calves? Would the LORD be pleased with thou-
sands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I present my firstborn for my transgres-
sion, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
He has shown you, O man, what is good. And
what does the LORD require of you but to act
justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with
your God?
The voice of the LORD calls out to the city (and
it is sound wisdom to fear Your name): “Heed
the rod and the One who ordained it. Can I
forget any longer, O house of the wicked, the
treasures of wickedness and the short ephah,
which is accursed? Can I excuse dishonest
scales or bags of false weights? For the wealthy
of the city are full of violence, and its residents
speak lies; their tongues are deceitful in their
mouths. Therefore I am striking you severely,
to ruin you because of your sins. You will
eat but not be satisfied, and your hunger will
remain with you. What you acquire, you will
not preserve; and what you save, I will give
to the sword. You will sow but not reap; you
will press olives but not anoint yourselves with
oil; you will tread grapes but not drink the
wine. You have kept the statutes of Omri and
all the practices of Ahab’s house; you have fol-
lowed their counsel. Therefore I will make you
a desolation, and your inhabitants an object
of contempt; you will bear the scorn of the
nations.”
Woe is me! For I am like one gathering summer
fruit at the gleaning of the vineyard; there is
no cluster to eat, no early fig that I crave. The
godly man has perished from the earth; there
is no one upright among men. They all lie in
wait for blood; they hunt one another with a
net. Both hands are skilled at evil; the prince
and the judge demand a bribe. When the pow-
erful utters his evil desire, they all conspire
together. The best of them is like a brier; the
most upright is sharper than a hedge of thorns.
The day for your watchmen has come, the day
of your visitation. Now is the time of their con-
fusion. Do not rely on a friend; do not trust in a
companion. Seal the doors of your mouth from
her who lies in your arms. For a son dishonors
his father, a daughter rises against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-
law. A man’s enemies are the members of his
own household.
But as for me, I will look to the LORD; I will
wait for the God of my salvation. My God will
hear me. Do not gloat over me, my enemy!
Though I have fallen, I will arise; though I sit in
darkness, the LORD will be my light. Because
I have sinned against Him, I must endure the
rage of the LORD, until He argues my case and
executes justice for me. He will bring me into
the light; I will see His righteousness. Then my
enemy will see and will be covered with shame
— she who said to me, “Where is the LORD
your God?” My eyes will see her; at that time
she will be trampled like mud in the streets.
The day for rebuilding your walls will come
— the day for extending your boundary. On
that day they will come to you from Assyria
and the cities of Egypt, even from Egypt to the
Euphrates, from sea to sea and mountain to
mountain. Then the earth will become desolate
because of its inhabitants, as the fruit of their
deeds.
Shepherd with Your staff Your people, the flock
of Your inheritance. They live alone in a wood-
land, surrounded by pastures. Let them graze
in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old.
As in the days when you came out of Egypt,
I will show My wonders. Nations will see and
be ashamed, deprived of all their might. They
will put their hands over their mouths, and
their ears will become deaf. They will lick the
dust like a snake, like reptiles slithering on the
ground. They will come trembling from their
strongholds in the presence of the LORD our
God; they will tremble in fear of You. Who is a
God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes
over the transgression of the remnant of His
inheritance — who does not retain His anger
forever, because He delights in loving devo-
tion? He will again have compassion on us; He
will vanquish our iniquities. You will cast out
all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will
show faithfulness to Jacob and loving devotion
to Abraham, as You swore to our fathers from
the days of old.

Nahum

Book of Nahum

This is the burden against Nineveh, the book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite:

> The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD is avenging and full of wrath. The LORD takes vengeance on His foes and reserves wrath for His enemies. The LORD is slow to anger and great in power; the LORD will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. His path is in the whirlwind and storm, and clouds are the dust beneath His feet. He rebukes the sea and dries it up; He makes all the rivers run dry. Bashan and Carmel wither, and the flower of Lebanon wilts. The mountains quake before Him, and the hills melt away; the earth trembles at His presence— the world and all its dwellers. Who can withstand His indignation? Who can endure His burning anger? His wrath is poured out like fire; even rocks are shattered before Him. The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of distress; He cares for those who trust in Him. But with an overwhelming flood He will make an end of Nineveh and pursue His enemies into darkness. Whatever you plot against the LORD, He will bring to an end. Affliction will not rise up a second time. For they will be entangled as with thorns and consumed like the drink of a drunkard — like stubble that is fully dry. From you, O Nineveh, comes forth a plotter of evil against the LORD, a counselor of wickedness.

This is what the LORD says:

> "Though they are allied and numerous, yet they will be cut down and pass away. Though I have afflicted you, O Judah, I will afflict you no longer. For I will now break their yoke from your neck and tear away your shackles."

The LORD has issued a command concerning you, O Nineveh:

> "There will be no descendants to carry on your name. I will cut off the carved image and cast idol from the house of your gods; I will prepare your grave, for you are contemptible." Look to the mountains— the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace! Celebrate your feasts, O Judah; fulfill your vows. For the wicked will never again march through you; they will be utterly cut off.
>
> One who scatters advances against you, O Nineveh. Guard the fortress! Watch the road! Brace yourselves! Summon all your strength! For the LORD will restore the splendor of Jacob like the splendor of Israel, though destroyers have laid them waste and ruined the branches of their vine. The shields of his mighty men are red; the valiant warriors are dressed in scarlet. The fittings of the chariots flash like fire on the day they are prepared, and the spears of cypress have been brandished. The chariots dash through the streets; they rush around the plazas, appearing like torches, darting about like lightning. He summons his nobles; they stumble as they advance. They race to its wall; the protective shield is set in place. The river gates are thrown open and the palace collapses. It is decreed that the city be exiled and carried away; her maidservants moan like doves, and beat upon their breasts. Nineveh has been like a pool of water throughout her days, but now it is draining away. "Stop! Stop!" they cry, but no one turns back. "Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold!" There is no end to the treasure, an abundance of every precious thing. She is emptied! Yes, she is desolate and laid waste! Hearts melt, knees knock, bodies tremble, and every face grows pale! Where is the lions' lair or the feeding ground of the young lions, where the lion and lioness prowled with their cubs, with nothing to frighten them away? The lion mauled enough for its cubs and strangled prey for the lioness. It filled its dens with the kill, and its lairs with mauled prey. "Behold, I am against you," declares the LORD of Hosts. "I will reduce your chariots to cinders, and the sword will devour your young lions. I will cut off your prey from the earth, and the voices of your messengers will no longer be heard."
>
> Woe to the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without prey. The crack of the whip, the rumble of the wheel, galloping horse and bounding chariot! Charging horseman, flashing sword, shining spear; heaps of slain, mounds of corpses, dead bodies without end — they stumble over their dead— because of the many harlotries of the harlot, the seductive mistress of sorcery, who betrays nations by her prostitution and clans by her witchcraft. "Behold, I am against you," declares the LORD of Hosts. "I will lift your skirts over your face. I will show your nakedness to the nations and your shame to the kingdoms. I will pelt you with filth and treat you with contempt; I will make a spectacle of you. Then all who see you will recoil from you and say, 'Nineveh is devastated; who will grieve for her?' Where can I find comforters for you?" Are you better than Thebes, stationed by the Nile with water around her, whose rampart was the sea, whose wall was the water? Cush and Egypt were her boundless strength; Put and Libya were her allies. Yet she became an exile; she went into captivity. Her infants were dashed to pieces at the head of every street. They cast lots for her dignitaries, and all her nobles were bound in chains. You too will become drunk; you will go into hiding and seek refuge from the enemy. All your fortresses are fig trees with the first ripe figs; when shaken, they fall into the mouth of

the eater! Look at your troops — they are like your women! The gates of your land are wide open to your enemies; fire consumes their bars. Draw your water for the siege; strengthen your fortresses. Work the clay and tread the mortar; repair the brick kiln! There the fire will devour you; the sword will cut you down and consume you like a young locust. Make yourself many like the young locust; make yourself many like the swarming locust! You have multiplied your merchants more than the stars of the sky. The young locust strips the land and flies away. Your guards are like the swarming locust, and your scribes like clouds of locusts that settle on the walls on a cold day. When the sun rises, they fly away, and no one knows where. O king of Assyria, your shepherds slumber; your officers sleep. Your people are scattered on the mountains with no one to gather them. There is no healing for your injury; your wound is severe. All who hear the news of you applaud your downfall, for who has not experienced your constant cruelty?

Habakkuk

Book of Habakkuk

This is the burden that Habakkuk the prophet received in a vision:

How long, O LORD, must I call for help but
You do not hear, or cry out to You, “Violence!”
but You do not save? Why do You make me
see iniquity? Why do You tolerate wrongdoing?
Destruction and violence are before me. Strife
is ongoing, and conflict abounds. Therefore the
law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth.
For the wicked hem in the righteous, so that
justice is perverted.

“Look at the nations and observe— be utterly
astounded! For I am doing a work in your
days that you would never believe even if
someone told you. For behold, I am raising up
the Chaldeans — that ruthless and impetuous
nation which marches through the breadth of
the earth to seize dwellings not their own. They
are dreaded and feared; from themselves they
derive justice and sovereignty. Their horses
are swifter than leopards, fiercer than wolves
of the night. Their horsemen charge ahead,
and their cavalry comes from afar. They fly
like a vulture, swooping down to devour. All of
them come bent on violence; their hordes ad-
vance like the east wind; they gather prisoners
like sand. They scoff at kings and make rulers
an object of scorn. They laugh at every fortress
and build up siege ramps to seize it. Then they
sweep by like the wind and pass through. They
are guilty; their own strength is their god.”

Are You not from everlasting, O LORD, my
God, my Holy One? We will not die. O LORD,
You have appointed them to execute judgment;
O Rock, You have established them for correc-
tion. Your eyes are too pure to look upon evil,
and You cannot tolerate wrongdoing. So why
do You tolerate the faithless? Why are You
silent while the wicked swallow up those more
righteous than themselves? You have made
men like the fish of the sea, like creeping
things that have no ruler. The foe pulls all of
them up with a hook; he catches them in his
dragnet, and gathers them in his fishing net; so
he rejoices gladly. Therefore he sacrifices to his
dragnet and burns incense to his fishing net,
for by these things his portion is sumptuous
and his food is rich. Will he, therefore, empty
his net and continue to slay nations without
mercy?

I will stand at my guard post and station myself
on the ramparts. I will watch to see what He
will say to me, and how I should answer when
corrected.

Then the LORD answered me:

“Write down this vision and clearly inscribe
it on tablets, so that a herald may run with
it. For the vision awaits an appointed time; it
testifies of the end and does not lie. Though it
lingers, wait for it, since it will surely come and
will not delay. Look at the proud one; his soul
is not upright — but the righteous will live by
faith — and wealth indeed betrays him. He is
an arrogant man never at rest. He enlarges his
appetite like Sheol, and like Death, he is never
satisfied. He gathers all the nations to himself
and collects all the peoples as his own.

Will not all of these take up a taunt against him,
speaking with mockery and derision: ‘Woe to
him who amasses what is not his and makes
himself rich with many loans! How long will
this go on?’ Will not your creditors suddenly
arise and those who disturb you awaken?
Then you will become their prey. Because you
have plundered many nations, the remnant
of the people will plunder you— because of
your bloodshed against man and your violence
against the land, the city, and all their dwellers.
Woe to him who builds his house by unjust
gain, to place his nest on high and escape the
hand of disaster! You have plotted shame for
your house by cutting off many peoples and
forfeiting your life. For the stones will cry out
from the wall, and the rafters will echo it from
the woodwork. Woe to him who builds a city
with bloodshed and establishes a town by iniq-
uity! Is it not indeed from the LORD of Hosts
that the labor of the people only feeds the fire,
and the nations weary themselves in vain? For
the earth will be filled with the knowledge of
the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the
sea. Woe to him who gives drink to his neigh-
bors, pouring it from the wineskin until they
are drunk, in order to gaze at their nakedness!
You will be filled with shame instead of glory.
You too must drink and expose your uncircum-
cision! The cup in the LORD’s right hand will
come around to you, and utter disgrace will
cover your glory. For your violence against
Lebanon will overwhelm you, and the destruc-
tion of animals will terrify you, because of
your bloodshed against men and your violence
against the land, the city, and all their dwellers.
What use is an idol, that a craftsman should
carve it — or an image, a teacher of lies? For
its maker trusts in his own creation; he makes
idols that cannot speak. Woe to him who says to
wood, ‘Awake!’ or to silent stone, ‘Arise!’ Can it
give guidance? Behold, it is overlaid with gold
and silver, yet there is no breath in it at all.” But
the LORD is in His holy temple; let all the earth
be silent before Him.

This is a prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, accord-
ing to Shigionoth:

O LORD, I have heard the report of You; I stand
in awe, O LORD, of Your deeds. Revive them in
these years; make them known in these years.
In Your wrath, remember mercy! God came

from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount
Paran. Selah His glory covered the heavens,
and His praise filled the earth. His radiance
was like the sunlight; rays flashed from His
hand, where His power is hidden. Plague went
before Him, and fever followed in His steps.
He stood and measured the earth; He looked
and startled the nations; the ancient moun-
tains crumbled; the perpetual hills collapsed.
His ways are everlasting. I saw the tents of
Cushan in distress; the curtains of Midian were
trembling. Were You angry at the rivers, O
LORD? Was Your wrath against the streams?
Did You rage against the sea when You rode
on Your horses, on Your chariots of salvation?
You brandished Your bow; You called for many
arrows. Selah You split the earth with rivers.
The mountains saw You and quaked; torrents
of water swept by. The deep roared with its
voice and lifted its hands on high. Sun and
moon stood still in their places at the flash of
Your flying arrows, at the brightness of Your
shining spear. You marched across the earth
with fury; You threshed the nations in wrath.
You went forth for the salvation of Your people,
to save Your anointed. You crushed the head
of the house of the wicked and stripped him
from head to toe. Selah With his own spear You
pierced his head, when his warriors stormed
out to scatter us, gloating as though ready to
secretly devour the weak. You trampled the sea
with Your horses, churning the great waters. I
heard and trembled within; my lips quivered
at the sound. Decay entered my bones; I trem-
bled where I stood. Yet I must wait patiently
for the day of distress to come upon the people
who invade us.
Though the fig tree does not bud and no fruit
is on the vines, though the olive crop fails and
the fields produce no food, though the sheep
are cut off from the fold and no cattle are in the
stalls, yet I will exult in the LORD; I will rejoice
in the God of my salvation! GOD the Lord is my
strength; He makes my feet like those of a deer;
He makes me walk upon the heights!

For the choirmaster. With stringed instruments.

Zephaniah

Book of Zephaniah

This is the word of the LORD that came to Zephaniah son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah:

"I will completely sweep away everything from the face of the earth," declares the LORD. "I will sweep away man and beast; I will sweep away the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, and the idols with their wicked worshipers. I will cut off mankind from the face of the earth," declares the LORD. "I will stretch out My hand against Judah and against all who dwell in Jerusalem. I will cut off from this place every remnant of Baal, the names of the idolatrous and pagan priests — those who bow on the rooftops to worship the host of heaven, those who bow down and swear by the LORD but also swear by Milcom, and those who turn back from following the LORD, neither seeking the LORD nor inquiring of Him."

Be silent in the presence of the Lord GOD, for the Day of the LORD is near. Indeed, the LORD has prepared a sacrifice; He has consecrated His guests. "On the Day of the LORD's sacrifice I will punish the princes, the sons of the king, and all who are dressed in foreign apparel. On that day I will punish all who leap over the threshold, who fill the house of their master with violence and deceit. On that day," declares the LORD, "a cry will go up from the Fish Gate, a wail from the Second District, and a loud crashing from the hills. Wail, O dwellers of the Hollow, for all your merchants will be silenced; all who weigh out silver will be cut off. And at that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps and punish the men settled in complacency, who say to themselves, 'The LORD will do nothing, either good or bad.' Their wealth will be plundered and their houses laid waste. They will build houses but not inhabit them, and plant vineyards but never drink their wine. The great Day of the LORD is near — near and coming quickly. Listen, the Day of the LORD! Then the cry of the mighty will be bitter. That day will be a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, a day of horn blast and battle cry against the fortified cities, and against the high corner towers. I will bring such distress on mankind that they will walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the LORD. Their blood will be poured out like dust and their flesh like dung. Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them on the Day of the LORD's wrath. The whole earth will be consumed by the fire of His jealousy." For indeed, He will make a sudden end of all who dwell on the earth.

Gather yourselves, gather together, O shameful nation, before the decree takes effect and the day passes like chaff, before the burning anger of the LORD comes upon you, before the Day of the LORD's anger comes upon you. Seek the LORD, all you humble of the earth who carry out His justice. Seek righteousness; seek humility. Perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the LORD's anger.

For Gaza will be abandoned, and Ashkelon left in ruins. Ashdod will be driven out at noon, and Ekron will be uprooted. Woe to the dwellers of the seacoast, O nation of the Cherethites! The word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines: "I will destroy you, and no one will be left." So the seacoast will become a land of pastures, with wells for shepherds and folds for sheep. The coast will belong to the remnant of the house of Judah; there they will find pasture. They will lie down in the evening among the houses of Ashkelon, for the LORD their God will attend to them and restore their captives.

"I have heard the reproach of Moab and the insults of the Ammonites, who have taunted My people and threatened their borders. Therefore, as surely as I live," declares the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, "surely Moab will be like Sodom and the Ammonites like Gomorrah — a place of weeds and salt pits, a perpetual wasteland. The remnant of My people will plunder them; the remainder of My nation will dispossess them." This they shall have in return for their pride, for taunting and mocking the people of the LORD of Hosts. The LORD will be terrifying to them when He starves all the gods of the earth. Then the nations of every shore will bow in worship to Him, each in its own place.

"You too, O Cushites, will be slain by My sword." And He will stretch out His hand against the north and destroy Assyria; He will make Nineveh a desolation, as dry as a desert. Herds will lie down in her midst, creatures of every kind. Both the desert owl and screech owl will roost atop her pillars. Their calls will sound from the window, but desolation will lie on the threshold, for He will expose the beams of cedar. This carefree city that dwells securely, that thinks to herself: "I am it, and there is none besides me," what a ruin she has become, a resting place for beasts. Everyone who passes by her hisses and shakes his fist.

Woe to the city of oppressors, rebellious and defiled! She heeded no voice; she accepted no correction. She does not trust in the LORD; she has not drawn near to her God. Her princes are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves, leaving nothing for the morning. Her prophets

are reckless, faithless men. Her priests profane the sanctuary; they do violence to the law. The LORD within her is righteous; He does no wrong. He applies His justice morning by morning; He does not fail at dawn, yet the unjust know no shame.
“I have cut off the nations; their corner towers are destroyed. I have made their streets deserted with no one to pass through. Their cities are laid waste, with no man, no inhabitant. I said, ‘Surely you will fear Me and accept correction.’ Then her dwelling place would not be cut off despite all for which I punished her. But they rose early to corrupt all their deeds. Therefore wait for Me,” declares the LORD, “until the day I rise to testify. For My decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them My indignation — all My burning anger. For all the earth will be consumed by the fire of My jealousy.
For then I will restore pure lips to the peoples, that all may call upon the name of the LORD and serve Him shoulder to shoulder. From beyond the rivers of Cush My worshipers, My scattered people, will bring Me an offering. On that day you will not be put to shame for any of the deeds by which you have transgressed against Me. For then I will remove from among you those who rejoice in their pride, and you will never again be haughty on My holy mountain. But I will leave within you a meek and humble people, and they will trust in the name of the LORD. The remnant of Israel will no longer do wrong or speak lies, nor will a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths. But they will feed and lie down, with no one to make them tremble.”
Sing for joy, O Daughter of Zion; shout aloud, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O Daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away your punishment; He has turned back your enemy. Israel’s King, the LORD, is among you; no longer will you fear any harm. On that day they will say to Jerusalem: “Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands fall limp. The LORD your God is among you; He is mighty to save. He will rejoice over you with gladness; He will quiet you with His love; He will rejoice over you with singing.” “I will gather those among you who grieve over the appointed feasts, so that you will no longer suffer reproach. Behold, at that time, I will deal with all who afflict you. I will save the lame and gather the scattered; and I will appoint praise and fame for the disgraced throughout the earth. At that time I will bring you in; yes, at that time I will gather you. For I will give you fame and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your captives before your very eyes,” says the LORD.

Haggai

Book of Haggai

In the second year of the reign of Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came through Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, stating that this is what the LORD of Hosts says:

> "These people say, 'The time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD.'"

Then the word of the LORD came through Haggai the prophet, saying:

> "Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?"

Now this is what the LORD of Hosts says:

> "Consider carefully your ways. You have planted much but harvested little. You eat but never have enough. You drink but never have your fill. You put on clothes but never get warm. You earn wages to put into a bag pierced through."

This is what the LORD of Hosts says:

> "Consider carefully your ways. Go up into the hills, bring down lumber, and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified, says the LORD. You expected much, but behold, it amounted to little. And what you brought home, I blew away. Why? declares the LORD of Hosts. Because My house still lies in ruins, while each of you is busy with his own house. Therefore, on account of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth has withheld its crops. I have summoned a drought on the fields and on the mountains, on the grain, new wine, and oil, and on whatever the ground yields, on man and beast, and on all the labor of your hands."

Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, as well as all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God and the words of the prophet Haggai, because the LORD their God had sent him. So the people feared the LORD.

Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, delivered the message of the LORD to the people:

> "I am with you," declares the LORD.

So the LORD stirred the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, as well as the spirit of all the remnant of the people. And they came and began the work on the house of the LORD of Hosts, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, in the second year of King Darius.

On the twenty-first day of the seventh month, the word of the LORD came through Haggai the prophet, saying: "Speak to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and also to the remnant of the people. Ask them, 'Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not appear to you like nothing in comparison?'

> But now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. And be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work! For I am with you, declares the LORD of Hosts. This is the promise I made to you when you came out of Egypt. And My Spirit remains among you; do not be afraid."

For this is what the LORD of Hosts says:

> "Once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all the nations, and they will come with all their treasures, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of Hosts. The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, declares the LORD of Hosts. The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former, says the LORD of Hosts. And in this place I will provide peace, declares the LORD of Hosts."

On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Haggai the prophet, saying, "This is what the LORD of Hosts says: 'Ask the priests for a ruling. If a man carries consecrated meat in the fold of his garment, and it touches bread, stew, wine, oil, or any other food, does that item become holy?'"

"No," replied the priests.

So Haggai asked, "If one who is defiled by contact with a corpse touches any of these, does it become defiled?"

"Yes, it becomes defiled," the priests answered.

Then Haggai replied, "So it is with this people and this nation before Me, declares the LORD, and so it is with every work of their hands; whatever they offer there is defiled.

Now consider carefully from this day forward: Before one stone was placed on another in the temple of the LORD, from that time, when one came expecting a heap of twenty ephahs of grain, there were but ten. When one came to the winepress to draw out fifty baths, there were but twenty. I struck you— all the work of your hands— with blight, mildew, and hail, but you did not turn to Me, declares the LORD.

Consider carefully from this day forward — from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, the day the foundation of the LORD's temple was laid — consider carefully: Is there still seed in the barn? The vine, the fig, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have not yet yielded fruit. But from this day on, I will bless you."

For the second time that day, the twenty-fourth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to Haggai, saying, "Tell Zerubbabel governor of Judah that I am about to shake the heavens and the earth:

> I will overturn royal thrones and destroy the power of the kingdoms of the nations. I will overturn chariots and their riders; horses and their riders will fall, each by the sword of his brother. On that day, declares the LORD of Hosts, I will take you, My servant, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, declares the LORD, and I will make you like My signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the LORD of Hosts."

Zechariah

Book of Zechariah

In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, saying:

"The LORD was very angry with your fathers. So tell the people that this is what the LORD of Hosts says: 'Return to Me, declares the LORD of Hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of Hosts.'

Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets proclaimed that this is what the LORD of Hosts says: 'Turn now from your evil ways and deeds.'

But they did not listen or pay attention to Me, declares the LORD.

Where are your fathers now? And the prophets, do they live forever? But did not My words and My statutes, which I commanded My servants the prophets, overtake your fathers? They repented and said, 'Just as the LORD of Hosts purposed to do to us according to our ways and deeds, so He has done to us.'"

On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, the month of Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo.

I looked out into the night and saw a man riding on a red horse. He was standing among the myrtle trees in the hollow, and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses.

"What are these, my lord?" I asked.

And the angel who was speaking with me replied, "I will show you what they are."

Then the man standing among the myrtle trees explained, "They are the ones the LORD has sent to patrol the earth."

And the riders answered the angel of the LORD who was standing among the myrtle trees, "We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth is at rest and tranquil."

Then the angel of the LORD said, "How long, O LORD of Hosts, will You withhold mercy from Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which You have been angry these seventy years?"

So the LORD spoke kind and comforting words to the angel who was speaking with me.

Then the angel who was speaking with me said, "Proclaim this word: This is what the LORD of Hosts says: 'I am very jealous for Jerusalem and Zion, but I am fiercely angry with the nations that are at ease. For I was a little angry, but they have added to the calamity.'

Therefore this is what the LORD says: 'I will return to Jerusalem with mercy, and there My house will be rebuilt, declares the LORD of Hosts, and a measuring line will be stretched out over Jerusalem.'

Proclaim further that this is what the LORD of Hosts says: 'My cities will again overflow with prosperity; the LORD will again comfort Zion and choose Jerusalem.'"

Then I looked up and saw four horns. So I asked the angel who was speaking with me, "What are these?"

And he told me, "These are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem."

Then the LORD showed me four craftsmen.

"What are these coming to do?" I asked.

And He replied, "These are the horns that scattered Judah so that no one could raise his head; but the craftsmen have come to terrify them and throw down these horns of the nations that have lifted up their horns against the land of Judah to scatter it."

Then I lifted up my eyes and saw a man with a measuring line in his hand.

"Where are you going?" I asked.

"To measure Jerusalem," he replied, "and to determine its width and length."

Then the angel who was speaking with me went forth, and another angel came forward to meet him and said to him, "Run and tell that young man: 'Jerusalem will be a city without walls because of the multitude of men and livestock within it. For I will be a wall of fire around it, declares the LORD, and I will be the glory within it.'"

"Get up! Get up! Flee from the land of the north," declares the LORD, "for I have scattered you like the four winds of heaven," declares the LORD. "Get up, O Zion! Escape, you who dwell with the Daughter of Babylon!"

For this is what the LORD of Hosts says: "After His Glory has sent Me against the nations that have plundered you — for whoever touches you touches the apple of His eye — I will surely wave My hand over them, so that they will become plunder for their own servants. Then you will know that the LORD of Hosts has sent Me."

"Shout for joy and be glad, O Daughter of Zion, for I am coming to dwell among you," declares the LORD. "On that day many nations will join themselves to the LORD, and they will become My people. I will dwell among you, and you will know that the LORD of Hosts has sent Me to you. And the LORD will take possession of Judah as His portion in the Holy Land, and He will once again choose Jerusalem. Be silent before the LORD, all people, for He has roused Himself from His holy dwelling."

Then the angel showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, with Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.

And the LORD said to Satan: "The LORD rebukes you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebukes you! Is not this man a firebrand snatched from the fire?"

Now Joshua was dressed in filthy garments as he stood before the angel. So the angel said to those standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes!"

Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have removed your iniquity, and I will clothe you with splendid robes."

Then I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So a clean turban was placed on his head, and they clothed him, as the angel of the LORD stood by.

Then the angel of the LORD gave this charge to Joshua: "This is what the LORD of Hosts says: 'If you walk in My ways and keep My instructions, then you will govern My house and will also have charge of My

courts; and I will give you a place among these who are standing here.

Hear now, O high priest Joshua, you and your companions seated before you, who are indeed a sign. For behold, I am going to bring My servant, the Branch. See the stone I have set before Joshua; on that one stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave on it an inscription, declares the LORD of Hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day. On that day, declares the LORD of Hosts, you will each invite your neighbor to sit under your own vine and fig tree.'"

Then the angel who was speaking with me returned and woke me, as a man is awakened from his sleep.

"What do you see?" he asked.

"I see a solid gold lampstand," I replied, "with a bowl at the top and seven lamps on it, with seven spouts to the lamps. There are also two olive trees beside it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left."

"What are these, my lord?" I asked the angel who was speaking with me.

"Do you not know what they are?" replied the angel.

"No, my lord," I answered.

So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of Hosts. What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain. Then he will bring forth the capstone accompanied by shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'"

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will complete it. Then you will know that the LORD of Hosts has sent me to you. For who has despised the day of small things? But these seven eyes of the LORD, which scan the whole earth, will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel."

Then I asked the angel, "What are the two olive trees on the right and left of the lampstand?" And I questioned him further, "What are the two olive branches beside the two gold pipes from which the golden oil pours?"

"Do you not know what these are?" he inquired.

"No, my lord," I replied.

So he said, "These are the two anointed ones who are standing beside the Lord of all the earth."

Again I lifted up my eyes and saw before me a flying scroll.

"What do you see?" asked the angel.

"I see a flying scroll," I replied, "twenty cubits long and ten cubits wide."

Then he told me, "This is the curse that is going out over the face of all the land, for according to one side of the scroll, every thief will be removed; and according to the other side, every perjurer will be removed. I will send it out, declares the LORD of Hosts, and it will enter the house of the thief and the house of him who swears falsely by My name. It will remain inside his house and destroy it, down to its timbers and stones."

Then the angel who was speaking with me came forward and told me, "Now lift up your eyes and see what is approaching."

"What is it?" I asked.

And he replied, "A measuring basket is going forth." Then he continued, "This is their iniquity in all the land."

And behold, the cover of lead was raised, and there was a woman sitting inside the basket.

"This is Wickedness," he said. And he shoved her down into the basket, pushing down the lead cover over its opening.

Then I lifted up my eyes and saw two women approaching, with the wind in their wings. Their wings were like those of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between heaven and earth.

"Where are they taking the basket?" I asked the angel who was speaking with me.

"To build a house for it in the land of Shinar," he told me. "And when it is ready, the basket will be set there on its pedestal."

And again I lifted up my eyes and saw four chariots coming out from between two mountains — mountains of bronze. The first chariot had red horses, the second black horses, the third white horses, and the fourth dappled horses— all of them strong.

So I inquired of the angel who was speaking with me, "What are these, my lord?"

And the angel told me, "These are the four spirits of heaven, going forth from their station before the Lord of all the earth. The one with the black horses is going toward the land of the north, the one with the white horses toward the west, and the one with the dappled horses toward the south."

As the strong horses went out, they were eager to go and patrol the earth; and the LORD said, "Go and patrol the earth." So they patrolled the earth.

Then the LORD summoned me and said, "Behold, those going to the land of the north have given rest to My Spirit in the land of the north."

The word of the LORD also came to me, saying, "Take an offering from the exiles — from Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah, who have arrived from Babylon — and go that same day to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah. Take silver and gold, make an ornate crown, and set it on the head of the high priest, Joshua son of Jehozadak.

And you are to tell him that this is what the LORD of Hosts says: 'Here is a man whose name is the Branch, and He will branch out from His place and build the temple of the LORD. Yes, He will build the temple of the LORD; He will be clothed in splendor and will sit on His throne and rule. And He will be a priest on His throne, and there will be peaceful counsel between the two.'

The crown will reside in the temple of the LORD as a memorial to Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and the gracious son of Zephaniah. Even those far away will come and build the temple of the LORD, and you will know that the LORD of Hosts has sent Me to you. This will happen if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God."

In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, the month of Chislev. Now the people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-melech, along with their men, to plead before the LORD by asking the priests of the house of the LORD of Hosts, as well as the prophets, "Should I weep and fast in the fifth month, as I have done these many years?"

Then the word of the LORD of Hosts came to me, saying, “Ask all the people of the land and the priests, ‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for these seventy years, was it really for Me that you fasted? And when you were eating and drinking, were you not doing so simply for yourselves? Are these not the words that the LORD proclaimed through the earlier prophets, when Jerusalem and its surrounding towns were populous and prosperous, and the Negev and the foothills were inhabited?’”

Then the word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying, “This is what the LORD of Hosts says: ‘Administer true justice. Show loving devotion and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. And do not plot evil in your hearts against one another.’

But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder; they stopped up their ears from hearing. They made their hearts like flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the LORD of Hosts had sent by His Spirit through the earlier prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of Hosts.

And just as I had called and they would not listen, so when they called I would not listen, says the LORD of Hosts. But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations that they had not known, and the land was left desolate behind them so that no one could come or go. Thus they turned the pleasant land into a desolation.”

Again the word of the LORD of Hosts came to me, saying: This is what the LORD of Hosts says: “I am jealous for Zion with great zeal; I am jealous for her with great fervor.”

This is what the LORD says: “I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of Hosts will be called the Holy Mountain.”

This is what the LORD of Hosts says: “Old men and old women will again sit along the streets of Jerusalem, each with a staff in hand because of great age. And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing there.”

This is what the LORD of Hosts says: “If this is impossible in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be impossible in My eyes?” declares the LORD of Hosts.

This is what the LORD of Hosts says: “I will save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west. I will bring them back to dwell in Jerusalem, where they will be My people, and I will be their faithful and righteous God.”

This is what the LORD of Hosts says: “Let your hands be strong, you who now hear these words spoken by the prophets who were present when the foundations were laid to rebuild the temple, the house of the LORD of Hosts. For before those days neither man nor beast received wages, nor was there safety from the enemy for anyone who came or went, for I had turned every man against his neighbor. But now I will not treat the remnant of this people as I did in the past,” declares the LORD of Hosts.

“For the seed will be prosperous, the vine will yield its fruit, the ground will yield its produce, and the skies will give their dew. To the remnant of this people I will give all these things as an inheritance. As you have been a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you, and you will be a blessing. Do not be afraid; let your hands be strong.”

For this is what the LORD of Hosts says: “Just as I resolved to bring disaster upon you when your fathers provoked Me to anger, and I did not relent,” says the LORD of Hosts, “so now I have resolved to do good again to Jerusalem and Judah. Do not be afraid. These are the things you must do: Speak truth to one another, render true and sound judgments in your gates, do not plot evil in your hearts against your neighbor, and do not love to swear falsely, for I hate all these things,” declares the LORD.

Then the word of the LORD of Hosts came to me, saying, “This is what the LORD of Hosts says: The fasts of the fourth, the fifth, the seventh, and the tenth months will become times of joy and gladness, cheerful feasts for the house of Judah. Therefore you are to love both truth and peace.”

This is what the LORD of Hosts says: “Peoples will yet come — the residents of many cities — and the residents of one city will go to another, saying: ‘Let us go at once to plead before the LORD and to seek the LORD of Hosts. I myself am going.’ And many peoples and strong nations will come to seek the LORD of Hosts in Jerusalem and to plead before the LORD.”

This is what the LORD of Hosts says: “In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue will tightly grasp the robe of a Jew, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’”

This is the burden of the word of the LORD against the land of Hadrach and Damascus its resting place— for the eyes of men and of all the tribes of Israel are upon the LORD — and also against Hamath, which borders it, as well as Tyre and Sidon, though they are very shrewd. Tyre has built herself a fortress; she has heaped up silver like dust, and gold like the dirt of the streets. Behold, the Lord will impoverish her and cast her wealth into the sea, and she will be consumed by fire. Ashkelon will see and fear; Gaza will writhe in agony, as will Ekron, for her hope will wither. There will cease to be a king in Gaza, and Ashkelon will be uninhabited. A mixed race will occupy Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. I will remove the blood from their mouths and the abominations from between their teeth. Then they too will become a remnant for our God; they will become like a clan in Judah, and Ekron will be like the Jebusites. But I will camp around My house because of an army, because of those who march to and fro, and never again will an oppressor overrun My people, for now I keep watch with My own eyes.

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you, righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem,

and the bow of war will be broken. Then He will proclaim peace to the nations. His dominion will extend from sea to sea, and from the Euphrates to the ends of the earth. As for you, because of the blood of My covenant, I will release your prisoners from the waterless pit. Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; even today I declare that I will restore to you double. For I will bend Judah as My bow and fit it with Ephraim. I will rouse your sons, O Zion, against the sons of Greece. I will make you like the sword of a mighty man.
Then the LORD will appear over them, and His arrow will go forth like lightning. The Lord GOD will sound the ram's horn and advance in the whirlwinds of the south. The LORD of Hosts will shield them. They will destroy and conquer with slingstones; they will drink and roar as with wine. And they will be filled like sprinkling bowls, drenched like the corners of the altar. On that day the LORD their God will save them as the flock of His people; for like jewels in a crown they will sparkle over His land. How lovely they will be, and how beautiful! Grain will make the young men flourish, and new wine, the young women.
Ask the LORD for rain in springtime; the LORD makes the storm clouds, and He will give everyone showers of rain and crops in the field. For idols speak deceit and diviners see illusions; they tell false dreams and offer empty comfort. Therefore the people wander like sheep, oppressed for lack of a shepherd.
"My anger burns against the shepherds, and I will punish the leaders. For the LORD of Hosts attends to His flock, the house of Judah; He will make them like His royal steed in battle. The cornerstone will come from Judah, the tent peg from him, as well as the battle bow and every ruler together. They will be like mighty men in battle, trampling the enemy in the mire of the streets. They will fight because the LORD is with them, and they will put the horsemen to shame. I will strengthen the house of Judah and save the house of Joseph. I will restore them because I have compassion on them, and they will be as though I had not rejected them. For I am the LORD their God, and I will answer them. Ephraim will be like a mighty man, and their hearts will be glad as with wine. Their children will see it and be joyful; their hearts will rejoice in the LORD. I will whistle for them to gather, for I have redeemed them; and they will be as numerous as they once were. Though I sow them among the nations, they will remember Me in distant lands; they and their children will live and return. I will bring them back from Egypt and gather them from Assyria. I will bring them to Gilead and Lebanon until no more room is found for them. They will pass through the sea of distress and strike the waves of the sea; all the depths of the Nile will dry up. The pride of Assyria will

> be brought down, and the scepter of Egypt will depart. I will strengthen them in the LORD, and in His name they will walk," declares the LORD.
>
> Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may consume your cedars! Wail, O cypress, for the cedar has fallen; the majestic trees are ruined! Wail, O oaks of Bashan, for the dense forest has been cut down! Listen to the wailing of the shepherds, for their glory is in ruins. Listen to the roaring of the young lions, for the thickets of the Jordan are destroyed.

This is what the LORD my God says: "Pasture the flock marked for slaughter, whose buyers slaughter them without remorse. Those who sell them say, 'Blessed be the LORD, for I am rich!' Even their own shepherds have no compassion on them.

For I will no longer have compassion on the people of the land, declares the LORD, but behold, I will cause each man to fall into the hands of his neighbor and his king, who will devastate the land, and I will not deliver it from their hands."

So I pastured the flock marked for slaughter, especially the afflicted of the flock. Then I took for myself two staffs, calling one Favor and the other Union, and I pastured the flock. And in one month I dismissed three shepherds.

My soul grew impatient with the flock, and their souls also detested me. Then I said, "I will no longer shepherd you. Let the dying die, and the perishing perish; and let those who remain devour one another's flesh."

Next I took my staff called Favor and cut it in two, revoking the covenant I had made with all the nations. It was revoked on that day, and so the afflicted of the flock who were watching me knew that it was the word of the LORD.

Then I told them, "If it seems right to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them." So they weighed out my wages, thirty pieces of silver.

And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—this magnificent price at which they valued me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD.

Then I cut in two my second staff called Union, breaking the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

And the LORD said to me: "Take up once more the equipment of a foolish shepherd. For behold, I will raise up a shepherd in the land who will neither care for the lost, nor seek the young, nor heal the broken, nor sustain the healthy, but he will devour the flesh of the choice sheep and tear off their hooves.

> Woe to the worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock! May a sword strike his arm and his right eye! May his arm be completely withered and his right eye utterly blinded!"

This is the burden of the word of the LORD concerning Israel.

Thus declares the LORD, who stretches out the heavens and lays the foundation of the earth, who forms the spirit of man within him:

"Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples. Judah will be besieged, as well as Jerusalem.

On that day, when all the nations of the earth gather against her, I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who would heave it away will be severely injured.

On that day, declares the LORD, I will strike every horse with panic, and every rider with madness. I will keep a watchful eye on the house of Judah, but I will strike with blindness all the horses of the nations.

Then the leaders of Judah will say in their hearts: 'The people of Jerusalem are my strength, for the LORD of Hosts is their God.'

On that day I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot in a woodpile, like a flaming torch among the sheaves; they will consume all the peoples around them on the right and on the left, while the people of Jerusalem remain secure there.

The LORD will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and of the people of Jerusalem may not be greater than that of Judah. On that day the LORD will defend the people of Jerusalem, so that the weakest among them will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the LORD going before them.

So on that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

Then I will pour out on the house of David and on the people of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and prayer, and they will look on Me, the One they have pierced. They will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for Him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

On that day the wailing in Jerusalem will be as great as the wailing of Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. The land will mourn, each clan on its own: the clan of the house of David and their wives, the clan of the house of Nathan and their wives, the clan of the house of Levi and their wives, the clan of Shimei and their wives, and all the remaining clans and their wives."

"On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the people of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity. And on that day, declares the LORD of Hosts, I will erase the names of the idols from the land, and they will no longer be remembered. I will also remove the prophets and the spirit of impurity from the land.

And if anyone still prophesies, his father and mother who bore him will say to him, 'You shall not remain alive, because you have spoken falsely in the name of the LORD.' When he prophesies, his father and mother who bore him will pierce him through.

And on that day every prophet who prophesies will be ashamed of his vision, and he will not put on a hairy cloak in order to deceive. He will say, 'I am not a prophet; I work the land, for I was purchased as a servant in my youth.' If someone asks him, 'What are these wounds on your chest?' he will answer, 'These are the wounds I received in the house of my friends.'

> Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the man who is My Companion, declares the LORD of Hosts. Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn My hand against the little ones. And in all the land, declares the LORD, two-thirds will be cut off and perish, but a third will be left in it. This third I will bring through the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are My people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'"

Behold, a day of the LORD is coming when your plunder will be divided in your presence. For I will gather all the nations for battle against Jerusalem, and the city will be captured, the houses looted, and the women ravished. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be removed from the city.

Then the LORD will go out to fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. On that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half the mountain moving to the north and half to the south. You will flee by My mountain valley, for it will extend to Azal. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with Him.

On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. It will be a unique day known only to the LORD, without day or night; but when evening comes, there will be light.

And on that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half of it toward the Eastern Sea and the other half toward the Western Sea, in summer and winter alike. On that day the LORD will become King over all the earth— the LORD alone, and His name alone.

All the land from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem will be turned into a plain, but Jerusalem will be raised up and will remain in her place, from the Benjamin Gate to the site of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the royal winepresses. People will live there, and never again will there be an utter destruction. So Jerusalem will dwell securely.

And this will be the plague with which the LORD strikes all the peoples who have warred against Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths.

On that day a great panic from the LORD will come upon them, so that each will seize the hand of another, and the hand of one will rise against the other. Judah will also fight at Jerusalem, and the wealth of all the surrounding nations will be collected — gold, silver, and apparel in great abundance. And a similar plague will strike the horses and mules, camels and donkeys, and all the animals in those camps.

Then all the survivors from the nations that came against Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of Hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. And should any of the families of the earth not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of Hosts, then the rain will not fall on them. And if the people of Egypt will not go up and enter in, then the rain will not fall on them; this will be the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. This will be the

punishment of Egypt and of all the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.

On that day, HOLY TO THE LORD will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the house of the LORD will be like the sprinkling bowls before the altar. Indeed, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the LORD of Hosts, and all who sacrifice will come and take some pots and cook in them. And on that day there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of Hosts.

Malachi

Book of Malachi

This is the burden of the word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi:

"I have loved you," says the LORD.

But you ask, "How have You loved us?"

"Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. "Yet Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated, and I have made his mountains a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals."

Though Edom may say, "We have been devastated, but we will rebuild the ruins," this is what the LORD of Hosts says: "They may build, but I will demolish. They will be called the Land of Wickedness, and a people with whom the LORD is indignant forever. You will see this with your own eyes, and you yourselves will say, 'The LORD is great — even beyond the borders of Israel.'"

"A son honors his father, and a servant his master. But if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is your fear of Me?" says the LORD of Hosts to you priests who despise My name.

"But you ask, 'How have we despised Your name?'

By presenting defiled food on My altar.

But you ask, 'How have we defiled You?'

By saying that the table of the LORD is contemptible.

When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is it not wrong? And when you present the lame and sick ones, is it not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you or show you favor?" asks the LORD of Hosts.

"But ask now for God's favor. Will He be gracious? Since this has come from your hands, will He show you favor?" asks the LORD of Hosts.

"Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would no longer kindle useless fires on My altar! I take no pleasure in you," says the LORD of Hosts, "and I will accept no offering from your hands.

For My name will be great among the nations, from where the sun rises to where it sets. In every place, incense and pure offerings will be presented in My name, because My name will be great among the nations," says the LORD of Hosts. "But you profane it when you say, 'The table of the Lord is defiled, and as for its fruit, its food is contemptible.'

You also say: 'Oh, what a nuisance!' And you turn up your nose at it," says the LORD of Hosts.

"You bring offerings that are stolen, lame, or sick! Should I accept these from your hands?" asks the LORD.

"But cursed is the deceiver who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it, but sacrifices a defective animal to the Lord. For I am a great King," says the LORD of Hosts, "and My name is to be feared among the nations."

"And now this decree is for you, O priests:

If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to honor My name," says the LORD of Hosts, "I will send a curse among you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have already begun to curse them, because you are not taking it to heart.

Behold, I will rebuke your descendants, and I will spread dung on your faces, the waste from your feasts, and you will be carried off with it.

Then you will know that I have sent you this commandment so that My covenant with Levi may continue," says the LORD of Hosts. "My covenant with him was one of life and peace, which I gave to him; it called for reverence, and he revered Me and stood in awe of My name.

True instruction was in his mouth, and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, because he is the messenger of the LORD of Hosts.

But you have departed from the way, and your instruction has caused many to stumble. You have violated the covenant of Levi," says the LORD of Hosts. "So I in turn have made you despised and humiliated before all the people, because you have not kept My ways, but have shown partiality in matters of the law."

Do we not all have one Father? Did not one God create us? Why then do we break faith with one another so as to profane the covenant of our fathers?

Judah has broken faith; an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the LORD's beloved sanctuary by marrying the daughter of a foreign god. As for the man who does this, may the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob everyone who is awake and aware — even if he brings an offering to the LORD of Hosts.

And this is another thing you do: You cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and groaning, because He no longer regards your offerings or receives them gladly from your hands.

Yet you ask, "Why?"

It is because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have broken faith, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.

Has not the LORD made them one, having a portion of the Spirit? And why one? Because He seeks godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.

"For I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel. "He who divorces his wife covers his garment with violence," says the LORD of Hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit and do not break faith.

You have wearied the LORD with your words; yet you ask, "How have we wearied Him?"

By saying, "All who do evil are good in the sight of the LORD, and in them He delights," or, "Where is the God of justice?"

"Behold, I will send My messenger, who will prepare the way before Me. Then the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple — the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight — see, He is coming," says the LORD of Hosts.

But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He will be like a refiner's fire, like a launderer's soap.

And He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver. Then they will present offerings to the LORD in righteousness.

Then the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will please the LORD, as in days of old and years gone by.

"Then I will draw near to you for judgment. And I will be a swift witness against sorcerers and adulterers and perjurers, against oppressors of the widowed and fatherless, and against those who defraud laborers of their wages and deny justice to the foreigner but do not fear Me," says the LORD of Hosts.

"Because I, the LORD, do not change, you descendants of Jacob have not been destroyed. Yet from the days of your fathers, you have turned away from My statutes and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the LORD of Hosts.

"But you ask, 'How can we return?'

Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me!

But you ask, 'How do we rob You?'

In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, yet you— the whole nation— are still robbing Me. Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this," says the LORD of Hosts. "See if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour out for you blessing without measure. I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your land, and the vine in your field will not fail to produce fruit," says the LORD of Hosts.

"Then all the nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight," says the LORD of Hosts.

"Your words against Me have been harsh," says the LORD. "Yet you ask, 'What have we spoken against You?'

You have said, 'It is futile to serve God. What have we gained by keeping His requirements and walking mournfully before the LORD of Hosts? So now we call the arrogant blessed. Not only do evildoers prosper, they even test God and escape.'"

At that time those who feared the LORD spoke with one another, and the LORD listened and heard them. So a scroll of remembrance was written before Him regarding those who feared the LORD and honored His name.

"They will be Mine," says the LORD of Hosts, "on the day when I prepare My treasured possession. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him. So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not."

"For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace, when all the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble; the day is coming when I will set them ablaze," says the LORD of Hosts. "Not a root or branch will be left to them."

"But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings, and you will go out and leap like calves from the stall. Then you will trample the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day I am preparing," says the LORD of Hosts.

"Remember the law of My servant Moses, the statutes and ordinances I commanded him for all Israel at Horeb.

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome Day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers. Otherwise, I will come and strike the land with a curse."

Matthew

The Gospel According to Matthew

This is the record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham:

> Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram. Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon. Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.

Next:

> David the king was the father of Solomon by Uriah's wife, Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa. Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah. Uzziah was the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah. Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

After the exile to Babylon:

> Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor. Azor was the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud. Eliud was the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

In all, then, there were fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ.

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged in marriage to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and was unwilling to disgrace her publicly, he resolved to divorce her quietly.

But after he had pondered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to embrace Mary as your wife, for the One conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a Son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

> "Behold, the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel" (which means, "God with us").

When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and embraced Mary as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to her firstborn Son. And he gave Him the name Jesus.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the One who has been born King of the Jews? We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him."

When Herod the king heard this, he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.

"In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

> 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of My people Israel.'"

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and learned from them the exact time the star had appeared. And sending them to Bethlehem, he said: "Go and search carefully for the Child, and when you find Him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship Him."

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with great delight. On coming to the house, they saw the Child with His mother Mary, and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.

And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they withdrew to their country by another route.

When the Magi had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up!" he said. "Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the Child to kill Him."

So he got up, took the Child and His mother by night, and withdrew to Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

When Herod saw that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was filled with rage. Sending orders, he put to death all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, according to the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

> "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. "Get up!" he said. "Take the Child and His mother and go to the land of Israel, for those seeking the Child's life are now dead."

So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he learned that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And having

been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophets: "He will be called a Nazarene."

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

> "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him.'"

John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region around the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan.

But when John saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his place of baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit, then, in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The axe lies ready at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

I baptize you with water for repentance, but after me will come One more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

At that time Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?"

"Let it be so now," Jesus replied. "It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness in this way." Then John permitted Him.

As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water. Suddenly the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and resting on Him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!"

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry.

The tempter came to Him and said, "If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

But Jesus answered, "It is written:

> 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

Then the devil took Him to the holy city and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple. "If You are the Son of God," he said, "throw Yourself down. For it is written:

> 'He will command His angels concerning You, and they will lift You up in their hands, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus replied, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' "

Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. "All this I will give You," he said, "if You will fall down and worship me."

"Get behind Me, Satan!" Jesus told him. "For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.' "

Then the devil left Him, and angels came and ministered to Him.

When Jesus heard that John had been imprisoned, He withdrew to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, He went and lived in Capernaum, which is by the sea in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

> "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles — the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned."

From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow Me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." And at once they left their nets and followed Him.

Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed Him.

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about Him spread all over Syria, and people brought to Him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering acute pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and He healed them.

Large crowds followed Him, having come from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.

When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain and sat down. His disciples came to Him, and He began to teach them, saying:

> "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say every evil thing against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets before you.

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its savor, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer

good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they set it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. For I tell you truly, until heaven and earth pass away, not a single jot, not a stroke of a pen, will disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

So then, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do likewise will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever practices and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

You have heard that it was said to the ancients, 'Do not murder' and 'Anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother without cause will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' will be subject to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be subject to the fire of hell.

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

Reconcile quickly with your adversary, while you are still on the way to court. Otherwise, he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

It has also been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' But I tell you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, brings adultery upon her. And he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Again, you have heard that it was said to the ancients, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfill your vows to the Lord.' But I tell you not to swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is His footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor should you swear by your head, for you cannot make a single hair white or black. Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' Anything more comes from the evil one.

You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. If someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well; and if someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor' and 'Hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who mistreat you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Do not even tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your friends, what are you doing more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

Be perfect, therefore, as your Father in heaven is perfect."

"Be careful not to perform your acts of charity before men to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

So when you give to the needy, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. Truly I tell you, they already have their full reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will Himself reward you openly.

And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. Truly I tell you, they already have their full reward. But when you pray, go into your inner room, shut your door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you openly.

And when you pray, do not babble on like pagans, for they think that by their many words they will be heard. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

So then, this is how you should pray:

> 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. '

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive yours.

When you fast, do not be somber like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they already have their full reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that your fasting will not be obvious to men, but only to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

No one can serve two masters: Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat and drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air: They do not sow or reap or gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

And why do you worry about clothes? Consider how the lilies of the field grow: They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his glory was adorned like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles strive after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about the things of itself. Today has enough trouble of its own."

"Do not judge, or you will be judged. For with the same judgment you pronounce, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye but fail to notice the beam in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while there is still a beam in your own eye? You hypocrite! First take the beam out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Do not give dogs what is holy; do not throw your pearls before swine. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? And if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? So if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

In everything, then, do to others as you would have them do to you. For this is the essence of the Law and the Prophets.

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Beware of false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?'

Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness!'

Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them I will liken to a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain fell, the torrents raged, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because its foundation was on the rock.

But everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the torrents raged, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its collapse!"

When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astonished at His teaching, because He taught as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.

When Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed Him. Suddenly a leper came and knelt before Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."

Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man. "I am willing," He said. "Be clean!" And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Then Jesus instructed him, "See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift prescribed by Moses, as a testimony to them."

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came and pleaded with Him, "Lord, my servant lies at home, paralyzed and in terrible agony."

"I will go and heal him," Jesus replied.

The centurion answered, "Lord, I am not worthy to have You come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell one to go, and he goes, and another to come, and he comes. I tell my servant to do something, and he does it."

When Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those following Him, "Truly I tell you, I have not found even in Israel such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west to share the banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of

heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! As you have believed, so will it be done for you." And his servant was healed at that very hour.

When Jesus arrived at Peter's house, He saw Peter's mother-in-law sick in bed with a fever. So He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she got up and began to serve Him.

When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to Jesus, and He drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

> "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases."

When Jesus saw large crowds around Him, He gave orders to cross to the other side of the sea. And one of the scribes came to Him and said, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go."

Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head."

Another of His disciples requested, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

But Jesus told him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. Suddenly a violent storm came up on the sea, so that the boat was engulfed by the waves. But Jesus was sleeping. Then the disciples went and woke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!"

"You of little faith," Jesus replied, "why are you so afraid?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it was perfectly calm.

The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the sea obey Him!"

When Jesus arrived on the other side in the region of the Gergesenes, He was met by two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs. They were so violent that no one could pass that way.

"What do You want with us, Jesus, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have You come here to torture us before the appointed time?"

In the distance a large herd of pigs was feeding. So the demons begged Jesus, "If You drive us out, permit us to go off into the herd of pigs."

"Go!" He told them. So they came out and went into the herd of pigs, and the whole herd of pigs rushed down the steep bank into the sea and died in the waters.

Those tending the pigs ran off into the town and reported all this, including the account of the demon-possessed men. Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to leave their region.

Jesus got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own town. Just then some men brought to Him a paralytic lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven you. "

On seeing this, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming!"

But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said, "Why do you harbor evil in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven, ' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." Then He said to the paralytic, "Get up, pick up your mat, and go home." And the man got up and went home.

When the crowds saw this, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax booth. "Follow Me," He told him, and Matthew got up and followed Him.

Later, as Jesus was dining at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with Him and His disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

On hearing this, Jesus said to them,"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. "

Then John's disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Why is it that we and the Pharisees fast so often, but Your disciples do not fast?"

Jesus replied, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while He is with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. For the patch will pull away from the garment, and a worse tear will result.

Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will spill, and the wineskins will be ruined. Instead, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

While Jesus was saying these things, a synagogue leader came and knelt before Him. "My daughter has just died," he said. "But come and place Your hand on her, and she will live."

So Jesus got up and went with him, along with His disciples. Suddenly a woman who had suffered from bleeding for twelve years came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak. She said to herself, "If only I touch His cloak, I will be healed."

Jesus turned around and saw her. "Take courage, daughter," He said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed from that very hour.

When Jesus entered the house of the synagogue leader, He saw the flute players and the noisy crowd. "Go away," He told them. "The girl is not dead, but asleep." And they laughed at Him.

After the crowd had been put outside, Jesus went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. And the news about this spread throughout that region.

As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"

After Jesus had entered the house, the blind men came to Him. "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" He asked.

"Yes, Lord," they answered.

Then He touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you." And their eyes were opened. Jesus warned them sternly, "See that no one

finds out about this!" But they went out and spread the news about Him throughout the land.

As they were leaving, a demon-possessed man who was mute was brought to Jesus. And when the demon had been driven out, the man began to speak. The crowds were amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel!"

But the Pharisees said, "It is by the prince of demons that He drives out demons."

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. When He saw the crowds, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest."

And calling His twelve disciples to Him, Jesus gave them authority over unclean spirits, so that they could drive them out and heal every disease and sickness.

These are the names of the twelve apostles: first Simon, called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus called Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus.

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go onto the road of the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts. Take no bag for the road, or second tunic, or sandals, or staffs; for the worker is worthy of his provisions.

Whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy there and stay at his house until you move on. As you enter the home, greet its occupants. If the home is worthy, let your peace rest on it, but if it is not, let your peace return to you. And if anyone will not welcome you or heed your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

Behold, I am sending you out like sheep among wolves; therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. But beware of men, for they will hand you over to their councils and flog you in their synagogues. On My account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they hand you over, do not worry about how to respond or what to say. In that hour you will be given what to say. For it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rise against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of My name, but the one who perseveres to the end will be saved.

When they persecute you in one town, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not reach all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple to be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

So do not be afraid of them. For there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, and nothing hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the housetops.

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Instead, fear the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father in heaven.

Do not assume that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn

> 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'

Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and anyone who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives the One who sent Me. Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is My disciple, truly I tell you, he will never lose his reward."

After Jesus had finished instructing His twelve disciples, He went on from there to teach and preach in their cities.

Meanwhile John heard in prison about the works of Christ, and he sent two of his disciples to ask Him, "Are You the One who was to come, or should we look for someone else?"

Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the one who does not fall away on account of Me. "

As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the wind? Otherwise, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? Look, those who wear fine clothing are found in kings' palaces. What then did you go out to

see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. For this is the one about whom it is written:

> 'Behold, I will send My messenger ahead of You, who will prepare Your way before You.'

Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet even the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subject to violence, and the violent lay claim to it. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to one another:

> 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge for you, and you did not mourn.'

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon!' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at this glutton and drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is vindicated by her children. "

Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you.

And you, Capernaum, which is lifted up to heaven, will be brought down to Hades! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."

At that time Jesus declared, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was well-pleasing in Your sight.

All things have been entrusted to Me by My Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.

Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat them. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath."

Jesus replied, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for them to eat, but only for the priests.

Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and yet are innocent? But I tell you that One greater than the temple is here.

If only you had known the meaning of 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

Moving on from there, Jesus entered their synagogue, and a man with a withered hand was there. In order to accuse Jesus, they asked Him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"

He replied, "If one of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

Then Jesus said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out, and it was restored to full use, just like the other. But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. Large crowds followed Him, and He healed them all, warning them not to make Him known. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

> "Here is My Servant, whom I have chosen, My beloved, in whom My soul delights. I will put My Spirit on Him, and He will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not extinguish, till He leads justice to victory. In His name the nations will put their hope."

Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed the man so that the blind and mute man could both speak and see. The crowds were astounded and asked, "Could this be the Son of David?"

But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "Only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, does this man drive out demons."

Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and steal his possessions, unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house.

He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in the present age or in the one to come.

Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out

of his good store of treasure, and the evil man brings evil things out of his evil store of treasure. But I tell you that men will give an account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."

Jesus replied, "A wicked and adulterous generation demands a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

The men of Nineveh will stand at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now One greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and now One greater than Solomon is here.

When an unclean spirit comes out of a man, it passes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' On its return, it finds the house vacant, swept clean, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and dwell there. And the final plight of that man is worse than the first. So will it be with this wicked generation."

While Jesus was still speaking to the crowds, His mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to Him. Someone told Him, "Look, Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to You."

But Jesus replied, "Who is My mother, and who are My brothers?" Pointing to His disciples, He said, "Here are My mother and My brothers. For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. Such large crowds gathered around Him that He got into the boat and sat down, while all the people stood on the shore.

And He told them many things in parables, saying, "A farmer went out to sow his seed. And as he was sowing, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it.

Some fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow. But when the sun rose, the seedlings were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.

Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the seedlings.

Still other seed fell on good soil and produced a crop — a hundredfold, sixtyfold, or thirtyfold.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Then the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Why do You speak to the people in parables?"

He replied, "The knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. This is why I speak to them in parables:

> 'Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.'

In them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled:

> 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has grown callous; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn, and I would heal them.'

But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

Consider, then, the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the message of the kingdom but does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.

The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he remains for only a season. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.

The seed sown among the thorns is the one who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

But the seed sown on good soil is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and produces a crop — a hundredfold, sixtyfold, or thirtyfold."

Jesus put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was asleep, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and slipped away. When the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the weeds also appeared.

The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

'An enemy did this,' he replied.

So the servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

'No,' he said, 'if you pull the weeds now, you might uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat into my barn.'"

He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a man took and planted in his field. Although it is the smallest of all seeds, yet it grows into the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and mixed into three measures of flour, until all of it was leavened."

Jesus spoke all these things to the crowds in parables. He did not tell them anything without using a parable. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:

> "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the world."

Then Jesus dismissed the crowds and went into the house. His disciples came to Him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."

He replied, "The One who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed represents the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

As the weeds are collected and burned in the fire, so will it be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will weed out of His kingdom every cause of sin and all who practice lawlessness. And they will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and in his joy he went and sold all he had and bought that field.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. When he found one very precious pearl, he went away and sold all he had and bought it.

Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was cast into the sea and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the men pulled it ashore. Then they sat down and sorted the good fish into containers, but threw the bad away.

So will it be at the end of the age: The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked them.

"Yes, Lord," they answered.

Then He told them, "For this reason, every scribe who has been discipled in the kingdom of heaven is like a homeowner who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."

When Jesus had finished these parables, He withdrew from that place. Coming to His hometown, He taught the people in their synagogue, and they were astonished. "Where did this man get such wisdom and miraculous powers?" they asked. "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't His mother's name Mary, and aren't His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? Aren't all His sisters with us as well? Where then did this man get all these things?" And they took offense at Him.

But Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown and in his own household is a prophet without honor." And He did not do many miracles there, because of their unbelief.

At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus and said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead! That is why miraculous powers are at work in him."

Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because John had been telling him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." Although Herod wanted to kill John, he was afraid of the people, because they regarded John as a prophet.

When Herod's birthday was being celebrated, however, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod so much that he promised with an oath to give to her whatever she asked.

Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist."

The king was grieved, but because of his oaths and his guests, he ordered that her wish be granted and sent to have John beheaded in the prison.

John's head was brought in on a platter and presented to the girl, who carried it to her mother.

Then John's disciples came and took his body and buried it. And they went and informed Jesus.

When Jesus heard about John, He withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. But the crowds found out about it and followed Him on foot from the towns. When Jesus stepped ashore and saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them and healed their sick.

When evening came, His disciples came to Him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the hour is already late. Dismiss the crowds so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

"They do not need to go away," Jesus replied. "You give them something to eat."

"We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

"Bring them here to Me," Jesus said. And He directed the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, He spoke a blessing. Then He broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.

They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. About five thousand men were fed, besides women and children.

Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of Him to the other side, while He dismissed the crowds. After He had dismissed them, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone, but the boat was already in the middle of the sea, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

During the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went out to them, walking on the sea. When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified. "It's a ghost!" they said, and cried out in fear.

But Jesus spoke up at once: "Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid."

"Lord, if it is You," Peter replied, "command me to come to You on the water."

"Come," said Jesus.

Then Peter got down out of the boat and walked on the water to go toward Jesus. But when he saw the strength of the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and took hold of Peter. "You of little faith," He said, "why did you doubt?"

And when they had climbed back into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, “Truly You are the Son of God!”

When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding region. People brought all the sick to Him and begged Him just to let them touch the fringe of His cloak. And all who touched Him were healed.

Then some scribes and Pharisees came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, “Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They do not wash their hands before they eat.”

Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor your father and mother’ and ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’ But you say that if anyone says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever you would have received from me is a gift devoted to God,’ then he need not honor his father or mother with it. Thus you nullify the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied correctly about you:

> ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouths, and they honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. They worship Me in vain; they teach as doctrine the precepts of men.’ ”

Jesus called the crowd to Him and said, “Listen and understand. A man is not defiled by what enters his mouth, but by what comes out of it.”

Then His disciples came to Him and said, “Are You aware that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?”

But Jesus replied, “Every plant that My heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by its roots. Disregard them! They are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”

Peter said to Him, “Explain this parable to us.”

“Do you still not understand?” Jesus asked. “Do you not yet realize that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then is eliminated? But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these things defile a man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, and slander. These are what defile a man, but eating with unwashed hands does not defile him.”

Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And a Canaanite woman from that region came to Him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is miserably possessed by a demon.”

But Jesus did not answer a word. So His disciples came and urged Him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.”

He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

The woman came and knelt before Him. “Lord, help me!” she said.

But Jesus replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.”

“Yes, Lord,” she said, “even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.”

“O woman,” Jesus answered, “your faith is great! Let it be done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

Moving on from there, Jesus went along the Sea of Galilee. Then He went up on a mountain and sat down. Large crowds came to Him, bringing the lame, the blind, the mute, the crippled, and many others, and laid them at Jesus’ feet, and He healed them. The crowds were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel.

Then Jesus called His disciples to Him and said, “I have compassion for this crowd, because they have already been with Me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may faint along the way.”

His disciples replied, “Where in this desolate place could we find enough bread to feed such a large crowd?”

“How many loaves do you have?” Jesus asked.

“Seven,” they replied, “and a few small fish.”

And He commanded the crowd to sit down on the ground. Taking the seven loaves and the fish, He gave thanks and broke them. Then He gave them to His disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.

They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. A total of four thousand men were fed, besides women and children.

After Jesus had dismissed the crowds, He got into the boat and went to the region of Magdala.

Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came and tested Jesus by asking Him to show them a sign from heaven.

But He replied, “When evening comes, you say, ‘The weather will be fair, for the sky is red,’ and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but not the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation demands a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.” Then He left them and went away.

When they crossed to the other side, His disciples forgot to take bread. “Watch out!” Jesus told them. “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

They discussed this among themselves and concluded, “It is because we did not bring any bread.”

Aware of their conversation, Jesus said to them,“You of little faith, why are you debating among yourselves about having brought no bread? Do you still not understand? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? How do you not understand that I was not telling you about bread, but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees? ”

Then they understood that He was not telling them to beware of the leaven used in bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He questioned His disciples: “Who do people pronounce Me, the Son of Man, to be? ”

They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

“But what about you?” Jesus asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by My Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Then He commanded His disciples not to tell anyone that He was Jesus the Christ.

From that time on Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. “Far be it from You, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to You!”

But Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me. For you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”

Then Jesus told His disciples, “If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in His Father’s glory with His angels, and then He will repay each one according to what he has done.

Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

After six days Jesus took with Him Peter, James, and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.

Suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared before them, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If You wish, we will put up three shelters— one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

While Peter was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him!” When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown in terror.

Then Jesus came over and touched them. “Get up,” He said. “Do not be afraid.” And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Do not tell anyone about this vision until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.”

His disciples asked Him, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”

Jesus replied, “Elijah does indeed come first, and he will restore all things. But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him whatever they wished. In the same way, the Son of Man will suffer at their hands.”

Then the disciples understood that He was speaking to them about John the Baptist.

When they came to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus and knelt before Him. “Lord, have mercy on my son,” he said. “He has seizures and is suffering terribly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not heal him.”

“O unbelieving and perverse generation!” Jesus replied. “How long must I remain with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy here to Me.” Then Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment.

Afterward the disciples came to Jesus privately and asked, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

“Because of your unbelief, ” Jesus answered.“For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you. But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”

While they were staying together in Galilee, Jesus told them, “The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill Him, and on the third day He will be raised to life.” And the disciples were deeply grieved.

After they had arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax came to Peter and asked, “Does your Teacher pay the two drachmas?”

“Yes,” he answered.

When Peter entered the house, Jesus preempted him. “What do you think, Simon?” He asked. “From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs and taxes: from their own sons, or from others?”

“From others,” Peter answered.

“Then the sons are exempt,” Jesus said to him. “But so that we may not offend them, go to the sea, cast a hook, and take the first fish you catch. When you open its mouth, you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for My tax and yours.”

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

Jesus invited a little child to stand among them. “Truly I tell you,” He said, “unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in My name welcomes Me.

But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

Woe to the world for the causes of sin. These stumbling blocks must come, but woe to that man through whom they come!

If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life lame or crippled than to have two hands and two feet and be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you

to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

See that you do not look down on any of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of My Father in heaven. For the Son of Man came to save the lost.

What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go out to search for the one that is lost? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices more over that one sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. In the same way, your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.

If your brother sins against you, go and confront him privately. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, regard him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Again, I tell you truly that if two of you on the earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven. For where two or three gather together in My name, there am I with them."

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother who sins against me? Up to seven times?"

Jesus answered, "I tell you, not just seven times, but seventy-seven times!

Because of this, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlements, a debtor owing ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since the man was unable to pay, the master ordered that he be sold to pay his debt, along with his wife and children and everything he owned.

Then the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Master, have patience with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.'

His master had compassion on him, forgave his debt, and released him.

But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe me! '

So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you back. '

But he refused. Instead, he went and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay his debt.

When his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and recounted all of this to their master.

Then the master summoned him and said, 'You wicked servant! I forgave all your debt because you begged me. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had on you?' In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should repay all that was owed him.

That is how My heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother his trespasses from your heart."

When Jesus had finished saying these things, He left Galilee and went into the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. Large crowds followed Him, and He healed them there.

Then the Pharisees came and tested Him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?"

Jesus answered, "Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh' ? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

"Why then," they asked, "did Moses order a man to give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"

Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because of your hardness of heart. But it was not this way from the beginning. Now I tell you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery. And he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery. "

His disciples said to Him, "If this is the case between a man and his wife, it is better not to marry."

"Not everyone can accept this word," He replied, "but only those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who were born that way; others were made that way by men; and still others live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."

Then little children were brought to Jesus for Him to place His hands on them and pray for them. And the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them! For the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." And after He had placed His hands on them, He went on from there.

Just then a man came up to Jesus and inquired, "Good Teacher, what good thing must I do to obtain eternal life?"

"Why do you call Me good?" Jesus replied. "There is no one who is good but God. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments."

"Which ones?" the man asked.

Jesus answered, "'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as yourself.' "

"All these I have kept from my youth," said the young man. "What do I still lack?"

Jesus told him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me."

When the young man heard this, he went away in sorrow, because he had great wealth.

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I tell you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

When His disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?”

Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

“Look,” Peter replied, “we have left everything to follow You. What then will there be for us?”

Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, in the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for the sake of My name will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. ‘You also go into my vineyard,’ he said, ‘and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went.

He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing.

About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing idle. ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’ he asked.

‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.

So he told them, ‘You also go into my vineyard, and you will receive whatever is right. ’

When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with the last ones hired and moving on to the first.’

The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. So when the original workers came, they assumed they would receive more. But each of them also received a denarius.

On receiving their pay, they began to grumble against the landowner. ‘These men who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day.’

But he answered one of them, ‘Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Did you not agree with me on one denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give this last man the same as I gave you. Do I not have the right to do as I please with what is mine? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

So the last will be first, and the first will be last. For many are called, but few are chosen. ”

As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside and said, “Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes. They will condemn Him to death and will deliver Him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. And on the third day He will rise again. ”

Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Jesus with her sons and knelt down to make a request of Him.

“What do you want?” He inquired.

She answered, “Declare that in Your kingdom one of these two sons of mine may sit at Your right hand, and the other at Your left.”

“You do not know what you are asking,” Jesus replied. “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized? ”

“We can,” the brothers answered.

“You will indeed drink My cup and be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized,” Jesus said. “But to sit at My right or left is not Mine to grant. These seats belong to those for whom My Father has prepared them.”

When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. But Jesus called them aside and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their superiors exercise authority over them. But it shall not be this way among you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave — just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him. And there were two blind men sitting beside the road. When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, “Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!”

The crowd admonished them to be silent, but they cried out all the louder, “Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!”

Jesus stopped and called them. “What do you want Me to do for you?” He asked.

“Lord,” they answered, “let our eyes be opened.”

Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes, and at once they received their sight and followed Him.

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethsphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent out two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt beside her. Untie them and bring them to Me. If anyone questions you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

All this took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

> “Say to the Daughter of Zion, ‘See, your King comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”

So the disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and laid their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them.

A massive crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

The crowds that went ahead of Him and those that followed were shouting:

> “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest!”

When Jesus had entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?”

The crowds replied, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

Then Jesus entered the temple of God and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned

the tables of the money changers and the seats of those selling doves. And He declared to them, "It is written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer.' But you have made it 'a den of robbers.' "

The lame and the blind came to Him at the temple, and He healed them. But the chief priests and scribes were indignant when they saw the wonders He performed and the children shouting in the temple courts, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

"Do You hear what these children are saying?" they asked.

"Yes," Jesus answered. "Have you never read:

> 'From the mouths of children and infants You have ordained praise' ?"

Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where He spent the night.

In the morning, as Jesus was returning to the city, He was hungry. Seeing a fig tree by the road, He went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. "May you never bear fruit again!" He said. And immediately the tree withered.

When the disciples saw this, they marveled and asked, "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?"

"Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "if you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

When Jesus returned to the temple courts and began to teach, the chief priests and elders of the people came up to Him. "By what authority are You doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave You this authority?"

"I will also ask you one question," Jesus replied, "and if you answer Me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. What was the source of John's baptism? Was it from heaven or from men?"

They deliberated among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will ask, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From men,' we are afraid of the people, for they all regard John as a prophet." So they answered, "We do not know."

And Jesus replied, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

But what do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first one and said, 'Son, go and work today in my vineyard. '

'I will not,' he replied. But later he changed his mind and went.

Then the man went to the second son and told him the same thing.

'I will, sir,' he said. But he did not go.

Which of the two did the will of his father?"

"The first," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a tower. Then he rented it out to some tenants and went away on a journey.

When the harvest time drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his share of the fruit. But the tenants seized his servants. They beat one, killed another, and stoned a third.

Again, he sent other servants, more than the first group. But the tenants did the same to them.

Finally, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said.

But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and take his inheritance.' So they seized him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard returns, what will he do to those tenants?"

"He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and will rent out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him his share of the fruit at harvest time."

Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:

> 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes' ?

Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed. "

When the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they knew that Jesus was speaking about them. Although they wanted to arrest Him, they were afraid of the crowds, because the people regarded Him as a prophet.

Once again, Jesus spoke to them in parables: "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to call those he had invited to the banquet, but they refused to come.

Again, he sent other servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner. My oxen and fattened cattle have been killed, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'

But they paid no attention and went away, one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them, and killed them.

When he heard this, the king was enraged, and he sent his troops to destroy those murderers and burn their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the crossroads and invite to the banquet as many as you can find.'

So the servants went out into the streets and gathered everyone they could find, both evil and good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

But when the king came in to see the guests, he spotted a man who was not dressed in wedding clothes. 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?'

But the man was speechless.

Then the king told the servants, 'Tie him hand and foot, take him away, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

For many are called, but few are chosen."

Then the Pharisees went out and conspired to trap Jesus in His words. They sent their disciples to Him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know that You are honest and that You teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You seek favor from no one, because You pay no attention to external appearance. So tell us what You think: Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

But Jesus knew their evil intent and said, "You hypocrites, why are you testing Me? Show Me the coin used for the tax."

And they brought Him a denarius.

"Whose image is this," He asked, "and whose inscription?"

"Caesar's," they answered.

So Jesus told them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

And when they heard this, they were amazed. So they left Him and went away.

That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus and questioned Him. "Teacher," they said, "Moses declared that if a man dies without having children, his brother is to marry the widow and raise up offspring for him. Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died without having children. So he left his wife to his brother. The same thing happened to the second and third brothers, down to the seventh. And last of all, the woman also died. In the resurrection, then, whose wife will she be of the seven? For all of them were married to her."

Jesus answered, "You are mistaken because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. In the resurrection, people will neither marry nor be given in marriage. Instead, they will be like the angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what God said to you: 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob' ? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.

And when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they themselves gathered together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested Him with a question: "Teacher, which commandment is the greatest in the Law?"

Jesus declared, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

While the Pharisees were assembled, Jesus questioned them: "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is He?"

"David's," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord'? For he says:

> 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."'

So if David calls Him 'Lord,' how can He be David's son?"

No one was able to answer a word, and from that day on no one dared to question Him any further.

Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples: "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So observe and practice everything they tell you to observe. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy, burdensome loads and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

All their deeds are done for men to see. They broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. They love the places of honor at banquets, the chief seats in the synagogues, the greetings in the marketplaces, and the title of 'Rabbi, Rabbi' by which they are addressed.

But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth your father, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Christ. The greatest among you shall be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You defraud widows of their houses, and for a show make lengthy prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let in those who wish to enter.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You traverse land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.

Woe to you, blind guides! You say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.' You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes it sacred? And you say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by his oath.' You are foolish and blind! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes it sacred? So then, he who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And he who swears by the temple swears by it and by the One who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven swears by God's throne and by the One who sits on it.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You pay tithes of mint, dill, and cumin. But you have disregarded the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and unrighteousness. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, so that the outside may become clean as well.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and every kind of impurity. In the same way, on

the outside you appear to be righteous, but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous. And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' So you testify against yourselves that you are the sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your fathers. You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape the sentence of hell?

Because of this, I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify, and others you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town. And so upon you will come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Truly I tell you, all these things will come upon this generation.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those sent to her, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were unwilling! Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you that you will not see Me again until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.' "

As Jesus left the temple and was walking away, His disciples came up to Him to point out its buildings.

"Do you see all these things?" Jesus replied."Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

While Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?"

Jesus answered, "See to it that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. All these things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.

Then they will deliver you over to be persecuted and killed, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. At that time many will fall away and will betray and hate one another, and many false prophets will arise and deceive many.

Because of the multiplication of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold. But the one who perseveres to the end will be saved.

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination of desolation,' spoken of by the prophet Daniel(let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the housetop come down to retrieve anything from his house. And let no one in the field return for his garments.

How miserable those days will be for pregnant and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not occur in the winter or on the Sabbath. For at that time there will be great tribulation, unmatched from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be seen again. If those days had not been cut short, nobody would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short.

At that time, if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There He is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive even the elect, if that were possible. See, I have told you in advance.

So if they tell you, 'There He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, or, 'Here He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days:

> 'The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. '

At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its branches become tender and sprout leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you will know that He is near, right at the door. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.

No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, but only My Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark. And they were oblivious until the flood came and swept them all away. So will it be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.

Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the hour in which your Lord will come. But understand this: If the homeowner had known in which watch of the night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. For this reason, you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour you do not expect.

Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has put in charge of his household, to give the others their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

But suppose that servant is wicked and says in his heart, 'My master will be a long time in coming. ' And he begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day he does not expect and at an hour he does not anticipate. Then he will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps but did not take along any extra oil. But the wise ones took oil in flasks along with their lamps. When the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

At midnight the cry rang out: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming! Come out to meet him!'

Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'

'No,' said the wise ones, 'or there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'

But while they were on their way to buy it, the bridegroom arrived. Those who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet, and the door was shut.

Later the other virgins arrived and said, 'Lord, lord, open the door for us!'

But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.'

Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour when the Son of Man comes.

For it is just like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted them with his possessions. To one he gave five talents, to another two talents, and to another one talent — each according to his own ability. And he went on his journey.

The servant who had received the five talents went at once and put them to work and made five more talents. Likewise, the one with the two talents also gained two more. But the servant who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master's money.

After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The servant who had received the five talents came and presented five more. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more besides them. '

His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master!'

The servant who had received the two talents also came and said, 'Master, you entrusted me with two talents. See, I have gained two more besides them.'

His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master!'

Finally, the servant who had received the one talent came and said, 'Master, I knew that you are a hard man, reaping where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what belongs to you.'

'You wicked, lazy servant!' replied his master. 'You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed. Then you should have deposited my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received it back with interest.

Therefore take the talent from him and give it to the one who has ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. But the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. And throw that worthless servant into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on His right and the goats on His left.

Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you visited Me.'

Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? When did we see You sick or in prison and visit You?'

And the King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.'

Then He will say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, I was naked and you did not clothe Me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after Me.'

And they too will reply, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'

Then the King will answer, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me.'

And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

When Jesus had finished saying all these things, He told His disciples, "You know that the Passover is two days away, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified."

At that time the chief priests, scribes, and elders of the people assembled in the courtyard of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and they conspired to arrest Jesus covertly and kill Him. "But not during the feast," they said, "or there may be a riot among the people."

While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came to Him with an alabaster jar

of expensive perfume, which she poured on His head as He reclined at the table.

When His disciples saw this, they were indignant and asked, "Why this waste? This perfume could have been sold at a high price, and the money given to the poor."

Aware of this, Jesus asked, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful deed to Me. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have Me. By pouring this perfume on Me, she has prepared My body for burial. Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached in all the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her."

Then one of the Twelve, the one called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand Him over to you?" And they set out for him thirty pieces of silver. So from then on Judas looked for an opportunity to betray Jesus.

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?"

He answered, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him that the Teacher says, 'My time is near. I will keep the Passover with My disciples at your house.'" So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.

When evening came, Jesus was reclining with the Twelve. And while they were eating, He said to them, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray Me."

They were deeply grieved and began to ask Him one after another, "Surely not I, Lord?"

Jesus answered, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with Me will betray Me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about Him, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed. It would be better for him if he had not been born."

Then Judas, who would betray Him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?"

Jesus answered, "You have said it yourself."

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is My body."

Then He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is My blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in My Father's kingdom."

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Then Jesus said to them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of Me. For it is written:

> 'I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'

But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

Peter said to Him, "Even if all fall away on account of You, I never will."

"Truly I tell you," Jesus declared, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."

Peter replied, "Even if I have to die with You, I will never deny You." And all the other disciples said the same thing.

Then Jesus went with His disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and He told them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."

He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee and began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then Jesus said to them, "My soul is consumed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with Me."

Going a little farther, He fell facedown and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will."

Then Jesus returned to the disciples and found them sleeping. "Were you not able to keep watch with Me for one hour?" He asked Peter. "Watch and pray so that you will not enter into temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

A second time He went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cup cannot pass from Me unless I drink it, may Your will be done." And Jesus returned and found them sleeping again, for their eyes were heavy.

So He left them and went away once more and prayed a third time, saying the same thing. Then He returned to His disciples and said, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! See, My betrayer is approaching! "

While Jesus was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived, accompanied by a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and elders of the people.

Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The One I kiss is the man; arrest Him." Going directly to Jesus, he said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed Him.

"Friend," Jesus replied, "why have you come?"

Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus, and arrested Him. At this, one of Jesus' companions drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

"Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him. "For all who draw the sword will perish by the sword. Are you not aware that I can call on My Father right now, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen this way?"

At that time Jesus said to the crowd, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as you would an outlaw? Every day I sat with you teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest Me. But this has all happened so that the writings of the prophets would be fulfilled."

Then all the disciples deserted Him and fled.

Those who had arrested Jesus led Him away to the house of Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and elders had gathered. But Peter followed Him at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the high priest. And he went in and sat down with the guards to see the outcome.

Now the chief priests, the elders, and the whole Sanhedrin were seeking false testimony against Jesus in order to put Him to death. But they did not find any. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none.

Finally two false witnesses came forward and declared, “This man said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’”

So the high priest stood up and asked Him, “Have You no answer? What are these men testifying against You?”

But Jesus remained silent.

Then the high priest said to Him, “I charge You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God.”

“You have said it yourself,” Jesus answered. “But I say to all of you, from now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

At this, the high priest tore his clothes and declared, “He has blasphemed! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy. What do you think?”

“He deserves to die,” they answered.

Then they spit in His face and struck Him. Others slapped Him and said, “Prophesy to us, Christ! Who hit You?”

Meanwhile, Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came up to him. “You also were with Jesus the Galilean,” she said.

But he denied it before them all: “I do not know what you are talking about.”

When Peter had gone out to the gateway, another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, “This man was also with Jesus of Nazareth.”

And again he denied it with an oath: “I do not know the man!”

After a little while, those standing nearby came up to Peter. “Surely you are one of them,” they said, “for your accent gives you away.”

At that he began to curse and swear to them, “I do not know the man!”

And immediately a rooster crowed.

Then Peter remembered the word that Jesus had spoken to him:“Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.

When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people conspired against Jesus to put Him to death. They bound Him, led Him away, and handed Him over to Pontius Pilate the governor.

When Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was filled with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders. “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood,” he said.

“What is that to us?” they replied. “You bear the responsibility.”

So Judas threw the silver into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

The chief priests picked up the pieces of silver and said, “It is unlawful to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money.” After conferring together, they used the money to buy the potter’s field as a burial place for foreigners. That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

> “They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price set on Him by the people of Israel, and they gave them for the potter’s field, as the Lord had commanded me.”

Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, who questioned Him: “Are You the King of the Jews?”

“You have said so,” Jesus replied.

And when He was accused by the chief priests and elders, He gave no answer.

Then Pilate asked Him, “Do You not hear how many charges they are bringing against You?”

But Jesus gave no answer, not even to a single charge, much to the governor’s amazement.

Now it was the governor’s custom at the feast to release to the crowd a prisoner of their choosing. At that time they were holding a notorious prisoner named Barabbas. So when the crowd had assembled, Pilate asked them, “Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?” For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him.

While Pilate was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him this message: “Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered terribly in a dream today because of Him.”

But the chief priests and elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus put to death.

“Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” asked the governor.

“Barabbas,” they replied.

“What then should I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” Pilate asked.

They all answered, “Crucify Him!”

“Why?” asked the governor. “What evil has He done?”

But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify Him!”

When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but that instead a riot was breaking out, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd. “I am innocent of this righteous man’s blood,” he said. “You bear the responsibility.”

All the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!”

So Pilate released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed Him over to be crucified.

Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company around Him. They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. And they twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on His head. They put a staff in His right hand, knelt down before Him, and mocked Him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” Then they spit on Him and took the staff and struck Him on the head repeatedly.

After they had mocked Him, they removed the robe and put His own clothes back on Him. Then they led Him away to crucify Him.

Along the way they found a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross of Jesus.

And when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means The Place of the Skull, they offered Him sour wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, He refused to drink it.

When they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments by casting lots. And sitting down, they kept watch over Him there.

Above His head they posted the written charge against Him:

THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Two robbers were crucified with Him, one on His right and the other on His left.

And those who passed by heaped abuse on Him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross!"

In the same way, the chief priests, scribes, elders, and Pharisees mocked Him, saying, "He saved others, but He cannot save Himself. If He is the King of Israel, let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in Him. He trusts in God. Let God deliver Him now if He wants Him. For He said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

In the same way, even the robbers who were crucified with Him berated Him.

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lima sabachthani?" which means, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He is calling Elijah." One of them quickly ran and brought a sponge. He filled it with sour wine, put it on a reed, and held it up for Jesus to drink.

But the others said, "Leave Him alone. Let us see if Elijah comes to save Him."

When Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, He yielded up His spirit. At that moment the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth quaked, and the rocks were split. The tombs broke open, and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After Jesus' resurrection, when they had come out of the tombs, they entered the holy city and appeared to many people.

When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified and said, "Truly this was the Son of God."

And many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to minister to Him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who himself was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus, and Pilate ordered that the body be given to him. So Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut into the rock. Then he rolled a great stone across the entrance to the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and Pharisees assembled before Pilate. "Sir," they said, "we remember that while He was alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So give the order that the tomb be secured until the third day. Otherwise, His disciples may come by night and steal Him away and tell the people He has risen from the dead. And this last deception would be worse than the first."

"You have a guard," Pilate said. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." So they went and secured the tomb by sealing the stone and posting the guard.

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

Suddenly there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, rolled away the stone from the entrance, and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards trembled in fear of him and became like dead men.

But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; He has risen, just as He said! Come, see the place where the Lord lay. Then go quickly and tell His disciples, 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see Him.' See, I have told you."

So they hurried out from the tomb in fear and great joy, and ran to tell His disciples. And as they were going to tell His disciples, suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" They came to Him, grasped His feet, and worshiped Him. "Do not be afraid," said Jesus. "Go and tell My brothers to go to Galilee. There they will see Me."

While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. And after the chief priests had met with the elders and formed a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money and instructed them: "You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.' If this report reaches the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble."

So the guards took the money and did as they were instructed. And this account has been circulated among the Jews to this very day.

Meanwhile, the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him, but some doubted.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen. "

Mark

The Gospel According to Mark

This is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophets:

> "Behold, I will send My messenger ahead of You, who will prepare Your way before You." "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him.'"

John came baptizing in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People went out to him from all of Jerusalem and the countryside of Judea. Confessing their sins, they were all baptized by him in the Jordan River.

John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. And he proclaimed: "After me will come One more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I indeed baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As soon as Jesus came up out of the water, He saw the heavens breaking open and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

At once the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness, and He was there in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and the angels ministered to Him.

After the arrest of John, Jesus went into Galilee and proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom of God. "The time is fulfilled," He said, "and the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe in the gospel!"

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow Me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." And at once they left their nets and followed Him.

Going on a little farther from there, He saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat, mending their nets. Immediately Jesus called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed Him.

Then Jesus and His companions went to Capernaum, and right away Jesus entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and began to teach. The people were astonished at His teaching, because He taught as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.

Now a man with an unclean spirit cried out in the synagogue: "Let us alone! What do You want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are — the Holy One of God!"

But Jesus rebuked the spirit. "Be silent!" He said. "Come out of him!" At this, the unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions and came out with a loud shriek.

All the people were amazed and began to ask one another, "What is this? What new teaching is this that with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him?" And the news about Jesus spread quickly through the whole region of Galilee.

As soon as Jesus and His companions had left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was sick in bed with a fever, and they promptly told Jesus about her. So He went to her, took her by the hand, and helped her up. Immediately the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, after sunset, people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed, and the whole town gathered at the door. And He healed many who were ill with various diseases and drove out many demons. But He would not allow the demons to speak, because they knew who He was.

Early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up and went out to a solitary place to pray. Simon and his companions went to look for Him, and when they found Him, they said, "Everyone is looking for You!"

But Jesus answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns so I can preach there as well, for that is why I have come." So He went throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Then a leper came to Jesus, begging and kneeling before Him and saying to Him: "If You are willing, You can make me clean."

Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man. "I am willing," He said. "Be clean!" And when He had said this, immediately the leprosy left him, and the man was cleansed.

Jesus promptly sent him away with a stern warning: "See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and present the offering Moses prescribed for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."

But the man went out and openly began to proclaim and spread the news.

Consequently, Jesus could no longer enter a town in plain view, but He stayed out in solitary places. Yet people came to Him from every quarter.

A few days later Jesus went back to Capernaum. And when the people heard that He was home, immediately they gathered in such large numbers that there was no more room, not even outside the door, as Jesus spoke the word to them.

Then a paralytic was brought to Him, carried by four men. Since they were unable to get to Jesus through the crowd, they uncovered the roof above Him, made an opening, and lowered the paralytic on his mat.

When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you. "

But some of the scribes were sitting there and thinking in their hearts, "Why does this man speak such blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

At once Jesus knew in His spirit that they were thinking this way within themselves. "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts?" He asked. "Which is easier: to say to a paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven, ' or to say, 'Get up, pick up your mat, and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralytic, "I tell you, get up, pick up your mat, and go home."

And immediately the man got up, picked up his mat, and walked out in front of them all. As a result, they were all astounded and glorified God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

Once again Jesus went out beside the sea. All the people came to Him, and He taught them there.

As He was walking along, He saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth. “Follow Me,” He told him, and Levi got up and followed Him.

While Jesus was dining at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with Him and His disciples — for there were many who followed Him. When the scribes and Pharisees saw Jesus eating with these people, they asked His disciples, “Why does He eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?”

On hearing this, Jesus told them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. ”

Now the disciples of John and of the Pharisees were often fasting. So people came to Jesus and asked, “Why don’t Your disciples fast like John’s disciples and those of the Pharisees?”

Jesus replied, “How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while He is with them? As long as He is with them, they cannot fast. But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, and a worse tear will result.

And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will spill out, and the wineskins will be ruined. Instead, new wine is poured into new wineskins.”

One Sabbath Jesus was passing through the grainfields, and His disciples began to pick the heads of grain as they walked along. So the Pharisees said to Him, “Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?”

Jesus replied, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? During the high priesthood of Abiathar, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which was lawful only for the priests. And he gave some to his companions as well.”

Then Jesus declared, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Therefore, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

Once again Jesus entered the synagogue, and a man with a withered hand was there. In order to accuse Jesus, they were watching to see if He would heal on the Sabbath.

Then Jesus said to the man with the withered hand, “Stand up among us.” And He asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?”

But they were silent.

Jesus looked around at them with anger and sorrow at their hardness of heart. Then He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he stretched it out, and it was restored, as sound as the other.

At this, the Pharisees went out and began plotting with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

So Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea, accompanied by a large crowd from Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, the region beyond the Jordan, and the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon. The large crowd came to Him when they heard what great things He was doing.

Jesus asked His disciples to have a boat ready for Him so that the crowd would not crush Him. For He had healed so many that all who had diseases were pressing forward to touch Him. And when the unclean spirits saw Him, they fell down before Him and cried out, “You are the Son of God!” But He warned them sternly not to make Him known.

Then Jesus went up on the mountain and called for those He wanted, and they came to Him. He appointed twelve of them to accompany Him, to be sent out to preach, and to have authority to heal sicknesses and to drive out demons:

Simon (whom He named Peter), James son of Zebedee and his brother John(whom He named Boanerges, meaning “Sons of Thunder”), Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus.

Then they went into a house, and once again a crowd gathered, so that they could not even eat. When His family heard about this, they went out to take custody of Him, saying, “He is out of His mind.”

And the scribes who had come down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and, “By the prince of the demons He drives out demons.”

So Jesus called them together and began to speak to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, it cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, it cannot stand. And if Satan is divided and rises against himself, he cannot stand; his end has come. No one can enter a strong man’s house to steal his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can plunder his house.

Truly I tell you, the sons of men will be forgiven all sins and blasphemies, as many as they utter. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is subject to eternal judgment. ”

Jesus made this statement because they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”

Then Jesus’ brothers and mother came and stood outside. They sent someone in to summon Him, and a crowd was sitting around Him. “Look,” He was told, “Your mother and brothers and sisters are outside, asking for You.”

But Jesus replied, “Who is My mother, or who are My brothers? ” Looking at those seated in a circle around Him, He said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and sister and mother. ”

Once again Jesus began to teach beside the sea, and such a large crowd gathered around Him that He got into the boat and sat in it, while all the people crowded along the shore.

And He taught them many things in parables, and in His teaching He said, “Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. And as he was sowing, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it.

Some fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow. But when the sun rose, the seedlings were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.

Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the seedlings, and they yielded no crop.

Still other seed fell on good soil, where it sprouted, grew up, and produced a crop — one bearing thirtyfold, another sixtyfold, and another a hundredfold."

Then Jesus said,"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

As soon as Jesus was alone with the Twelve and those around Him, they asked Him about the parable.

He replied, "To know the mystery of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to those on the outside everything is expressed in parables, so that,

> 'they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven their sins.' "

Then Jesus said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand any of the parables?

The farmer sows the word. Some are like the seeds along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.

Some are like the seeds sown on rocky ground. They hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But they themselves have no root, and they remain for only a season. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.

Others are like the seeds sown among the thorns. They hear the word, but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Still others are like the seeds sown on good soil. They hear the word, receive it, and produce a crop — thirtyfold, sixtyfold, or a hundredfold."

Jesus also said to them, "Does anyone bring in a lamp to put it under a basket or under a bed? Doesn't he set it on a stand? For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be brought to light.

If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."

He went on to say, "Pay attention to what you hear. With the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and even more will be added to you who hear. For whoever has will be given more. But whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him."

Jesus also said, "The kingdom of God is like a man who scatters seed on the ground. Night and day he sleeps and wakes, and the seed sprouts and grows, though he knows not how. For all by itself the earth produces a crop— first the stalk, then the head, then grain that ripens within. And as soon as the grain is ripe, he swings the sickle, because the harvest has come. "

Then He asked, "To what can we compare the kingdom of God? With what parable shall we illustrate it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds sown upon the earth. But after it is planted, it grows to be the largest of all garden plants and puts forth great branches, so that the birds of the air nest in its shade."

With many such parables Jesus spoke the word to them, to the extent that they could understand. He did not tell them anything without using a parable. But privately He explained everything to His own disciples.

When that evening came, He said to His disciples, "Let us cross to the other side." After they had dismissed the crowd, they took Jesus with them, since He was already in the boat. And there were other little boats with Him.

Soon a violent windstorm came up, and the waves were breaking over the boat, so that it was being swamped. But Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on the cushion. So they woke Him and said, "Teacher, don't You care that we are perishing?"

Then Jesus got up and rebuked the wind and the sea. "Silence!" He commanded. "Be still!" And the wind died down, and it was perfectly calm.

"Why are you so afraid?" He asked. "How do you still have no faith?"

Overwhelmed with fear, they asked one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

On the other side of the sea, they arrived in the region of the Gadarenes. As soon as Jesus got out of the boat, He was met by a man with an unclean spirit, who was coming from the tombs. This man had been living in the tombs and could not be restrained, even with chains. Though he was often bound with chains and shackles, he had broken the chains and shattered the shackles. Now there was no one with the strength to subdue him. Night and day in the mountains and in the tombs he kept crying out and cutting himself with stones.

When the man saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees before Him. And he shouted in a loud voice, "What do You want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You before God not to torture me!" For Jesus had already declared, "Come out of this man, you unclean spirit!"

"What is your name?" Jesus asked.

"My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." And he begged Jesus repeatedly not to send them out of that region.

There on the nearby hillside a large herd of pigs was feeding. So all the demons begged Jesus, "Send us to the pigs, so that we may enter them."

So Jesus immediately gave them permission, and the unclean spirits came out and went into the pigs, and the herd of about two thousand rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the water.

Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons sitting there, clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

Those who had seen it described what had happened to the demon-possessed man and also to the pigs. And the people began to beg Jesus to leave their region.

As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed by the demons begged to go with Him. But Jesus would not allow him. "Go home to your own people," He said, "and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy He has shown you."

So the man went away and began to proclaim throughout the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And everyone was amazed.

When Jesus had again crossed by boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around Him beside the sea. And behold, a synagogue leader named Jairus arrived, and seeing Jesus, he fell at His feet and pleaded with Him urgently, "My little daughter is near death. Please come and place Your hands on her so that she will be healed, and she will live."

So Jesus went with him, and a large crowd followed and pressed around Him. And a woman was there who had suffered from bleeding for twelve years. She had borne much agony under the care of many physicians and had spent all she had, but to no avail. Instead, her condition had only grown worse.

When the woman heard about Jesus, she came up through the crowd behind Him and touched His cloak. For she kept saying, "If only I touch His garments, I will be healed." Immediately her bleeding stopped, and she sensed in her body that she was healed of her affliction.

At once Jesus was aware that power had gone out from Him. Turning to the crowd, He asked, "Who touched My garments?"

His disciples answered, "You can see the crowd pressing in on You, and yet You ask, 'Who touched Me?'"

But He kept looking around to see who had done this. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him trembling in fear, and she told Him the whole truth.

"Daughter," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be free of your affliction."

While He was still speaking, messengers from the house of Jairus arrived and said, "Your daughter is dead; why bother the Teacher anymore?"

But Jesus overheard their conversation and immediately said to Jairus, "Do not be afraid; just believe." And He did not allow anyone to accompany Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James.

When He arrived at the house of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw the commotion and the people weeping and wailing loudly. He went inside and asked, "Why all this commotion and weeping? The child is not dead, but asleep." And they laughed at Him.

After He had put them all outside, He took the child's father and mother and His own companions, and went in where the child was lying. Taking her by the hand, Jesus said, "Talitha koumi! " which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!" Immediately the girl got up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). And they were utterly astounded. Then Jesus gave strict orders that no one should know about this, and He told them to give her something to eat.

Jesus went on from there and came to His hometown, accompanied by His disciples. When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard Him were astonished. "Where did this man get these ideas?" they asked. "What is this wisdom He has been given? And how can He perform such miracles? Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? Aren't His sisters here with us as well?" And they took offense at Him.

Then Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives, and in his own household is a prophet without honor." So He could not perform any miracles there, except to lay His hands on a few of the sick and heal them. And He was amazed at their unbelief.

And He went around from village to village, teaching the people.

Then Jesus called the Twelve to Him and began to send them out two by two, giving them authority over unclean spirits. He instructed them to take nothing but a staff for the journey — no bag, no bread, no money in their belts — and to wear sandals, but not a second tunic.

And He told them, "When you enter a house, stay there until you leave that area. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that place, as a testimony against them. Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. "

So they set out and preached that the people should repent. They also drove out many demons and healed many of the sick, anointing them with oil.

Now King Herod heard about this (for Jesus' name had become well known) and he said, "John the Baptist has risen from the dead! That is why miraculous powers are at work in him." Others were saying, "He is Elijah," and still others, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old."

But when Herod heard this, he said, "This is John, whom I beheaded; he has risen from the dead!" For Herod himself had ordered that John be arrested and bound and imprisoned, on account of his brother Philip's wife Herodias, whom Herod had married. For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife!"

So Herodias held a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she had been unable, because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man. When he heard John's words, he did much of what he said; and he listened to him gladly.

On Herod's birthday, her opportunity arose. Herod held a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. When the daughter of Herodias came and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests, and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you." And he swore to her, "Whatever you ask of me, I will give you, up to half my kingdom!"

Then she went out and asked her mother, "What should I request?"

And her mother answered, "The head of John the Baptist."

At once the girl hurried back to the king with her request: "I want you to give me the head of John the Baptist on a platter immediately."

The king was consumed with sorrow, but because of his oaths and his guests, he did not want to refuse her. So without delay, the king commanded that John's head be brought in. He sent an executioner, who went and beheaded him in the prison. The man brought John's

head on a platter and presented it to the girl, who gave it to her mother.

When John's disciples heard about this, they came and took his body and placed it in a tomb.

Meanwhile, the apostles gathered around Jesus and brought Him news of all they had done and taught. And He said to them, "Come with Me privately to a solitary place, and let us rest for a while." For many people were coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.

So they went away in the boat by themselves to a solitary place. But many people saw them leaving and recognized Him. They ran together on foot from all the towns and arrived before them. When Jesus stepped ashore and saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And He began to teach them many things.

By now the hour was already late. So the disciples came to Jesus and said, "This is a desolate place, and the hour is already late. Dismiss the crowd so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves food, for they have nothing to eat."

But Jesus told them, "You give them something to eat."

They asked Him, "Should we go out and spend two hundred denarii to give all of them bread to eat?"

"Go and see how many loaves you have," He told them.

And after checking, they said, "Five — and two fish."

Then Jesus directed them to have the people sit in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties.

Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, Jesus spoke a blessing and broke the loaves. Then He gave them to His disciples to set before the people. And He divided the two fish among them all.

They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. And there were five thousand men who had eaten the loaves.

Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of Him to Bethsaida, while He dismissed the crowd. After bidding them farewell, He went up on the mountain to pray.

When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and Jesus was alone on land. He could see that the disciples were straining to row, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went out to them, walking on the sea. He intended to pass by them, but when they saw Him walking on the sea, they cried out, thinking He was a ghost — for they all saw Him and were terrified.

But Jesus spoke up at once: "Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid." Then He climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. And the disciples were utterly astounded beyond measure, and were marveling. For they had not understood about the loaves because their hearts had been hardened.

When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and moored the boat. As soon as they got out of the boat, the people recognized Jesus and ran through that whole surrounding region, carrying the sick on mats to wherever they heard He was. And wherever He went — villages and towns and countrysides — they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged Him just to let them touch the fringe of His cloak. And all who touched Him were healed.

Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus. And seeing some of His disciples eating with hands that were defiled (that is, unwashed), they found fault.

Now in holding to the tradition of the elders, the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat until they wash their hands ceremonially. And on returning from the market, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions for them to observe, including the washing of cups, pitchers, kettles, and couches for dining.

So the Pharisees and scribes questioned Jesus: "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders? Instead, they eat with unwashed hands."

Jesus answered them, "Isaiah prophesied correctly about you hypocrites, as it is written:

> 'These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. They worship Me in vain; they teach as doctrine the precepts of men.'

You have disregarded the commandment of God to keep the tradition of men— the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other similar things you do. "

He went on to say, "You neatly set aside the command of God to maintain your own tradition. For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever you would have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), he is no longer permitted to do anything for his father or mother. Thus you nullify the word of God by the tradition you have handed down. And you do so in many such matters."

Once again Jesus called the whole crowd to Him and said, "All of you, listen to Me and understand: Nothing that enters a man from the outside can defile him; but the things that come out of a man, these are what defile him. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."

After Jesus had left the crowd and gone into the house, His disciples inquired about the parable.

"Are you still so dull?" He asked. "Do you not understand? Nothing that enters a man from the outside can defile him, because it does not enter his heart, but it goes into the stomach and then is eliminated, thus purifying all foods."

He continued: "What comes out of a man, that is what defiles him. For from within the hearts of men come evil thoughts, adultery, sexual immorality, murder, theft, greed, wickedness, deceit, debauchery, envy, slander, arrogance, and foolishness. All these evils come from within, and these are what defile a man."

Jesus left that place and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. Not wanting anyone to know He was there, He entered a house, but was unable to escape their notice. For a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Jesus, and she came and fell at His feet. Now she was a Greek woman of Syrophoenician

origin, and she kept asking Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

"First let the children have their fill," Jesus said."For it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."

"Yes, Lord," she replied, "for even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

Then Jesus told her, "Because of this answer, you may go. The demon has left your daughter." And she went home and found the demon was gone, and her daughter was lying on the bed.

Then Jesus left the region of Tyre and Sidon and went toward the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. Some people brought to Him a man who was deaf and hardly able to speak, and they begged Jesus to place His hand on him.

So Jesus took him aside privately, away from the crowd, and put His fingers into the man's ears. Then He spit and touched the man's tongue. And looking up to heaven, He sighed deeply and said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means, "Be opened!"). Immediately the man's ears were opened and his tongue was released, and he began to speak plainly.

Jesus ordered them not to tell anyone. But the more He ordered them, the more widely they proclaimed it. The people were utterly astonished and said, "He has done all things well! He makes even the deaf hear and the mute speak!"

In those days the crowd became very large, and they had nothing to eat. Jesus called His disciples to Him and said, "I have compassion for this crowd, because they have already been with Me three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them home hungry, they will faint along the way. For some of them have come a great distance."

His disciples replied, "Where in this desolate place could anyone find enough bread to feed all these people?"

"How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked.

"Seven," they replied.

And He instructed the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then He took the seven loaves, gave thanks and broke them, and gave them to His disciples to set before the people. And they distributed them to the crowd. They also had a few small fish, and Jesus blessed them and ordered that these be set before them as well.

The people ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. And about four thousand men who had eaten were present .

And when Jesus had dismissed the crowd, He immediately got into the boat with His disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

Then the Pharisees came and began to argue with Jesus, testing Him by demanding from Him a sign from heaven.

Jesus sighed deeply in His spirit and said, "Why does this generation seek after a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to this generation." And He left them, got back into the boat, and crossed to the other side.

Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. "Watch out!" He cautioned them. "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod."

So they began to discuss this with one another, saying, "It is because we have no bread."

Aware of their conversation, Jesus asked them, "Why are you debating about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Do you still have such hard hearts? 'Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear?' And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of broken pieces did you collect?"

"Twelve," they answered.

"And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of broken pieces did you collect?"

"Seven," they said.

Then He asked them, "How do you still not understand?"

When He arrived at Bethsaida, some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village. Then He spit on the man's eyes and placed His hands on him, asking if he could see anything.

The man looked up and said, "I can see the people, but they look like trees walking around."

Once again Jesus placed His hands on the man's eyes and made him look up, and his sight was restored, and he could see everything clearly. Jesus sent him home and said, "Do not go back or tell anyone in the village."

Then Jesus and His disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way, He questioned His disciples: "Who do people say I am?"

They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."

"But what about you?" Jesus asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, "You are the Christ."

And Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about Him.

Then He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and that He must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke this message quite frankly, and Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him.

But Jesus, turning and looking at His disciples, rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

Then Jesus called the crowd to Him along with His disciples, and He told them, "If anyone wants to follow after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and for the gospel will save it.

What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? If anyone is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in His Father's glory with the holy angels."

Then Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God arrive with power."

After six days Jesus took with Him Peter, James, and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There He was transfigured before them. His clothes became radiantly white as snow, brighter than any launderer on earth could bleach them. And Elijah and Moses appeared before them, talking with Jesus.

Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters— one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." For they were all so terrified that Peter did not know what else to say.

Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is My beloved Son. Listen to Him!" Suddenly, when they looked around, they saw no one with them except Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus admonished them not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept this matter to themselves, discussing what it meant to rise from the dead. And they asked Jesus, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"

He replied, "Elijah does indeed come first, and he restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected? But I tell you that Elijah has indeed come, and they have done to him whatever they wished, just as it is written about him."

When Jesus returned to the other disciples, He saw a large crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were filled with awe and ran to greet Him.

"What are you disputing with them?" He asked the scribes.

Someone in the crowd replied, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a spirit that makes him mute. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. I asked Your disciples to drive it out, but they were unable."

"O unbelieving generation!" Jesus replied. "How long must I remain with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy to Me."

So they brought him, and seeing Jesus, the spirit immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has this been with him?"

"From childhood," he said. "It often throws him into the fire or into the water, trying to kill him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."

"If you can believe!" said Jesus."All things are possible to him who believes!"

Immediately the boy's father cried out with tears, "Lord, I do believe; help my unbelief!"

When Jesus saw that a crowd had come running, He rebuked the unclean spirit. "You mute and deaf spirit," He said, "I command you to come out and never enter him again."

After shrieking and convulsing him violently, the spirit came out. The boy became like a corpse, so that many said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and helped him to his feet, and he stood up.

After Jesus had gone into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

Jesus answered, "This kind cannot come out, except by prayer and fasting. "

Going on from there, they passed through Galilee. But Jesus did not want anyone to know, because He was teaching His disciples. He told them, "The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill Him, and on the third day He will rise." But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him about it.

Then Jesus came to Capernaum. While He was in the house, He asked them, "What were you discussing among yourselves on the way?" But they were silent, for on the way they had been arguing about which of them was the greatest.

Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the last of all and the servant of all."

Then He had a little child stand among them. Taking the child in His arms, He said to them, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in My name welcomes Me, and whoever welcomes Me welcomes not only Me, but the One who sent Me."

John said to Him, "Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us driving out demons in Your name, and we forbade him, because he does not accompany us."

"Do not stop him," Jesus replied. "For no one who performs a miracle in My name can turn around and speak evil of Me. For whoever is not against you is for you. Indeed, if anyone gives you even a cup of water in My name because you are Christ's, truly I tell you, he will never lose his reward.

But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a millstone hung around his neck and to be thrown into the sea.

If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two hands and go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, where 'their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.' If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and be thrown into hell, into the unquenchable fire, where 'their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.' And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell, where 'their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.'

For everyone will be salted with fire, and every sacrifice will be salted with salt.

Salt is good, but if the salt loses its saltiness, with what will you season it? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

Then Jesus left that place and went into the region of Judea, beyond the Jordan. Again the crowds came to Him and He taught them, as was His custom.

Some Pharisees came to test Him. "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" they inquired.

"What did Moses command you?" He replied.

They answered, “Moses permitted a man to write his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away.”

But Jesus told them, “Moses wrote this commandment for you because of your hardness of heart. However, from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”

When they were back inside the house, His disciples asked Jesus about this matter. So He told them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.”

Now people were bringing the little children to Jesus for Him to place His hands on them, and the disciples rebuked those who brought them.

But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and told them, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them! For the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And He took the children in His arms, placed His hands on them, and blessed them.

As Jesus started on His way, a man ran up and knelt before Him. “Good Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

“Why do you call Me good?” Jesus replied. “No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not cheat others, honor your father and mother.’ ”

“Teacher,” he replied, “all these I have kept from my youth.”

Jesus looked at him, loved him, and said to him, “There is one thing you lack: Go, sell everything you own and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, take up the cross, and follow Me.”

But the man was saddened by these words and went away in sorrow, because he had great wealth.

Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

And the disciples were amazed at His words.

But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

They were even more astonished and said to one another, “Who then can be saved?”

Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.”

Peter began to say to Him, “Look, we have left everything and followed You.”

“Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or wife or children or fields for My sake and for the gospel will fail to receive a hundredfold in the present age — houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and fields, along with persecutions — and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

As they were going up the road to Jerusalem, Jesus was walking ahead of them. The disciples were amazed, but as they followed, they were afraid. Again Jesus took the Twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him: “Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes. They will condemn Him to death and will deliver Him over to the Gentiles, who will mock Him and flog Him and spit on Him and kill Him. And on the third day He will rise again.”

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus and declared, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.”

“What do you want Me to do for you?” He inquired.

They answered, “Grant that one of us may sit at Your right hand and the other at Your left in Your glory.”

“You do not know what you are asking,” Jesus replied. “Can you drink the cup I will drink, and be baptized with the baptism I will undergo?”

“We can,” the brothers answered.

“You will indeed drink the cup that I drink,” Jesus said, “and you will be baptized with the baptism that I undergo. But to sit at My right and left is not Mine to grant. These seats belong to those for whom they have been prepared.”

When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. So Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their superiors exercise authority over them. But it shall not be this way among you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

Next, they came to Jericho. And as Jesus and His disciples were leaving Jericho with a large crowd, a blind man named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting beside the road begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Many people admonished him to be silent, but he cried out all the louder, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Jesus stopped and asked for him to be called over. So they called the blind man. “Take courage!” they said. “Get up! He is calling for you.”

Throwing off his cloak, Bartimaeus rose up and came to Jesus.

“What do you want Me to do for you?” Jesus asked.

“Rabboni,” said the blind man, “let me see again.”

“Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethsphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent out two of His disciples and said to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and as soon as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one has sat. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks, ‘Why are you doing this?’ tell him, ‘The Lord needs it,’ and he will send it here immediately. ”

So they went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. They untied it, and some who were standing there asked, “Why are you untying the colt?”

The disciples answered as Jesus had commanded them, and the people gave them permission. Then they led the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, and He sat on it.

Many in the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The ones who went ahead and those who followed were shouting:

> “Hosanna!” “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is coming in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest!”

Then Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, He went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

The next day, when they had left Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if there was any fruit on it. But when He reached it, He found nothing on it except leaves, since it was not the season for figs. Then Jesus said to the tree, “May no one ever eat of your fruit again.” And His disciples heard this statement.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began to drive out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those selling doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. Then Jesus began to teach them, and He declared, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations’ ? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’ ”

When the scribes and chief priests heard this, they looked for a way to kill Him. For they were afraid of Him, because the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching.

And when evening came, Jesus went out of the city.

As they were walking back in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from its roots. Peter remembered it and said, “Look, Rabbi! The fig tree You cursed has withered.”

“Have faith in God,” Jesus said to them. “For truly I tell you that if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ and has no doubt in his heart but believes that it will happen, whatever he says will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

And when you stand to pray, if you hold anything against another, forgive it, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your trespasses as well. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

After their return to Jerusalem, Jesus was walking in the temple courts, and the chief priests, scribes, and elders came up to Him. “By what authority are You doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave You the authority to do them?”

“I will also ask you one question,” Jesus replied, “and if you answer Me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John’s baptism — was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me! ”

They deliberated among themselves: “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will ask, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ But if we say, ‘From men’ ...” they were afraid of the people, for they all held that John truly was a prophet. So they answered, “We do not know.”

And Jesus replied, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”

Then Jesus began to speak to them in parables: “A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a wine vat, and built a watchtower. Then he rented it out to some tenants and went away on a journey.

At harvest time, he sent a servant to the tenants to collect his share of the fruit of the vineyard. But they seized the servant, beat him, and sent him away empty-handed.

Then he sent them another servant, and casting stones they struck him over the head and sent him away, treating him shamefully.

He sent still another, and this one they killed.

He sent many others; some they beat and others they killed.

Finally, having his one beloved son, he sent him to them last. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said.

But the tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ So they seized the son, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.

What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants, and will give the vineyard to others. Have you never read this Scripture:

> ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes’ ?”

At this, the leaders sought to arrest Jesus, for they knew that He had spoken this parable against them. But fearing the crowd, they left Him and went away.

Later, they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to catch Jesus in His words. “Teacher,” they said, “we know that You are honest and seek favor from no one. Indeed, You are impartial and teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay them or not?”

But Jesus saw through their hypocrisy and said, “Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to inspect.” So they brought it, and He asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?”

“Caesar’s,” they answered.

In response Jesus told them, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”

And they marveled at Him.

Then the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus and questioned Him: “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man is to marry his brother’s widow and raise up offspring for him. Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died, leaving no children. Then the second one married the widow, but he also died and left no children. And the third did likewise. In this way, none of the seven who had her left any children. And last of all, the woman died. In the resurrection, then, whose wife will she be? For all seven were married to her.”

Jesus answered them,"Aren't you mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage. Instead, they will be like the angels in heaven.

But concerning the dead rising, have you not read about the burning bush in the Book of Moses, how God told him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob' ? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. Therefore you are badly mistaken!"

Now one of the scribes had come up and heard their debate. Noticing how well Jesus had answered them, he asked Him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?"

Jesus replied, "This is the most important of all the commandments: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. The second, like it, is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these."

"Right, Teacher," the scribe replied. "You have stated correctly that God is One and there is no other but Him, and to love Him with all your heart and with all your understanding and with all your soul and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself. This is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

When Jesus saw that the man had answered wisely, He said, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

And no one dared to question Him any further.

While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, He asked, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? Speaking by the Holy Spirit, David himself declared:

> 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."'

Therefore David himself calls Him 'Lord.' So how can He be David's son?"

And the large crowd listened to Him with delight.

In His teaching Jesus also said to them,"Watch out for the scribes. They like to walk around in long robes, to receive greetings in the marketplaces, and to have the chief seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They defraud widows of their houses, and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will receive greater condemnation."

As Jesus was sitting opposite the treasury, He watched the crowd putting money into it. And many rich people put in large amounts. Then one poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amounted to a small fraction of a denarius.

Jesus called His disciples to Him and said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more than all the others into the treasury. For they all contributed out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on."

As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, look at the magnificent stones and buildings!"

"Do you see all these great buildings?" Jesus replied. "Not one stone will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

While Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to be fulfilled?"

In response, Jesus began by telling them, "See to it that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, claiming, 'I am He,' and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. For these things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, as well as famines and riots. These are the beginning of birth pains.

So be on your guard. For you will be delivered over to the councils and beaten in the synagogues. On My account you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all the nations. But when they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand or premeditate what to say. Instead, speak whatever you are given at that time, for it will not be you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rise against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of My name, but the one who perseveres to the end will be saved.

So when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the housetop go back inside the house to retrieve anything from his house. And let no one in the field return for his cloak.

How miserable those days will be for pregnant and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not occur in the winter. For those will be days of tribulation unmatched from the beginning of God's creation until now, and never to be seen again. If the Lord had not cut short those days, nobody would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom He has chosen, He has cut them short.

At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There He is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders that would deceive even the elect, if that were possible. So be on your guard; see, I have told you everything in advance.

But in those days, after that tribulation:

> 'The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.'

At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And He will send out His angels to gather His elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its branches become tender and sprout leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these

things happening, know that He is near, right at the door. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.

No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on your guard, stay alert, and pray! For you do not know when the appointed time will come.

It is like a man going on a journey who left his house, put each servant in charge of his own task, and instructed the doorkeeper to keep watch. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know when the master of the house will return — whether in the evening, at midnight, when the rooster crows, or in the morning. Otherwise, he may arrive without notice and find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to everyone: Keep watch!"

Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were two days away, and the chief priests and scribes were looking for a covert way to arrest Jesus and kill Him. "But not during the feast," they said, "or there may be a riot among the people."

While Jesus was in Bethany reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke open the jar and poured it on Jesus' head.

Some of those present, however, expressed their indignation to one another and said, "Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for over three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor." And they scolded her.

But Jesus said, "Leave her alone; why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful deed to Me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them whenever you want. But you will not always have Me. She has done what she could to anoint My body in advance of My burial. And truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached in all the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her."

Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted to hear this, and they promised to give him money.

So Judas began to look for an opportunity to betray Jesus.

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was to be sacrificed, Jesus' disciples asked Him, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?"

So He sent two of His disciples and told them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jug of water will meet you. Follow him, and whichever house he enters, say to the owner, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?' And he will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."

So His disciples left and went into the city, where they found everything as Jesus had described. And they prepared the Passover.

When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. And while they were reclining and eating, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, one of you who is eating with Me will betray Me."

They began to be grieved and to ask Him one after another, "Surely not I?" And another said, "Is it I?"

He answered, "It is one of the Twelve — the one who is dipping his hand into the bowl with Me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about Him, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, spoke a blessing and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is My body."

Then He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God."

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away on account of Me this night, for it is written:

> 'I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'

But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I never will."

"Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times."

But Peter kept insisting all the more, "Even if I have to die with You, I will never deny You." And all the others said the same thing.

Then they came to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus told His disciples, "Sit here while I pray."

He took with Him Peter, James, and John, and began to be deeply troubled and distressed. Then He said to them, "My soul is consumed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch."

Going a little farther, He fell to the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour would pass from Him. "Abba, Father," He said, "all things are possible for You. Take this cup from Me. Yet not what I will, but what You will."

Then Jesus returned and found them sleeping. "Simon, are you asleep?" He asked. "Were you not able to keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not enter into temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

Again He went away and prayed, saying the same thing. And again Jesus returned and found them sleeping — for their eyes were heavy. And they did not know what to answer Him.

When Jesus returned the third time, He said, "Are you still sleeping and resting? That is enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go. See, My betrayer is approaching!"

While Jesus was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived, accompanied by a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, scribes, and elders.

Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The One I kiss is the man; arrest Him and lead Him away securely." Going directly to Jesus, he said, "Rabbi, Rabbi!" and kissed Him.

Then the men seized Jesus and arrested Him. And one of the bystanders drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

Jesus asked the crowd, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as you would an outlaw? Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest Me. But this has happened that the Scriptures would be fulfilled."

Then everyone deserted Him and fled. One young man who had been following Jesus was wearing a linen cloth around his body. The young men caught hold of him, but he pulled free of the linen cloth and ran away from them naked.

They led Jesus away to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders, and scribes assembled with him. Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the officers and warmed himself by the fire.

Now the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were seeking testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but they did not find any. For many bore false witness against Jesus, but their testimony was inconsistent.

Then some men stood up and testified falsely against Him: "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this man-made temple, and in three days I will build another that is made without hands.'" But even their testimony was inconsistent.

So the high priest stood up before them and questioned Jesus, "Have You no answer? What are these men testifying against You?"

But Jesus remained silent and made no reply.

Again the high priest questioned Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"

"I am," said Jesus, "and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven."

At this, the high priest tore his clothes and declared, "Why do we need any more witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy. What is your verdict?"

And they all condemned Him as deserving of death.

Then some of them began to spit on Him. They blindfolded Him, struck Him with their fists, and said to Him, "Prophesy!" And the officers kept striking Him with the palms of their hands.

While Peter was in the courtyard below, one of the servant girls of the high priest came down and saw him warming himself there. She looked at Peter and said, "You also were with Jesus the Nazarene."

But he denied it. "I do not know or even understand what you are talking about," he said. Then he went out to the gateway, and the rooster crowed.

There the servant girl saw him again and said to those standing nearby, "This man is one of them."

But he denied it again.

After a little while, those standing nearby said once more to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you too are a Galilean and your speech is similar."

But he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this man of whom you speak!" And the rooster crowed a second time.

Then Peter remembered the word that Jesus had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And he broke down and wept.

Early in the morning, the chief priests, elders, scribes, and the whole Sanhedrin devised a plan. They bound Jesus, led Him away, and handed Him over to Pilate.

So Pilate questioned Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?"

"You have said so," Jesus replied.

And the chief priests began to accuse Him of many things.

Then Pilate questioned Him again, "Have You no answer? Look how many charges they are testifying against You!"

But to Pilate's amazement, Jesus made no further reply.

Now it was Pilate's custom at the feast to release to the people a prisoner of their choosing. And a man named Barabbas was imprisoned with his fellow rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd cried out and began asking Pilate to keep his custom.

"Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" Pilate asked. For he knew it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over.

But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas to them instead.

So Pilate asked them again, "What then do you want me to do with the One you call the King of the Jews?"

And they shouted back, "Crucify Him!"

"Why?" asked Pilate. "What evil has He done?"

But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify Him!"

And wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed Him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called the whole company together. They dressed Him in a purple robe, twisted together a crown of thorns, and set it on His head. And they began to salute Him: "Hail, King of the Jews!"

They kept striking His head with a staff and spitting on Him. And they knelt down and bowed before Him. After they had mocked Him, they removed the purple robe and put His own clothes back on Him. Then they led Him out to crucify Him.

Now Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and the soldiers forced him to carry the cross of Jesus.

They brought Jesus to a place called Golgotha, which means The Place of the Skull. There they offered Him wine to drink mixed with myrrh, but He did not take it.

And they crucified Him.

They also divided His garments by casting lots to decide what each of them would take.

It was the third hour when they crucified Him. And the charge inscribed against Him read:

THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Along with Jesus, they crucified two robbers, one on His right and one on His left. So the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "And He was numbered with the transgressors."

And those who passed by heaped abuse on Him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who are

going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, come down from the cross and save Yourself!"

In the same way, the chief priests and scribes mocked Him among themselves, saying, "He saved others, but He cannot save Himself! Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, so that we may see and believe Him!" And even those who were crucified with Him berated Him.

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. At the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lima sabachthani?" which means, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

When some of those standing nearby heard this, they said, "Behold, He is calling Elijah."

And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine. He put it on a reed and held it up for Jesus to drink, saying, "Leave Him alone. Let us see if Elijah comes to take Him down."

But Jesus let out a loud cry and breathed His last. And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

When the centurion standing there in front of Jesus saw how He had cried out and breathed His last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

And there were also women watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. These women had followed Jesus and ministered to Him while He was in Galilee, and there were many other women who had come up to Jerusalem with Him.

Now it was already evening. Since it was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath), Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent Council member who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God, boldly went to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus.

Pilate was surprised to hear that Jesus was already dead, so he summoned the centurion to ask if this was so. When Pilate had confirmed it with the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph.

So Joseph bought a linen cloth, took down the body of Jesus, wrapped it in the cloth, and placed it in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance to the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where His body was placed.

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so they could go and anoint the body of Jesus. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they went to the tomb. They were asking one another, "Who will roll away the stone from the entrance of the tomb?" But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, even though it was extremely large.

When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here! See the place where they put Him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see Him, just as He told you.'"

So the women left the tomb and ran away, trembling and bewildered. And in their fear they did not say a word to anyone.

Early on the first day of the week, after Jesus had risen, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had driven out seven demons. She went and told those who had been with Him, who were mourning and weeping. And when they heard that Jesus was alive and she had seen Him, they did not believe it.

After this, Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them as they walked along in the country.

And they went back and reported it to the rest, but they did not believe them either.

Later, as they were eating, Jesus appeared to the Eleven and rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In My name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not harm them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will be made well."

After the Lord had spoken to them, He was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.

And they went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked through them, confirming His word by the signs that accompanied it. Amen.

Luke

The Gospel According to Luke

Many have undertaken to compose an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by the initial eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah, and whose wife Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and decrees of the Lord. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well along in years.

One day while Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And at the hour of the incense offering, the whole congregation was praying outside.

Just then an angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and gripped with fear.

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He shall never take wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb. Many of the sons of Israel he will turn back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous — to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

"How can I be sure of this?" Zechariah asked the angel. "I am an old man, and my wife is well along in years."

"I am Gabriel," replied the angel. "I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And now you will be silent and unable to speak until the day this comes to pass, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled at their proper time."

Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he took so long in the temple. When he came out and was unable to speak to them, they realized he had seen a vision in the temple. He kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak. And when the days of his service were complete, he returned home.

After these days, his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. She declared, "The Lord has done this for me. In these days He has shown me favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin pledged in marriage to a man named Joseph, who was of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. The angel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women!"

When she saw this, Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. So the angel told her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. His kingdom will never end!"

"How can this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God. Look, even Elizabeth your relative has conceived a son in her old age, and she who was called barren is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it happen to me according to your word." Then the angel left her.

In those days Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judah, where she entered the home of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For as soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord's word to her will be fulfilled."

Then Mary said:

> "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! For He has looked with favor on the humble state of His servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed. For the Mighty One has done great things for me. Holy is His name. His mercy extends to those who fear Him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who are proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones, but has exalted the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things, but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, remembering to be merciful, as He promised to our fathers, to Abraham and his descendants forever."

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

When the time came for Elizabeth to have her child, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they rejoiced with her.

On the eighth day, when they came to circumcise the child, they were going to name him after his father Zechariah. But his mother replied, “No! He shall be called John.”

They said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who bears this name.” So they made signs to his father to find out what he wanted to name the child.

Zechariah asked for a tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And they were all amazed. Immediately Zechariah’s mouth was opened and his tongue was released, and he began to speak, praising God.

All their neighbors were filled with awe, and people throughout the hill country of Judea were talking about these events. And all who heard this wondered in their hearts and asked, “What then will this child become?” And the Lord’s hand was with him.

Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

> “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, because He has visited and redeemed His people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke through His holy prophets, those of ages past, salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to show mercy to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath He swore to our father Abraham, to grant us deliverance from the hands of our enemies, that we may serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our lives. And you, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the presence of the Lord to prepare the way for Him, to give to His people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the Dawn has visited us from on high, to shine on those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until the time of his public appearance to Israel.

Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that a census should be taken of the whole empire. This was the first census to take place while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone went to his own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, since he was from the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to him in marriage and was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for her Child to be born. And she gave birth to her firstborn, a Son. She wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in the manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were shepherds residing in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid! For behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today in the city of David a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord! And this will be the sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”

And suddenly there appeared with the angel a great multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying:

> “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the Baby, who was lying in the manger. After they had seen the Child, they spread widely the message they had received about Him. And all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, which was just as the angel had told them.

When the eight days before His circumcision had passed, He was named Jesus, the name the angel had given Him before He was conceived.

And when the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses was complete, His parents brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord: “Every firstborn male shall be consecrated to the Lord”), and to offer the sacrifice specified in the Law of the Lord: “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

Now there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. Led by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. And when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for Him what was customary under the Law, Simeon took Him in his arms and blessed God, saying:

> “Sovereign Lord, as You have promised, You now dismiss Your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Your people Israel.”

And Joseph and the Child’s mother were amazed at what was spoken about Him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to His mother Mary:

> “Behold, this Child is appointed to cause the rise and fall of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts

of many hearts will be revealed — and a sword will pierce your soul as well."

There was also a prophetess named Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher, who was well along in years. She had been married for seven years, and then was a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.

Coming forward at that moment, she gave thanks to the Lord and spoke about the Child to all who were waiting for redemption in Jerusalem.

When Jesus' parents had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.

And the Child grew and became strong in spirit. He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him.

Every year His parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the Feast.

When those days were over and they were returning home, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but Joseph and His mother were unaware He had stayed. Assuming He was in their company, they traveled on for a day before they began to look for Him among their relatives and friends.

When they could not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for Him. Finally, after three days they found Him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astounded at His understanding and His answers.

When His parents saw Him, they were astonished. "Child, why have You done this to us?" His mother asked. "Your father and I have been anxiously searching for You."

"Why were you looking for Me?" He asked. "Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house ?" But they did not understand the statement He was making to them.

Then He went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But His mother treasured up all these things in her heart.

And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, while Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

He went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

> "A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
> 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight
> paths for Him. Every valley shall be filled in,
> and every mountain and hill made low. The
> crooked ways shall be made straight, and the
> rough ways smooth. And all humanity will see
> God's salvation.'"

Then John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit, then, in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The axe lies ready at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

The crowds asked him, "What then should we do?"

John replied, "Whoever has two tunics should share with him who has none, and whoever has food should do the same."

Even tax collectors came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"

"Collect no more than you are authorized," he answered.

Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?"

"Do not take money by force or false accusation," he said. "Be content with your wages."

The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John could be the Christ. John answered all of them: "I baptize you with water, but One more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor and gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

With these and many other exhortations, John proclaimed the good news to the people. But when he rebuked Herod the tetrarch regarding his brother's wife Herodias and all the evils he had done, Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison.

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in a bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, saying, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."

Jesus Himself was about thirty years old when He began His ministry.

> He was regarded as the son of Joseph, the son
> of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi,
> the son of Melchi, the son of Janna, the son of
> Joseph, the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos,
> the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of
> Naggai, the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias,
> the son of Semei, the son of Josech, the son of
> Judah, the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the
> son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son
> of Neri, the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the
> son of Cosam, the son of Elmodam, the son of
> Er, the son of Jose, the son of Eliezer, the son
> of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi,
> the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son
> of Joseph, the son of Jonan, the son of Eliakim,
> the son of Melea, the son of Mainan, the son of
> Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David,
> the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of
> Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon,
> the son of Amminadab, the son of Aram, the

son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel, the son of Cainan, the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days He was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry.

The devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

But Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word of God.' "

Then the devil led Him up to a high mountain and showed Him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. "I will give You authority over all these kingdoms and all their glory," he said. "For it has been relinquished to me, and I can give it to anyone I wish. So if You worship me, it will all be Yours."

But Jesus answered, "Get behind Me, Satan! It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.' "

Then the devil led Him to Jerusalem and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple. "If You are the Son of God," he said, "throw Yourself down from here. For it is written:

> 'He will command His angels concerning You to guard You carefully, and they will lift You up in their hands, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.'"

But Jesus answered, "It also says, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' "

When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time.

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and the news about Him spread throughout the surrounding region. He taught in their synagogues and was glorified by everyone.

Then Jesus came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. As was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath. And when He stood up to read, the scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to Him. Unrolling it, He found the place where it was written:

> "The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Then He rolled up the scroll, returned it to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on Him, and He began by saying, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

All spoke well of Him and marveled at the gracious words that came from His lips. "Isn't this the son of Joseph?" they asked.

Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to Me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in Your hometown what we have heard that You did in Capernaum.'"

Then He added, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in his hometown. But I tell you truthfully that there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and great famine swept over all the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to the widow of Zarephath in Sidon. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet. Yet not one of them was cleansed — only Naaman the Syrian."

On hearing this, all the people in the synagogue were enraged. They got up, drove Him out of the town, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw Him over the cliff. But Jesus passed through the crowd and went on His way.

Then He went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath He began to teach the people. They were astonished at His teaching, because His message had authority.

In the synagogue there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon. He cried out in a loud voice, "Ha! What do You want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are — the Holy One of God!"

But Jesus rebuked the demon. "Be silent!" He said. "Come out of him!" At this, the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without harming him.

All the people were overcome with amazement and asked one another, "What is this message? With authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!" And the news about Jesus spread throughout the surrounding region.

After Jesus had left the synagogue, He went to the home of Simon, whose mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever. So they appealed to Jesus on her behalf, and He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And she got up at once and began to serve them.

At sunset, all who were ill with various diseases were brought to Jesus, and laying His hands on each one, He healed them. Demons also came out of many people, crying out, "You are the Christ, the Son of God!" But He rebuked the demons and would not allow them to speak, because they knew He was the Christ.

At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place, and the crowds were looking for Him. They came to Him and tried to keep Him from leaving. But Jesus told them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well, because that is why I was sent."

And He continued to preach in the synagogues of Galilee.

On one occasion, while Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret with the crowd pressing in on Him to hear the word of God, He saw two boats at the edge of the lake. The fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. Jesus got into the boat belonging to Simon and asked him to put out a little from shore. And sitting down, He taught the people from the boat.

When Jesus had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch."

"Master," Simon replied, "we have worked hard all night without catching anything. But because You say so, I will let down the net." When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their net began to tear. So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees. "Go away from me, Lord," he said, "for I am a sinful man." For he and his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were his partners James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

"Do not be afraid," Jesus said to Simon. "From now on you will catch men." And when they had brought their boats ashore, they left everything and followed Him.

While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell facedown and begged Him, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."

Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man. "I am willing," He said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

"Do not tell anyone," Jesus instructed him. "But go, show yourself to the priest and present the offering Moses prescribed for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."

But the news about Jesus spread all the more, and great crowds came to hear Him and to be healed by Him of their sicknesses. Yet He frequently withdrew to the wilderness to pray.

One day Jesus was teaching, and the Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. People had come from Jerusalem and from every village of Galilee and Judea, and the power of the Lord was present for Him to heal the sick.

Just then some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. They tried to bring him inside to set him before Jesus, but they could not find a way through the crowd. So they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the man,"Friend, your sins are forgiven."

But the scribes and Pharisees began thinking to themselves, "Who is this man who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Knowing what they were thinking, Jesus replied, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on the earth to forgive sins…" He said to the paralytic, "I tell you, get up, pick up your mat, and go home."

And immediately the man stood up before them, took what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God. Everyone was taken with amazement and glorified God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax booth. "Follow Me," He told him, and Levi got up, left everything, and followed Him.

Then Levi hosted a great banquet for Jesus at his house. A large crowd of tax collectors was there, along with others who were eating with them. But their scribes and the Pharisees complained to Jesus' disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

Jesus answered, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Then they said to Him, "Why do John's disciples and those of the Pharisees frequently fast and pray, but Yours keep on eating and drinking?"

Jesus replied, "Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while He is with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast."

He also told them a parable: "No one sews a piece of cloth from a new garment onto an old one. If he does, he will tear the new garment as well, and the patch from the new will not match the old.

And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the wineskins, the wine will spill, and the wineskins will be ruined. Instead, new wine is poured into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one after drinking old wine immediately wants new, for he says, 'The old is better.'"

On the second chief Sabbath, Jesus was passing through the grainfields, and His disciples began to pick the heads of grain, rub them in their hands, and eat them. But some of the Pharisees asked, "Why are you doing what is unlawful to do on the Sabbath?"

Jesus replied, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, took the consecrated bread and also gave it to his companions, and ate what is lawful only for the priests to eat."

Then Jesus declared, "The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

On another Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered. Looking for an accusation against Jesus, the scribes and Pharisees were watching Him closely to see if He would heal on the Sabbath.

But Jesus knew their thoughts and said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and stand among us." So he got up and stood there.

Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?" And after looking around at all of them, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and it was restored as sound as the other.

But the scribes and Pharisees were filled with rage and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

In those days Jesus went out to the mountain to pray, and He spent the night in prayer to God. When daylight came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also designated as apostles: Simon, whom He named Peter, and his brother Andrew; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James son of Alphaeus and Simon called the

Zealot; Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Then Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place. A crowd of His disciples was there, along with a great number of people from all over Judea, Jerusalem, and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases, along with those troubled by unclean spirits. And they were healed. The entire crowd was trying to touch Him, because power was coming from Him and healing them all.

Looking up at His disciples, Jesus said:

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For their fathers treated the prophets in the same way.

But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed, for you will hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when men speak well of you, for their fathers treated the false prophets in the same way.

But to those of you who will listen, I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone takes your cloak, do not withhold your tunic as well. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what is yours, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full.

But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them, expecting nothing in return. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be poured into your lap. For with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you."

Jesus also told them a parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.

Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye but fail to notice the beam in your own eye? Or how can you say, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' while you yourself fail to see the beam in your own eye? You hypocrite! First take the beam out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. Indeed, figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor grapes from brambles. The good man brings good things out of the good treasure of his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil treasure of his heart. For out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.

Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' but do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them: He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid his foundation on the rock. When the flood came, the torrent crashed against that house but could not shake it, because its foundation was on the rock.

But the one who hears My words and does not act on them is like a man who built his house on ground without a foundation. The torrent crashed against that house, and immediately it fell — and great was its destruction!"

When Jesus had concluded His discourse in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum. There a highly valued servant of a centurion was sick and about to die. When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to ask Him to come and heal his servant. They came to Jesus and pleaded with Him earnestly, "This man is worthy to have You grant this, for he loves our nation and has built our synagogue."

So Jesus went with them. But when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends with the message: "Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy to have You come under my roof. That is why I did not consider myself worthy to come to You. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell one to go, and he goes, and another to come, and he comes. I tell my servant to do something, and he does it."

When Jesus heard this, He marveled at the centurion. Turning to the crowd following Him, He said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith." And when the messengers returned to the house, they found the ailing servant in good health.

Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain. Many of His disciples went with Him, accompanied by a large crowd. As He approached the town gate, He saw a dead man being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her.

When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said, "Do not weep." Then He went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. "Young man," He said, "I tell you, get up!" And the dead man sat up and began to speak! Then Jesus gave him back to his mother.

A sense of awe swept over all of them, and they glorified God. "A great prophet has appeared among us!" they said. "God has visited His people!" And the

news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding region.

Then John's disciples informed him about all these things. So John called two of his disciples and sent them to ask Jesus, "Are You the One who was to come, or should we look for someone else?"

When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to ask, 'Are You the One who was to come, or should we look for someone else?'"

Now at that very hour Jesus healed many people of their diseases, afflictions, and evil spirits, and He gave sight to many who were blind. So Jesus replied,"Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the one who does not fall away on account of Me. "

After John's messengers had left, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the wind? Otherwise, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? Look, those who wear elegant clothing and live in luxury are found in palaces.

What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written:

> 'Behold, I will send My messenger ahead of You, who will prepare Your way before You.'

For I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater prophet than John the Baptist, yet even the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

All the people who heard this, even the tax collectors, acknowledged God's justice. For they had received the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.

"To what, then, can I compare the men of this generation? What are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to one another:

> 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge for you, and you did not weep.'

For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon!' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look at this glutton and drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is vindicated by all her children."

Then one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to eat with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. When a sinful woman from that town learned that Jesus was dining there, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind Him at His feet weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears and wipe them with her hair. Then she kissed His feet and anointed them with the perfume.

When the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, He would know who this is and what kind of woman is touching Him — for she is a sinner!"

But Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

"Tell me, Teacher," he said.

"Two men were debtors to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they were unable to repay him, he forgave both of them. Tell Me, which one, then, will love him more?"

"I suppose the one who was forgiven more," Simon replied.

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

And turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? When I entered your house, you did not give Me water for My feet, but she wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You did not greet Me with a kiss, but she has not stopped kissing My feet since I arrived. You did not anoint My head with oil, but she has anointed My feet with perfume. Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven, for she has loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

But those at the table began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

And Jesus told the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Soon afterward, Jesus traveled from one town and village to another, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with Him, as well as some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, Joanna the wife of Herod's household manager Chuza, Susanna, and many others. These women were ministering to them out of their own means.

While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, He told them this parable: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. And as he was sowing, some seed fell along the path, where it was trampled, and the birds of the air devoured it.

Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the seedlings withered because they had no moisture.

Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the seedlings.

Still other seed fell on good soil, where it sprang up and produced a crop — a hundredfold."

As Jesus said this, He called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Then His disciples asked Him what this parable meant.

He replied, "The knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that,

> 'though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.'

Now this is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. The seeds along the path are those who hear, but the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

The seeds on rocky ground are those who hear the word and receive it with joy, but they have no root. They believe for a season, but in the time of testing, they fall away.

The seeds that fell among the thorns are those who hear, but as they go on their way, they are choked by the worries, riches, and pleasures of this life, and their fruit does not mature.

But the seeds on good soil are those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, cling to it, and by persevering produce a crop.

No one lights a lamp and covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he sets it on a stand, so those who enter can see the light. For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be made known and brought to light.

Pay attention, therefore, to how you listen. Whoever has will be given more, but whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken away from him."

Then Jesus' mother and brothers came to see Him, but they were unable to reach Him because of the crowd. He was told, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see You."

But He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear the word of God and carry it out."

One day Jesus said to His disciples, "Let us cross to the other side of the lake." So He got into a boat with them and set out.

As they sailed, He fell asleep, and a windstorm came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. The disciples went and woke Him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!"

Then Jesus arose and rebuked the wind and the raging waters, and they subsided, and all was calm. "Where is your faith?" He asked.

Frightened and amazed, they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him!"

Then they sailed to the region of the Gadarenes, across the lake from Galilee. When Jesus stepped ashore, He was met by a man from the town who had been demon-possessed for a long time. This man had not worn clothing or lived in a house, but he stayed in the tombs.

When the man saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before Him, shouting in a loud voice, "What do You want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You not to torture me!" For Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was bound with chains and shackles, he had broken the chains and been driven by the demon into solitary places.

"What is your name?" Jesus asked.

"Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. And he kept begging Jesus not to order them to go into the Abyss.

There on the hillside a large herd of pigs was feeding. So the demons begged Jesus to let them enter the pigs, and He gave them permission.

Then the demons came out of the man and went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside. So the people went out to see what had happened. They came to Jesus and found the man whom the demons had left, sitting at Jesus' feet, clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Meanwhile, those who had seen it reported how the demon-possessed man had been healed.

Then all the people of the region of the Gadarenes asked Jesus to depart from them, because great fear had taken hold of them. So He got into the boat and started back.

The man whom the demons had left begged to go with Jesus. But Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return home and describe how much God has done for you." So the man went away and proclaimed all over the town how much Jesus had done for him.

When Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed Him, for they had all been waiting for Him. Just then a synagogue leader named Jairus came and fell at Jesus' feet. He begged Him to come to his house, because his only daughter, who was about twelve, was dying.

As Jesus went with him, the crowds pressed around Him, including a woman who had suffered from bleeding for twelve years. She had spent all her money on physicians, but no one was able to heal her. She came up behind Jesus and touched the fringe of His cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

"Who touched Me?" Jesus asked.

But they all denied it. "Master," said Peter and those with him, "the people are crowding and pressing against You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'"

But Jesus declared, "Someone touched Me, for I know that power has gone out from Me."

Then the woman, seeing that she could not escape notice, came trembling and fell down before Him. In the presence of all the people, she explained why she had touched Him and how she had immediately been healed.

"Take courage, daughter," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you. Go in peace."

While He was still speaking, someone arrived from the house of the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," he told Jairus. "Do not bother the Teacher."

But Jesus overheard them and said to Jairus, "Do not be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."

When He entered the house, He did not allow anyone to go in except Peter, John, James, and the child's father and mother. Meanwhile, everyone was weeping and mourning for her. But Jesus said, "Stop weeping; she is not dead but asleep." And they laughed at Him, knowing that she was dead.

But Jesus sent them all outside, took her by the hand, and called out, "Child, get up!" Her spirit returned, and at once she got up. And He directed that she be given something to eat. Her parents were astounded, but Jesus ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.

Then Jesus called the Twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and power to cure diseases. And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. "Take nothing for the journey," He told them, "no staffs, no bag, no bread, no money, no second tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that area. If anyone does not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that town, as a testimony against them."

So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.

When Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was being done by Him, he was perplexed. For some were saying that John had risen from the dead, others that

Elijah had appeared, and still others that a prophet of old had arisen.

"I beheaded John," Herod said, "but who is this man I hear such things about?" And he kept trying to see Jesus.

Then the apostles returned and reported to Jesus all that they had done. Taking them away privately, He withdrew to a deserted place of the city called Bethsaida. But the crowds found out and followed Him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and He healed those who needed healing.

As the day neared its end, the Twelve came to Jesus and said, "Dismiss the crowd so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside for lodging and provisions. For we are in a desolate place here."

But Jesus told them, "You give them something to eat."

"We have only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered, "unless we go and buy food for all these people." (There were about five thousand men.)

He told His disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of fifty each." They did so, and everyone was seated.

Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, Jesus spoke a blessing and broke them. Then He gave them to the disciples to set before the people.

They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

One day as Jesus was praying in private and the disciples were with Him, He questioned them: "Who do the crowds say I am?"

They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that a prophet of old has arisen."

"But what about you?" Jesus asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, "The Christ of God."

Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. "The Son of Man must suffer many things," He said. "He must be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and He must be killed and on the third day rise again. "

Then Jesus said to all of them, "If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.

What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, yet lose or forfeit his very self? If anyone is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But I tell you truly, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God."

About eight days after Jesus had said these things, He took with Him Peter, John, and James, and went up on a mountain to pray. And as He was praying, the appearance of His face changed, and His clothes became radiantly white. Suddenly two men, Moses and Elijah, began talking with Jesus. They appeared in glory and spoke about His departure, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Meanwhile Peter and his companions were overcome by sleep, but when they awoke, they saw Jesus' glory and the two men standing with Him. As Moses and Elijah were leaving, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."(He did not know what he was saying.)

While Peter was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Listen to Him!"

After the voice had spoken, only Jesus was present with them. The disciples kept this to themselves, and in those days they did not tell anyone what they had seen.

The next day, when they came down from the mountain, Jesus was met by a large crowd. Suddenly a man in the crowd cried out, "Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only child. A spirit keeps seizing him, and he screams abruptly. It throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It keeps mauling him and rarely departs from him. I begged Your disciples to drive it out, but they were unable."

"O unbelieving and perverse generation!" Jesus replied. "How long must I remain with you and put up with you? Bring your son here."

Even while the boy was approaching, the demon slammed him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father.

And they were all astonished at the greatness of God.

While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus had done, He said to His disciples, "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men." But they did not understand this statement. It was veiled from them so that they could not comprehend it, and they were afraid to ask Him about it.

Then an argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. But Jesus, seeing the thoughts of their hearts, had a little child stand beside Him. And He said to them, "Whoever welcomes this little child in My name welcomes Me, and whoever welcomes Me welcomes the One who sent Me. For whoever is the least among all of you, he will be the greatest."

"Master," said John, "we saw someone driving out demons in Your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not accompany us."

"Do not stop him," Jesus replied, "for whoever is not against us is for us. "

As the day of His ascension approached, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. He sent messengers on ahead, who went into a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him. But the people there refused to welcome Him, because He was heading for Jerusalem.

When His disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do You want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them, just as Elijah did?"

But Jesus turned and rebuked them and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy the lives of men, but

to save them." And He and His disciples went on to another village.

As they were walking along the road, someone said to Jesus, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go."

Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head."

Then He said to another man, "Follow Me."

The man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

But Jesus told him, "Let the dead bury their own dead. You, however, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Still another said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first let me bid farewell to my family."

Then Jesus declared, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and then looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

After this, the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them two by two ahead of Him to every town and place He was about to visit. Therefore He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest.

Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Carry no purse or bag or sandals. Do not greet anyone along the road.

Whatever house you enter, begin by saying, 'Peace to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. Stay at the same house, eating and drinking whatever you are offered. For the worker is worthy of his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

If you enter a town and they welcome you, eat whatever is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'

But if you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go into the streets and declare, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to us, we wipe off as a testimony against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near to you. ' I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you.

And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades!

Whoever listens to you listens to Me; whoever rejects you rejects Me; and whoever rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."

The seventy returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name."

So He told them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I am giving you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. Nothing will harm you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

At that time Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and declared, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was well-pleasing in Your sight."

And turning to the disciples, He said,"All things have been entrusted to Me by My Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him."

Then Jesus turned to the disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."

One day an expert in the law stood up to test Him. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

"What is written in the Law?" Jesus replied. "How do you read it?"

He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind' and 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

"You have answered correctly," Jesus said. "Do this and you will live."

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Jesus took up this question and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.

Now by chance a priest was going down the same road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

So too, when a Levite came to that spot and saw him, he passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan on a journey came upon him, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

The next day when he departed he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Take care of him,' he said, 'and on my return I will repay you for any additional expense.'

So which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

"The one who showed him mercy," replied the expert in the law.

Then Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

As they traveled along, Jesus entered a village where a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet listening to His message. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations to be made. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," Jesus replied, "you are worried and troubled about many things. But only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, and it will not be taken away from her."

One day in a place where Jesus had just finished praying, one of His disciples requested, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

So Jesus told them, "When you pray, say:

‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on
earth as it is in heaven. Give us each day our
daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also
forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead
us not into temptation, but deliver us from the
evil one. ’”

Then Jesus said to them, “Suppose one of you goes to his friend at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend has come to me on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him.’

And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Do not bother me. My door is already shut, and my children and I are in bed. I cannot get up to give you anything.’

I tell you, even though he will not get up to provide for him because of his friendship, yet because of the man’s persistence, he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

So I tell you: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

What father among you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? So if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”

One day Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. And when the demon was gone, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowds were amazed, but some of them said, “It is by Beelzebul, the prince of the demons, that He drives out demons.” And others tested Him by demanding a sign from heaven.

Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste, and a house divided against a house will fall. If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? After all, you say that I drive out demons by Beelzebul. And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

When a strong man, fully armed, guards his house, his possessions are secure. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted, and then he divides up his plunder.

He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

When an unclean spirit comes out of a man, it passes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ On its return, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go and dwell there. And the final plight of that man is worse than the first.”

As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said, “Blessed is the womb that bore You, and blessed are the breasts that nursed You!”

But He replied, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”

As the crowds were increasing, Jesus said, “This is a wicked generation. It seeks a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so the Son of Man will be a sign to this generation.

The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and now One greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will stand at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now One greater than Jonah is here.

No one lights a lamp and puts it in a cellar or under a basket. Instead, he sets it on a stand, so those who enter can see the light.

The eye is the lamp of the body. So when your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body is full of darkness. Be careful, then, that the light within you is not darkness. So if your whole body is full of light, with no part of it in darkness, you will be radiant, as though a lamp were shining on you.”

As Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee invited Him to dine with him; so He went in and reclined at the table. But the Pharisee was surprised to see that Jesus did not first wash before the meal.

Then the Lord said, “Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You fools! Did not the One who made the outside make the inside as well? But give as alms the things that are within you, and behold, everything will be clean for you.

Woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithes of mint, rue, and every herb, but you disregard justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former.

Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and the greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! For you are like unmarked graves, which men walk over without even noticing.”

One of the experts in the law told Him, “Teacher, when You say these things, You insult us as well.”

“Woe to you as well, experts in the law!” He replied. “For you weigh men down with heavy burdens, but you yourselves will not lift a finger to lighten their load.

Woe to you! For you build tombs for the prophets, but it was your fathers who killed them. So you bear witness and consent to the deeds of your fathers: They killed the prophets, and you build their tombs. Because of this, the wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles; some of them they will kill and others they will persecute.’

As a result, this generation will be charged with the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the foundation of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, all of it will be charged to this generation.

Woe to you experts in the law! For you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not

entered, and you have hindered those who were entering."

As Jesus said these things to them, the scribes and Pharisees began to oppose Him bitterly and to ply Him with questions about many things, lying in wait for Him and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, so that they might accuse Him.

In the meantime, a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling one another. Jesus began to speak first to His disciples: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, and nothing hidden that will not be made known. What you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the housetops.

I tell you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear the One who, after you have been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him!

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

I tell you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will also confess him before the angels of God. But whoever denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

When you are brought before synagogues, rulers, and authorities, do not worry about how to defend yourselves or what to say. For at that time the Holy Spirit will teach you what you should say."

Someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

But Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed Me judge or executor between you?" And He said to them, "Watch out! Guard yourselves against greed, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Then He told them a parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced an abundance. So he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, since I have nowhere to store my crops?' Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and will build bigger ones, and there I will store up all my crops and my goods. Then I will say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take it easy. Eat, drink, and be merry!"'

But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be required of you. Then who will own what you have accumulated?'

This is how it will be for anyone who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich toward God."

Then Jesus said to His disciples,"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storehouse or barn; yet God feeds them. How much more valuable you are than the birds!

Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? So if you cannot do such a small thing, why do you worry about the rest?

Consider how the lilies grow: They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory was adorned like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith!

And do not be concerned about what you will eat or drink. Do not worry about it. For the Gentiles of the world strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added unto you.

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide yourselves with purses that will not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Be dressed for service and keep your lamps burning. Then you will be like servants waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks, they can open the door for him at once. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds on watch when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve and will have them recline at the table, and he himself will come and wait on them. Even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night and finds them alert, those servants will be blessed.

But understand this: If the homeowner had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour you do not expect."

"Lord," said Peter, "are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?"

And the Lord answered, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their portion at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

But suppose that servant says in his heart, 'My master will be a long time in coming,' and he begins to beat the menservants and maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk. The master of that servant will come on a day he does not expect and at an hour he does not anticipate. Then he will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

That servant who knows his master's will but does not get ready or follow his instructions will be beaten with many blows. But the one who unknowingly does things worthy of punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and from him who has been entrusted with much, even more will be demanded.

I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!

Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on, five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law. "

Then Jesus said to the crowds, "As soon as you see a cloud rising from the west, you say, 'A shower is coming,' and that is what happens. And when the south wind blows, you say, 'It will be hot,' and it is. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and sky. Why can't you interpret the present time?

And why don't you judge for yourselves what is right? Make every effort to reconcile with your adversary while you are on your way to the magistrate. Otherwise, he may drag you off to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and the officer may throw you into prison. I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the very last penny. "

At that time some of those present told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. To this Jesus replied,"Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered this way? No, I tell you. But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam collapsed on them: Do you think that they were more sinful than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you. But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

Then Jesus told this parable: "A man had a fig tree that was planted in his vineyard. He went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. So he said to the keeper of the vineyard, 'Look, for the past three years I have come to search for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'

'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone again this year, until I dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit, fine. But if not, you can cut it down next year. '"

One Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman there had been disabled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was hunched over and could not stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your disability." Then He placed His hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and began to glorify God.

But the synagogue leader was indignant that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath. "There are six days for work," he told the crowd. "So come and be healed on those days and not on the Sabbath."

"You hypocrites!" the Lord replied. "Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it to water? Then should not this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be released from her bondage on the Sabbath day?"

When Jesus said this, all His adversaries were humiliated. And the whole crowd rejoiced at all the glorious things He was doing.

Then Jesus asked, "What is the kingdom of God like? To what can I compare it? It is like a mustard seed that a man tossed into his garden. It grew and became a great tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches."

Again He asked, "To what can I compare the kingdom of God? It is like leaven that a woman took and mixed into three measures of flour, until all of it was leavened."

Then Jesus traveled throughout the towns and villages, teaching as He made His way toward Jerusalem. "Lord," someone asked Him, "will only a few people be saved?"

Jesus answered, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow gate. For many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able. After the master of the house gets up and shuts the door, you will stand outside knocking and saying, 'Lord, Lord, open the door for us.'

But he will reply, 'I do not know where you are from.'

Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.'

And he will answer, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from. Depart from me, all you evildoers.'

There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves are thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God. And indeed, some who are last will be first, and some who are first will be last."

On that very day, some Pharisees came to Jesus and told Him, "Leave this place and get away, because Herod wants to kill You."

But Jesus replied, "Go tell that fox, 'Look, I will keep driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach My goal.' Nevertheless, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day, for it is not admissible for a prophet to perish outside of Jerusalem.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those sent to her, how often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were unwilling! Look, your house is left to you desolate. And I tell you that you will not see Me again until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.' "

One Sabbath, Jesus went to eat in the home of a leading Pharisee, and those in attendance were watching Him closely. Right there before Him was a man with dropsy. So Jesus asked the experts in the law and the Pharisees, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? "

But they remained silent.

Then Jesus took hold of the man, healed him, and sent him on his way. And He asked them, "Which of you whose son or ox falls into a pit on the Sabbath day will not immediately pull him out?"

And they were unable to answer these questions .

When Jesus noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, He told them a parable: "When you are invited to a wedding banquet, do not sit in the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited. Then the host who invited both of you will

come and tell you, ‘Give this man your seat.’ And in humiliation, you will have to take the last place.

But when you are invited, go and sit in the last place, so that your host will come and tell you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in front of those at the table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Then Jesus said to the man who had invited Him, “When you host a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or brothers or relatives or rich neighbors. Otherwise, they may invite you in return, and you will be repaid. But when you host a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind, and you will be blessed. Since they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

When one of those reclining with Him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is he who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.”

But Jesus replied, “A certain man prepared a great banquet and invited many guests. When it was time for the banquet, he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’

But one after another they all began to make excuses. The first one said, ‘I have bought a field, and I need to go and see it. Please excuse me.’

Another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out. Please excuse me.’

Still another said, ‘I have married a wife, so I cannot come.’

That servant returned and reported all this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the city, and bring in the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ’

‘Sir,’ the servant replied, ‘it has been done as you ordered, and there is still room.’

So the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. For I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will taste my banquet. For many are called, but few are chosen. ’”

Now large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and He turned and said to them, “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters — yes, even his own life — he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple.

Which of you, wishing to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost to see if he has the resources to complete it? Otherwise, if he lays the foundation and is unable to finish the work, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This man could not finish what he started to build.’

Or what king on his way to war with another king does not first sit down and consider whether he can engage with ten thousand men the one coming against him with twenty thousand? And if he is unable, he will send a delegation while the other king is still far off, to ask for terms of peace.

In the same way, any one of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be My disciple.

Salt is good, but if the salt loses its savor, with what will it be seasoned? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile, and it is thrown out.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were gathering around to listen to Jesus. So the Pharisees and scribes began to grumble: “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

Then Jesus told them this parable: “What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the pasture and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders, comes home, and calls together his friends and neighbors to tell them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep!’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous ones who do not need to repent.

Or what woman who has ten silver coins and loses one of them does not light a lamp, sweep her house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls together her friends and neighbors to say, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost coin.’ In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of God’s angels over one sinner who repents.”

Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. The younger son said to him, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

After a few days, the younger son got everything together and journeyed to a distant country, where he squandered his wealth in wild living.

After he had spent all he had, a severe famine swept through that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. He longed to fill his belly with the pods the pigs were eating, but no one would give him a thing .

Finally he came to his senses and said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have plenty of food, but I am starving to death! I will get up and go back to my father and say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.”’

So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still in the distance, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him.

The son declared, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. ’

But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let us feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again! He was lost and is found!’ So they began to celebrate.

Meanwhile the older son was in the field, and as he approached the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what was going on.

‘Your brother has returned,’ he said, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has him back safe and sound.’

The older son became angry and refused to go in. So his father came out and pleaded with him.

But he answered his father, ‘Look, all these years I have served you and never disobeyed a commandment of yours. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours returns from squandering your wealth with prostitutes, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

‘Son, you are always with me,’ the father said, ‘and all that is mine is yours. But it was fitting to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

Jesus also said to His disciples,“There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. So he called him in to ask, ‘What is this I hear about you? Turn in an account of your management, for you cannot be manager any longer.’

The manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do, now that my master is taking away my position? I am too weak to dig and too ashamed to beg. I know what I will do so that after my removal from management, people will welcome me into their homes.’

And he called in each one of his master’s debtors. ‘How much do you owe my master?’ he asked the first.

‘A hundred measures of olive oil,’ he answered.

‘Take your bill,’ said the manager, ‘sit down quickly, and write fifty.’

Then he asked another, ‘And how much do you owe?’

‘A hundred measures of wheat,’ he replied.

‘Take your bill and write eighty,’ he told him.

The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the sons of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the sons of light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to make friends for yourselves so that when you fail, they will welcome you into eternal dwellings.

Whoever is faithful with very little will also be faithful with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been faithful with worldly wealth, who will entrust you with true riches? And if you have not been faithful with the belongings of another, who will give you belongings of your own?

No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all of this and were scoffing at Jesus. So He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is prized among men is detestable before God.

The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the gospel of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for a single stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law.

Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and everyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Now there was a rich man dressed in purple and fine linen, who lived each day in joyous splendor. And a beggar named Lazarus lay at his gate, covered with sores and longing to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

One day the beggar died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. And the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham from afar, with Lazarus by his side.

So he cried out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. For I am in agony in this fire.’

But Abraham answered, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things. But now he is comforted here, while you are in agony. And besides all this, a great chasm has been fixed between us and you, so that even those who wish cannot cross from here to you, nor can anyone cross from there to us.’

‘Then I beg you, father,’ he said, ‘send Lazarus to my father’s house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also end up in this place of torment.’

But Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let your brothers listen to them.’

‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone is sent to them from the dead, they will repent.’

Then Abraham said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’”

Jesus said to the disciples,“It is inevitable that stumbling blocks will come, but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be thrown into the sea than to cause one of these little ones to stumble.

Watch yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. Even if he sins against you seven times in a day, and returns seven times in that day to say, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”

The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”

And the Lord answered, “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.

Which of you whose servant comes in from plowing or shepherding in the field will say, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat’? Instead, won’t he tell him, ‘Prepare my meal and dress yourself to serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you may eat and drink’? Does he thank the servant because he did what he was told? I think not. So you also, when you have done everything commanded of you, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’”

While Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. As He entered one of the villages, He was met by ten lepers. They stood at a distance and raised their voices, shouting, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

When Jesus saw them, He said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they were on their way, they were cleansed.

When one of them saw that he was healed, he came back, praising God in a loud voice. He fell facedown at Jesus' feet in thanksgiving to Him — and he was a Samaritan.

"Were not all ten cleansed?" Jesus asked. "Where then are the other nine? Was no one found except this foreigner to return and give glory to God?"

Then Jesus said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well! "

When asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God will not come with observable signs. Nor will people say, 'Look, here it is,' or 'There it is.' For you see, the kingdom of God is in your midst. "

Then He said to the disciples, "The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. People will tell you, 'Look, there He is!' or 'Look, here He is!' Do not go out or chase after them. For just as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other, so will be the Son of Man in His day. But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man: People were eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.

It was the same in the days of Lot: People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But on the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

It will be just like that on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day, let no one on the housetop come down to retrieve his possessions. Likewise, let no one in the field return for anything he has left behind. Remember Lot's wife! Whoever tries to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together: one will be taken and the other left."

"Where, Lord?" they asked.

Jesus answered, "Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather."

Then Jesus told them a parable about the need to pray at all times and not lose heart: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected men. And there was a widow in that town who kept appealing to him, 'Give me justice against my adversary.'

For a while he refused, but later he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect men, yet because this widow keeps pestering me, I will give her justice. Otherwise, she will wear me out with her perpetual requests.'"

And the Lord said, "Listen to the words of the unjust judge. Will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry out to Him day and night? Will He delay in helping them? I tell you, He will promptly carry out justice on their behalf. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?"

To some who trusted in their own righteousness and viewed others with contempt, He also told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men — swindlers, evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and pay tithes of all that I acquire.'

But the tax collector stood at a distance, unwilling even to lift up his eyes to heaven. Instead, he beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man, rather than the Pharisee, went home justified. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

Now people were even bringing their babies to Jesus for Him to place His hands on them. And when the disciples saw this, they rebuked those who brought them.

But Jesus called the children to Him and said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them! For the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

Then a certain ruler asked Him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

"Why do you call Me good?" Jesus replied. "No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother.' "

"All these I have kept from my youth," he said.

On hearing this, Jesus told him, "You still lack one thing: Sell everything you own and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me."

But when the ruler heard this, he became very sad, because he was extremely wealthy.

Seeing the man's sadness, Jesus said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?"

But Jesus said, "What is impossible with man is possible with God."

"Look," said Peter, "we have left all we had to follow You."

"Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or parents or brothers or wife or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times more in this age — and in the age to come, eternal life."

Then Jesus took the Twelve aside and said to them, "Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything the prophets have written about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will flog Him and kill Him, and on the third day He will rise again."

But the disciples did not understand any of these things. The meaning was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend what He was saying.

As Jesus drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting beside the road, begging. When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening.

"Jesus of Nazareth is passing by," they told him.

So he called out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Those who led the way admonished him to be silent, but he cried out all the louder, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Jesus stopped and directed that the man be brought to Him. When he had come near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

“Lord,” he said, “let me see again.”

“Receive your sight!” Jesus replied. “Your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

Then Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man named Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, who was very wealthy. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but could not see over the crowd because he was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see Him, since Jesus was about to pass that way.

When Jesus came to that place, He looked up and saw him and said, “Zacchaeus, hurry down, for I must stay at your house today.”

So Zacchaeus hurried down and welcomed Him joyfully. And all who saw this began to grumble, saying, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinful man!”

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, half of my possessions I give to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will repay it fourfold.”

Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

While the people were listening to this, Jesus proceeded to tell them a parable, because He was near Jerusalem and they thought the kingdom of God would appear imminently. So He said, “A man of noble birth went to a distant country to lay claim to his kingship and then return. Beforehand, he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Conduct business with this until I return,’ he said.

But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We do not want this man to rule over us.’

When he returned from procuring his kingship, he summoned the servants to whom he had given the money, to find out what each one had earned.

The first servant came forward and said, ‘Master, your mina has produced ten more minas.’

His master replied, ‘Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very small matter, you shall have authority over ten cities.’

The second servant came and said, ‘Master, your mina has made five minas.’

And to this one he said, ‘You shall have authority over five cities.’

Then another servant came and said, ‘Master, here is your mina, which I have laid away in a piece of cloth. For I was afraid of you, because you are a harsh man. You withdraw what you did not deposit and reap what you did not sow. ’

His master replied, ‘You wicked servant, I will judge you by your own words. So you knew that I am a harsh man, withdrawing what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? Why then did you not deposit my money in the bank, and upon my return I could have collected it with interest?’

Then he told those standing by, ‘Take the mina from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.’

‘Master,’ they said, ‘he already has ten!’

He replied, ‘ I tell you that everyone who has will be given more; but the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. And these enemies of mine who were unwilling for me to rule over them, bring them here and slay them in front of me.’”

After Jesus had said this, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

As He approached Bethsphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, He sent out two of His disciples, saying, “Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks, ‘Why are you untying it?’ tell him, ‘The Lord needs it.’”

So those who were sent went out and found it just as Jesus had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked, “Why are you untying the colt?”

“The Lord needs it,” they answered. Then they led the colt to Jesus, threw their cloaks over it, and put Jesus on it.

As He rode along, the people spread their cloaks on the road. And as He approached the descent from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of disciples began to praise God joyfully in a loud voice for all the miracles they had seen:

> “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

But some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples!”

“I tell you,” He answered, “if they remain silent, the very stones will cry out.”

As Jesus approached Jerusalem and saw the city, He wept over it and said, “If only you, even you, had known on this day what would bring you peace! But now it is hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will barricade you and surround you and hem you in on every side. They will level you to the ground — you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God. ”

Then Jesus entered the temple courts and began to drive out those who were selling and buying there. He declared to them, “It is written: ‘My house is a house of prayer.’ But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’ ”

Jesus was teaching at the temple every day, but the chief priests, scribes, and leaders of the people were intent on killing Him. Yet they could not find a way to do so, because all the people hung on His words.

One day as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple courts and proclaiming the gospel, the priests and scribes, together with the elders, came up to Him. “Tell us,” they said, “by what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?”

“I will also ask you one question, ” Jesus replied. “Tell Me: John’s baptism — was it from heaven, or from men?”

They deliberated among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will ask, ‘Why did you not believe him?’ But if we say, ‘From men,’ all the people

will stone us, for they are convinced that John was a prophet."

So they answered that they did not know where it was from.

And Jesus replied, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

Then He proceeded to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, rented it out to some tenants, and went away for a long time. At harvest time, he sent a servant to the tenants to collect his share of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat the servant and sent him away empty-handed.

So he sent another servant, but they beat him and treated him shamefully, sending him away empty-handed.

Then he sent a third, but they wounded him and threw him out.

'What shall I do?' asked the owner of the vineyard. 'I will send my beloved son. Perhaps they will respect him when they see him. '

But when the tenants saw the son, they discussed it among themselves and said, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others."

And when the people heard this, they said, "May such a thing never happen!"

But Jesus looked directly at them and said, "Then what is the meaning of that which is written:

> 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone' ?

Everyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."

When the chief priests and scribes realized that Jesus had spoken this parable against them, they sought to arrest Him that very hour. But they were afraid.

So they watched Him closely and sent spies who pretended to be sincere. They were hoping to catch Him in His words in order to hand Him over to the rule and authority of the governor. "Teacher," they inquired, "we know that You speak and teach correctly. You show no partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

But Jesus saw through their duplicity and said to them, "Why do you test Me? Show Me a denarius. Whose image and inscription are on it?"

"Caesar's," they answered.

So Jesus told them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

And they were unable to trap Him in His words before the people. And amazed at His answer, they fell silent.

Then some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to question Him. "Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man is to marry his brother's widow and raise up offspring for him. Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a wife but died childless. Then the second took her as wife, and he died childless. And the third married the widow, and in the same way all seven died, leaving no children. And last of all, the woman died. So then, in the resurrection, whose wife will she be? For all seven were married to her."

Jesus answered, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy to share in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage. In fact, they can no longer die, because they are like the angels. And since they are sons of the resurrection, they are sons of God.

Even Moses demonstrates that the dead are raised, in the passage about the burning bush. For he calls the Lord 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to Him all are alive."

Some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, You have spoken well!" And they did not dare to question Him any further.

Then Jesus declared, "How can it be said that the Christ is the Son of David? For David himself says in the book of Psalms:

> 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."'

Thus David calls Him 'Lord.' So how can He be David's son?"

In the hearing of all the people, Jesus said to His disciples, "Beware of the scribes. They like to walk around in long robes, and they love the greetings in the marketplaces, the chief seats in the synagogues, and the places of honor at banquets. They defraud widows of their houses, and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will receive greater condemnation."

Then Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and He saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins.

"Truly I tell you," He said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. For they all contributed to God out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on."

As some of the disciples were remarking how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and consecrated gifts, Jesus said, "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

"Teacher," they asked, "when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?"

Jesus answered, "See to it that you are not deceived. For many will come in My name, claiming, 'I am He,' and, 'The time is near.' Therefore do not follow them. When you hear of wars and rebellions, do not be alarmed. These things must happen first, but the end is not imminent."

Then He told them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes in various places, famines and pestilences, along with fearful sights and great signs from heaven.

But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. On account of My name they will deliver you to the synagogues and prisons, and they will bring you before kings and governors. This will be your opportunity to serve as witnesses. So make up your mind not to worry beforehand how to defend yourselves. For I will give

you speech and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to contradict or resist.

You will be betrayed even by parents and relatives and friends and brothers, and some of you will be put to death. And you will be hated by everyone because of My name. Yet not even a hair of your head will perish. By your patient endurance you will gain your souls.

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, you will know that her desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country stay out of the city. For these are the days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written.

How miserable those days will be for pregnant and nursing mothers! For there will be great distress upon the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive into all the nations. And Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among the nations, bewildered by the roaring of the sea and the surging of the waves. Men will faint from fear and anxiety over what is coming upon the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to happen, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

Then Jesus told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.

But watch yourselves, or your hearts will be weighed down by dissipation, drunkenness, and the worries of life — and that day will spring upon you suddenly like a snare. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of all the earth. So keep watch at all times, and pray that you may be deemed worthy to escape all that is about to happen and to stand before the Son of Man."

Every day Jesus taught at the temple, but every evening He went out to spend the night on the Mount of Olives. And early in the morning all the people would come to hear Him at the temple.

Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, and the chief priests and scribes were looking for a way to put Jesus to death, for they feared the people.

Then Satan entered Judas Iscariot, who was one of the Twelve. And Judas went to discuss with the chief priests and temple officers how he might betray Jesus to them. They were delighted and agreed to give him money. Judas consented, and began to look for an opportunity to betray Jesus to them in the absence of a crowd.

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb was to be sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover."

"Where do You want us to prepare it?" they asked.

He answered, "When you enter the city, a man carrying a jug of water will meet you. Follow him to the house he enters, and say to the owner of that house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?' And he will show you a large upper room, already furnished. Make preparations there."

So they went and found it just as Jesus had told them. And they prepared the Passover.

When the hour had come, Jesus reclined at the table with His twelve apostles. And He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before My suffering. For I tell you that I will not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

After taking the cup, He gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

And He took the bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body, given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you.

Look! The hand of My betrayer is with Mine on the table. Indeed, the Son of Man will go as it has been determined, but woe to that man who betrays Him."

Then they began to question among themselves which of them was going to do this.

A dispute also arose among the disciples as to which of them should be considered the greatest. So Jesus declared, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in authority over them call themselves benefactors. But you shall not be like them. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who leads like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines? But I am among you as one who serves.

You are the ones who have stood by Me in My trials. And I bestow on you a kingdom, just as My Father has bestowed one on Me, so that you may eat and drink at My table and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

And the Lord said,"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you like wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon , that your faith will not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

"Lord," said Peter, "I am ready to go with You even to prison and to death."

But Jesus replied, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will certainly not crow today before you have denied three times that you know Me."

Then Jesus asked them, "When I sent you out without purse or bag or sandals, did you lack anything?"

"Nothing," they answered.

"Now, however," He told them, "the one with a purse should take it, and likewise a bag; and the one without a sword should sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you that this Scripture must yet be fulfilled in Me: 'And He was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about Me is reaching its fulfillment."

So they said, "Look, Lord, here are two swords."

"That is enough," He answered.

Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and His disciples followed Him. When He came to the place, He told them, "Pray that you will not enter into temptation."

And He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, where He knelt down and prayed, "Father, if You are willing, take this cup from Me. Yet not My will, but Yours be done."

Then an angel from heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him. And in His anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground.

When Jesus rose from prayer and returned to the disciples, He found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. "Why are you sleeping?" He asked. "Get up and pray so that you will not enter into temptation."

While He was still speaking, a crowd arrived, led by the man called Judas, one of the Twelve. He approached Jesus to kiss Him. But Jesus asked him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"

Those around Jesus saw what was about to happen and said to Him, "Lord, should we strike with our swords?" And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear.

But Jesus answered, "No more of this!" And He touched the man's ear and healed him.

Then Jesus said to the chief priests, temple officers, and elders who had come for Him, "Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against an outlaw? Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on Me. But this hour belongs to you and to the power of darkness."

Then they seized Jesus, led Him away, and took Him into the house of the high priest. And Peter followed at a distance.

When those present had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. A servant girl saw him seated in the firelight and looked intently at him. "This man also was with Him," she said.

But Peter denied Him. "Woman, I do not know Him," he said.

A short time later, someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them."

But Peter said, "Man, I am not."

About an hour later, another man insisted, "Certainly this man was with Him, for he too is a Galilean."

"Man, I do not know what you are talking about," Peter replied.

And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter.

Then Peter remembered the word that the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." And Peter went outside and wept bitterly.

The men who were holding Jesus began to mock Him and beat Him. They blindfolded Him and kept striking Him in the face and demanding, "Prophesy! Who hit You?" And they said many other blasphemous things against Him.

At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and scribes, met together. They led Jesus into their Sanhedrin and said, "If You are the Christ, tell us."

Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe. And if I ask you a question, you will not answer Me nor release Me. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God."

So they all asked, "Are You then the Son of God?"

He replied, "You say that I am."

"Why do we need any more testimony?" they declared. "We have heard it for ourselves from His own lips."

Then the whole council rose and led Jesus away to Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man subverting the nation, forbidding payment of taxes to Caesar, and proclaiming Himself to be Christ, a King."

So Pilate asked Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?"

"You have said so," Jesus replied.

Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."

But they kept insisting, "He stirs up the people all over Judea with His teaching. He began in Galilee and has come all the way here."

When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the man was a Galilean. And learning that Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself was in Jerusalem at that time.

When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased. He had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had heard many things about Him and was hoping to see Him perform a miracle. Herod questioned Jesus at great length, but He gave no answer.

Meanwhile, the chief priests and scribes stood there, vehemently accusing Him. And even Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked Him. Dressing Him in a fine robe, they sent Him back to Pilate.

That day Pilate and Herod became friends; before this time they had been enemies.

Then Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined Him here in your presence and found Him not guilty of your charges against Him. Neither has Herod, for I sent you back to him. As you can see, He has done nothing deserving of death. Therefore I will punish Him and release Him."

Now Pilate was obliged to release to the people one prisoner at the feast. But they all cried out in unison: "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!" (Barabbas had been imprisoned for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.)

Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate addressed them again, but they kept shouting, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

A third time he said to them, "What evil has this man done? I have found in Him no offense worthy of death. So after I punish Him, I will release Him."

But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices for Jesus to be crucified. And their clamor and that of the chief priests prevailed. So Pilate sentenced that their demand be met. As they had requested, he released the one imprisoned for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over to their will.

As the soldiers led Him away, they seized Simon of Cyrene on his way in from the country, and they put the cross on him to carry behind Jesus.

A great number of people followed Him, including women who kept mourning and wailing for Him. But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. Look, the days are coming when people will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore, and breasts that never nursed!' At that time

> 'they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!"
> and to the hills, "Cover us!"'

For if men do these things while the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Two others, who were criminals, were also led away to be executed with Jesus.

When they came to the place called The Skull, they crucified Him there, along with the criminals, one on His right and the other on His left.

Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up His garments by casting lots.

The people stood watching, and the rulers with them sneered at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the Chosen One of God."

The soldiers also mocked Him and came up to offer Him sour wine. "If You are the King of the Jews," they said, "save Yourself!"

Above Him was posted an inscription written in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew:

> THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

One of the criminals who hung there heaped abuse on Him. "If You are the Christ," he said, "save Yourself and us!"

But the other one rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same judgment? We are punished justly, for we are receiving what our actions deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!"

And Jesus said to him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over all the land until the ninth hour. The sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn down the middle.

Then Jesus called out in a loud voice, "Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit." And when He had said this, He breathed His last.

When the centurion saw what had happened, he gave glory to God, saying, "Surely this was a righteous man." And when all the people who had gathered for this spectacle saw what had happened, they returned home beating their breasts. But all those who knew Jesus, including the women who had followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance watching these things.

Now there was a Council member named Joseph, a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their decision or action. He was from the Judean town of Arimathea and himself was waiting for the kingdom of God. He went to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and placed it in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had yet been laid. It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was beginning.

The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how His body was placed. Then they returned to prepare spices and perfumes. And they rested on the Sabbath, according to the commandment.

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they and certain other women with them came to the tomb, bringing the spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were puzzling over this, suddenly two men in radiant apparel stood beside them.

As the women bowed their faces to the ground in terror, the two men asked them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen! Remember how He told you while He was still in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.'"

Then they remembered His words. And when they returned from the tomb, they reported all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But their words seemed like nonsense to them, and they did not believe the women.

Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. And after bending down and seeing only the linen cloths lying there, he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

That same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. And as they talked and deliberated, Jesus Himself came up and walked along with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing Him.

He asked them, "What are you discussing so intently as you walk along with sadness on your faces?"

The one named Cleopas asked Him, "Are You the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in recent days?"

"What things?" He asked.

"The events involving Jesus of Nazareth," they answered. "This man was a prophet, powerful in speech and action before God and all the people. Our chief priests and rulers delivered Him up to the sentence of death, and they crucified Him. But we were hoping He was the One who would redeem Israel. And besides all this, today is the third day since these things took place.

Furthermore, some of our women astounded us. They were at the tomb early, but they did not find His body. They came and told us they had seen a vision of angels, who said that Jesus was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had described. But Him they did not see."

Then Jesus said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and then to enter His glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was written in all the Scriptures about Himself.

As they approached the village where they were headed, He seemed to be going farther. But they pleaded with Him, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.”

So He went in to stay with them. While He was reclining at the table with them, He took bread, spoke a blessing and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus — and He disappeared from their sight.

They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us as He spoke with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem.

There they found the Eleven and those with them, gathered together and saying, “The Lord has indeed risen and has appeared to Simon!”

Then the two told what had happened on the road, and how they had recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

While they were describing these events, Jesus Himself stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” But they were startled and frightened, thinking they had seen a spirit.

“Why are you troubled,” Jesus asked, “and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at My hands and My feet. It is I Myself. Touch Me and see — for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and feet.

While they were still in disbelief because of their joy and amazement, He asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” So they gave Him a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb, and He took them and ate them in front of them.

Jesus said to them, “These are the words I spoke to you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.” Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.

And He told them, “This is what is written: And thus it is necessary that the Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and in His name repentance and forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

And behold, I am sending the promise of My Father upon you. But remain in the city of Jerusalem until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

When Jesus had led them out as far as Bethany, He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He left them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, praising and blessing God continually in the temple.

John

The Gospel According to John

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made, and without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There came a man who was sent from God. His name was John. He came as a witness to testify about the Light, so that through him everyone might believe. He himself was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.

The true Light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God — children born not of blood, nor of the desire or will of man, but born of God.

The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John testified concerning Him. He cried out, saying, "This is He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because He was before me.'"

From His fullness we have all received grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is at the Father's side, has made Him known.

And this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, "Who are you?" He did not refuse to confess, but openly declared, "I am not the Christ."

"Then who are you?" they inquired. "Are you Elijah?"

He said, "I am not."

"Are you the Prophet?"

He answered, "No."

So they said to him, "Who are you? We need an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet:

> "I am a voice of one calling in the wilderness,
> 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"

Then those whom the Pharisees had sent asked him, "Why then do you baptize, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

"I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands One you do not know. He is the One who comes after me, who is preferred before me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."

All this happened at Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because He was before me.' I myself did not know Him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that He might be revealed to Israel."

Then John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove and resting on Him. I myself did not know Him, but the One who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit descend and rest is He who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus walking by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" And when the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.

Jesus turned and saw them following. "What do you want?" He asked.

They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are You staying?"

"Come and see," He replied. So they went and saw where He was staying, and spent that day with Him. It was about the tenth hour.

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard John's testimony and followed Jesus. He first found his brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated as Christ).

Andrew brought him to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of Jonah. You will be called Cephas" (which is translated as Peter).

The next day Jesus decided to set out for Galilee. Finding Philip, He told him, "Follow Me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the same town as Andrew and Peter.

Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the One Moses wrote about in the Law, the One the prophets foretold — Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

"Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Nathanael asked.

"Come and see," said Philip.

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, He said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is no deceit."

"How do You know me?" Nathanael asked.

Jesus replied, "Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree."

"Rabbi," Nathanael answered, "You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

Jesus said to him, "Do you believe just because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree'? You will see greater things than these." Then He declared, "Truly, truly, I tell you, from now on you will all see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and His disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine ran out, Jesus' mother said to Him, "They have no more wine."

"Woman, what is that to you and to Me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever He tells you.”

Now six stone water jars had been set there for the Jewish rites of purification. Each could hold from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told the servants, “Fill the jars with water.”

So they filled them to the brim.

“Now draw some out,” He said, “and take it to the master of the banquet.”

They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not know where it was from, but the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, “Everyone serves the fine wine first, and then the cheap wine after the guests are drunk. But you have saved the fine wine until now!”

Jesus performed this, the first of His signs, at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

After this, He went down to Capernaum with His mother and brothers and His disciples, and they stayed there a few days.

When the Jewish Passover was near, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts He found men selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and money changers seated at their tables. So He made a whip out of cords and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle. He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those selling doves He said, “Get these out of here! How dare you turn My Father’s house into a marketplace!”

His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for Your house will consume Me.”

On account of this, the Jews demanded, “What sign can You show us to prove Your authority to do these things?”

Jesus answered, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again.”

“This temple took forty-six years to build,” the Jews replied, “and You are going to raise it up in three days?”

But Jesus was speaking about the temple of His body. After He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this. Then they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

While He was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the signs He was doing and believed in His name. But Jesus did not entrust Himself to them, for He knew them all. He did not need any testimony about man, for He knew what was in a man.

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs You are doing if God were not with him.”

Jesus replied, “Truly, truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. ”

“How can a man be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Can he enter his mother’s womb a second time to be born?”

Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh is born of flesh, but spirit is born of the Spirit. Do not be amazed that I said, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes. You hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

“How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

“You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and you do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, and yet you people do not accept our testimony.

If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the One who descended from heaven— the Son of Man, who is in heaven. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.

And this is the verdict: The Light has come into the world, but men loved the darkness rather than the Light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come into the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever practices the truth comes into the Light, so that it may be seen clearly that what he has done has been accomplished in God.”

After this, Jesus and His disciples went into the Judean countryside, where He spent some time with them and baptized.

Now John was also baptizing at Aenon near Salem, because the water was plentiful there, and people kept coming to be baptized. (For John had not yet been thrown into prison.)

Then a dispute arose between John’s disciples and a certain Jew over the issue of ceremonial washing. So John’s disciples came to him and said, “Look, Rabbi, the One who was with you beyond the Jordan, the One you testified about — He is baptizing, and everyone is going to Him.”

John replied, “A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Christ, but am sent ahead of Him.’ The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom stands and listens for him, and is overjoyed to hear the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must increase; I must decrease.

The One who comes from above is above all. The one who is from the earth belongs to the earth and speaks as one from the earth. The One who comes from heaven is above all. He testifies to what He has seen and heard, yet no one accepts His testimony. Whoever accepts His testimony has certified that God is truthful. For the One whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit.

The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in His hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal

life. Whoever rejects the Son will not see life. Instead, the wrath of God remains on him."

When the Lord realized that the Pharisees were aware that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John (although it was not Jesus who baptized, but His disciples), He left Judea and went away to Galilee.

Now He had to pass through Samaria. So He came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Since Jacob's well was there, Jesus, weary from His journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

"You are a Jew," said the woman. "How can You ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered, "If you knew the gift of God and who is asking you for a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

"Sir," the woman replied, "You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where then will You get this living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock?"

Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a fount of water springing up to eternal life."

The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water so that I will not get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

Jesus told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

"I have no husband," the woman replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are correct to say that you have no husband. In fact, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. You have spoken truthfully."

"Sir," the woman said, "I see that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say that the place where one must worship is in Jerusalem."

"Believe Me, woman," Jesus replied, "a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. But a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such as these to worship Him. God is Spirit, and His worshipers must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

The woman said, "I know that Messiah"(called Christ) "is coming. When He comes, He will explain everything to us."

Jesus answered, "I who speak to you am He."

Just then His disciples returned and were surprised that He was speaking with a woman. But no one asked Him, "What do You want from her?" or "Why are You talking with her?"

Then the woman left her water jar, went back into the town, and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" So they left the town and made their way toward Jesus.

Meanwhile the disciples urged Him, "Rabbi, eat something."

But He told them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

So the disciples asked one another, "Could someone have brought Him food?"

Jesus explained, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work. Do you not say, 'There are still four months until the harvest'? I tell you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are ripe for harvest.

Already the reaper draws his wages and gathers a crop for eternal life, so that both the sower and the reaper may rejoice together. For in this case the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for; others have done the hard work, and now you have taken up their labor."

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to Him, they asked Him to stay with them, and He stayed two days.

And many more believed because of His message. They said to the woman, "We now believe not only because of your words; we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man truly is the Christ, the Savior of the world."

After two days, Jesus left and went to Galilee. Now He Himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown. Yet when He arrived, the Galileans welcomed Him. They had seen all the great things He had done in Jerusalem at the feast, for they had gone there as well.

So once again Jesus came to Cana in Galilee, where He had turned the water into wine. And there was a royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and begged Him to come down and heal his son, who was about to die.

Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will never believe."

"Sir," the official said, "come down before my child dies."

"Go," said Jesus. "Your son will live."

The man took Jesus at His word and departed. And while he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news: "Your boy is alive."

So he inquired as to the hour when his son had recovered, and they told him, "The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour."

Then the father realized that this was the very hour in which Jesus had told him, "Your son will live." And he and all his household believed.

This was now the second sign that Jesus performed after coming from Judea into Galilee.

Some time later came the feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool with five covered colonnades, which in Hebrew is called Bethesda. On these walkways lay a great number of the sick, the blind, the lame, and the paralyzed, awaiting the moving of the water. For from time to time

an angel descended into the pool and stirred the water. As soon as the water was stirred, the first to enter the pool would be healed of his disease.

One man there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and realized that he had spent a long time in this condition, He asked him, "Do you want to get well?"

"Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am on my way, someone else goes in before me."

Then Jesus told him, "Get up, pick up your mat, and walk."

Immediately the man was made well, and he picked up his mat and began to walk.

Now this happened on the Sabbath day, so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "This is the Sabbath! It is unlawful for you to carry your mat."

But he answered, "The man who made me well told me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'"

"Who is this man who told you to pick up your mat and walk?" they asked.

But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while the crowd was there.

Afterward, Jesus found the man at the temple and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Stop sinning, or something worse may happen to you."

And the man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

Now because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews began to persecute Him and were seeking to kill Him. But Jesus answered them, "To this very day My Father is at His work, and I too am working."

Because of this, the Jews tried all the harder to kill Him. Not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

So Jesus replied, "Truly, truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing by Himself, unless He sees the Father doing it. For whatever the Father does, the Son also does. The Father loves the Son and shows Him all He does. And to your amazement, He will show Him even greater works than these. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He wishes.

Furthermore, the Father judges no one, but has assigned all judgment to the Son, so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

Truly, truly, I tell you, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not come under judgment. Indeed, he has crossed over from death to life.

Truly, truly, I tell you, the hour is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so also He has granted the Son to have life in Himself. And He has given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.

Do not be amazed at this, for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice and come out — those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

I can do nothing by Myself; I judge only as I hear. And My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of the Father who sent Me.

If I testify about Myself, My testimony is not valid. There is another who testifies about Me, and I know that His testimony about Me is valid.

You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth. Even though I do not accept human testimony, I say these things so that you may be saved.

John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you were willing for a season to bask in his light. But I have testimony more substantial than that of John. For the works that the Father has given Me to accomplish — the very works I am doing — testify about Me that the Father has sent Me. And the Father who sent Me has Himself testified about Me. You have never heard His voice nor seen His form, nor does His word abide in you, because you do not believe the One He sent.

You pore over the Scriptures because you presume that by them you possess eternal life. These are the very words that testify about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me to have life.

I do not accept glory from men, but I know you, that you do not have the love of God within you. I have come in My Father's name, and you have not received Me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe if you accept glory from one another, yet do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, in whom you have put your hope. If you had believed Moses, you would believe Me, because he wrote about Me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?"

After this, Jesus crossed to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias). A large crowd followed Him because they saw His signs He was performing on the sick. Then Jesus went up on the mountain and sat down with His disciples.

Now the Jewish Feast of the Passover was near. When Jesus looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where can we buy bread for these people to eat?" But He was asking this to test him, for He knew what He was about to do.

Philip answered, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to have a small piece."

One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, "Here is a boy with five barley loaves and two small fish. But what difference will these make among so many?"

"Have the people sit down," Jesus said. Now there was plenty of grass in that place, so the men sat down, about five thousand of them.

Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those who were seated— and the fish— as much as they wanted.

And when everyone was full, He said to His disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over, so that nothing will be wasted."

So they collected them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

When the people saw the sign that Jesus had performed, they began to say, “Truly this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.”

Then Jesus, realizing that they were about to come and make Him king by force, withdrew to a mountain by Himself.

When evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was already dark, and Jesus had not gone out to them. A strong wind was blowing, and the sea grew agitated.

When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the sea — and they were terrified. But Jesus spoke up: “It is I; do not be afraid.” Then they were willing to take Him into the boat, and at once the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

The next day, the crowd that had remained on the other side of the sea realized that no other boat had been there except the one that His disciples had entered, and that Jesus had not boarded it with His disciples, but they had gone away alone. Then other boats, which were from Tiberias, landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor His disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum to look for Him. When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they asked Him, “Rabbi, when did You get here?”

Jesus replied, “Truly, truly, I tell you, it is not because you saw these signs that you are looking for Me, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that perishes, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on Him God the Father has placed His seal of approval.”

Then they inquired, “What must we do to perform the works of God?”

Jesus replied, “The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent.”

So they asked Him, “What sign then will You perform, so that we may see it and believe You? What will You do? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

“Sir,” they said, “give us this bread at all times.”

Jesus answered, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never hunger, and whoever believes in Me will never thirst. But as I stated, you have seen Me and still you do not believe.

Everyone the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but to do the will of Him who sent Me.

And this is the will of the Father who sent Me, that I shall lose none of those He has given Me, but raise them up at the last day. And it is the will of Him who sent Me that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

At this, the Jews began to grumble about Jesus because He had said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” They were asking, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How then can He say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?”

“Stop grumbling among yourselves,” Jesus therefore replied. “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard the Father and learned from Him comes to Me — not that anyone has seen the Father except the One who is from God; only He has seen the Father.

Truly, truly, I tell you, he who believes in Me has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that anyone may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And this bread, which I will give for the life of the world, is My flesh.”

At this, the Jews began to argue among themselves, “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?”

So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is truly food, and My blood is truly drink.

Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your fathers, who ate the manna and died, the one who eats this bread will live forever.”

Jesus said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. On hearing it, many of His disciples said, “This is a difficult teaching. Who can accept it?”

Aware that His disciples were grumbling about this teaching , Jesus asked them, “Does this offend you? Then what will happen if you see the Son of Man ascend to where He was before?

The Spirit gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words I speak to you are spirit and they are life. However, there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray Him.)

Then Jesus said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless My Father has granted it to him.”

From that time on many of His disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him.

So Jesus asked the Twelve, “Do you want to leave too?”

Simon Peter replied, “Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus answered them, “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!” He was speaking about Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. For although Judas was one of the Twelve, he was later to betray Jesus.

After this, Jesus traveled throughout Galilee. He did not want to travel in Judea, because the Jews there were trying to kill Him. However, the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near. So Jesus' brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go to Judea, so that Your disciples there may see the works You are doing. For no one who wants to be known publicly acts in secret. Since You are doing these things, show Yourself to the world." For even His own brothers did not believe in Him.

Therefore Jesus told them, "Although your time is always at hand, My time has not yet come. The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me, because I testify that its works are evil. Go up to the feast on your own. I am not yet going up to this feast, because My time has not yet come."

Having said this to them, Jesus remained in Galilee. But after His brothers had gone up to the feast, He also went — not publicly, but in secret.

So the Jews were looking for Him at the feast and asking, "Where is He?"

Many in the crowds were whispering about Him. Some said, "He is a good man."

But others replied, "No, He deceives the people."

Yet no one would speak publicly about Him for fear of the Jews.

About halfway through the feast, Jesus went up to the temple courts and began to teach. The Jews were amazed and asked, "How did this man attain such learning without having studied?"

"My teaching is not My own," Jesus replied. "It comes from Him who sent Me. If anyone desires to do His will, he will know whether My teaching is from God or whether I speak on My own. He who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory, but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is a man of truth; in Him there is no falsehood. Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps it. Why are you trying to kill Me?"

"You have a demon," the crowd replied. "Who is trying to kill You?"

Jesus answered them, "I did one miracle, and you are all amazed. But because Moses gave you circumcision, you circumcise a boy on the Sabbath (not that it is from Moses, but from the patriarchs.) If a boy can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses will not be broken, why are you angry with Me for making the whole man well on the Sabbath? Stop judging by outward appearances, and start judging justly."

Then some of the people of Jerusalem began to say, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill? Yet here He is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying anything to Him. Have the rulers truly recognized that this is the Christ? But we know where this man is from. When the Christ comes, no one will know where He is from."

Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, "You know Me, and you know where I am from. I have not come of My own accord, but He who sent Me is true. You do not know Him, but I know Him, because I am from Him and He sent Me."

So they tried to seize Him, but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. Many in the crowd, however, believed in Him and said, "When the Christ comes, will He perform more signs than this man?"

When the Pharisees heard the crowd whispering these things about Jesus, they and the chief priests sent officers to arrest Him. So Jesus said,"I am with you only a little while longer, and then I am going to the One who sent Me. You will look for Me, but you will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come."

At this, the Jews said to one another, "Where does He intend to go that we will not find Him? Will He go where the Jews are dispersed among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? What does He mean by saying, 'You will look for Me, but you will not find Me,' and, 'Where I am, you cannot come'?"

On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood up and called out in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said: 'Streams of living water will flow from within him.'" He was speaking about the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive. For the Holy Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

On hearing these words, many of the people therefore said, "This is truly the Prophet."

Others declared, "This is the Christ."

But still others asked, "How can the Christ come from Galilee? Doesn't the Scripture say that the Christ will come from the line of David and from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?"

So there was division in the crowd because of Jesus. Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid a hand on Him.

Then the officers returned to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why didn't you bring Him in?"

"Never has anyone spoken like this man!" the officers answered.

"Have you also been deceived?" replied the Pharisees. "Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law— they are under a curse."

Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus by night and who himself was one of them, asked, "Does our law convict a man without first hearing from him to determine what he has done?"

"Aren't you also from Galilee?" they replied. "Look into it, and you will see that no prophet comes out of Galilee."

Then each went to his own home.

But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

Early in the morning He went back into the temple courts. All the people came to Him, and He sat down to teach them. The scribes and Pharisees, however, brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before them and to test Him they said, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such a woman. So what do You say?"

They said this to test Him, in order to have a basis for accusing Him. But Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with His finger, not taking notice.

When they continued to question Him, He straightened up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to cast a stone at her." And again He bent down and wrote on the ground.

When they heard this and were convicted by their consciences, they began to go away one by one, beginning with the older ones, until only Jesus was left, with the woman standing there. Then Jesus straightened up and saw no one but the woman. And He asked her, "Where are your accusers? Has no one condemned you?"

"No one, Lord," she answered.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared."Go and sin no more."

Once again, Jesus spoke to the people and said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life."

So the Pharisees said to Him, "You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not valid."

Jesus replied, "Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is valid, because I know where I came from and where I am going. But you do not know where I came from or where I am going. You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. But even if I do judge, My judgment is true, because I am not alone; I am with the Father who sent Me. Even in your own Law it is written that the testimony of two men is valid. I am One who testifies about Myself, and the Father, who sent Me, also testifies about Me."

"Where is Your Father?" they asked Him.

"You do not know Me or My Father," Jesus answered. "If you knew Me, you would know My Father as well."

Jesus spoke these words while teaching in the temple courts, near the treasury. Yet no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.

Again Jesus said to them, "I am going away, and you will look for Me, but you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come."

So the Jews began to ask, "Will He kill Himself, since He says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?"

Then He told them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. That is why I told you that you would die in your sins. For unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

"Who are You?" they asked.

"Just what I have been telling you from the beginning," Jesus replied. "I have much to say about you and much to judge. But the One who sent Me is truthful, and what I have heard from Him, I tell the world."

They did not understand that He was telling them about the Father. So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing on My own, but speak exactly what My Father has taught Me. He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, because I always do what pleases Him."

As Jesus spoke these things, many believed in Him. So He said to the Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, you are truly My disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

"We are Abraham's descendants," they answered. "We have never been slaves to anyone. How can You say we will be set free?"

Jesus replied, "Truly, truly, I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. A slave does not remain in the house forever, but a son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

I know you are Abraham's descendants, but you are trying to kill Me because My word has no place within you. I speak of what I have seen in the presence of My Father, and you do what you have seen from your father."

"Abraham is our father," they replied.

"If you were children of Abraham," said Jesus, "you would do the works of Abraham. But now you are trying to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham never did such a thing. You are doing the works of your father."

"We are not illegitimate children," they declared. "Our only Father is God Himself."

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on My own, but He sent Me.

Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you are unable to accept My message. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out his desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, refusing to stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, because he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me!

Which of you can prove Me guilty of sin? If I speak the truth, why do you not believe Me? Whoever belongs to God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."

The Jews answered Him, "Are we not right to say that You are a Samaritan and You have a demon?"

"I do not have a demon," Jesus replied, "but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. I do not seek My own glory. There is One who seeks it, and He is the Judge. Truly, truly, I tell you, if anyone keeps My word, he will never see death."

"Now we know that You have a demon!" declared the Jews. "Abraham died, and so did the prophets, yet You say that anyone who keeps Your word will never taste death. Are You greater than our father Abraham? He died, as did the prophets. Who do You claim to be?"

Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory means nothing. The One who glorifies Me is My Father, of whom you say 'He is our God.' You do not know Him, but I know Him. If I said I did not know Him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know Him, and I keep His word. Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see My day. He saw it and was glad."

Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and You have seen Abraham?"

"Truly, truly, I tell you," Jesus declared, "before Abraham was born, I am! "

At this, they picked up stones to throw at Him. But Jesus was hidden and went out of the temple area, going through the midst of them. And so He passed by.

Now as Jesus was passing by, He saw a man blind from birth, and His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the works of God would be displayed in him. While it is daytime, I must do the works of Him who sent Me. Night is coming,

when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

When Jesus had said this, He spit on the ground, made some mud, and applied it to the eyes of the blind man. Then He told him, "Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam" (which means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came back seeing.

At this, his neighbors and those who had formerly seen him blind began to ask, "Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?"

Some claimed that he was, but others said, "He just looks like him."

But the man kept saying, "I am the one."

"How were your eyes opened?" they asked.

He answered, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and anointed my eyes, and He told me to go to the Pool of Siloam and wash. So I went and washed and received my sight."

"Where is He?" they asked.

"I do not know," he answered.

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened his eyes was a Sabbath. So the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight.

The man answered, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see."

Because of this, some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for He does not keep the Sabbath."

But others said, "How can a sinful man perform such signs?"

And there was division among them. So once again they asked the man who had been blind, "What do you say about Him, since it was your eyes He opened?"

"He is a prophet," the man replied.

The Jews still did not believe that the man had been blind and had received his sight until they summoned his parents and asked, "Is this your son, the one you say was born blind? So how is it that he can now see?"

His parents answered, "We know he is our son, and we know he was born blind. But how he can now see or who opened his eyes, we do not know. He is of age. Ask him. He can speak for himself."

His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews. For the Jews had already determined that anyone who confessed Jesus as the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. That was why his parents said, "He is old enough. Ask him."

So a second time they called for the man who had been blind and said, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner."

He answered, "Whether He is a sinner I do not know. There is one thing I do know: I was blind, but now I see!"

"What did He do to you?" they asked again. "How did He open your eyes?"

He replied, "I already told you, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?"

Then they heaped insults on him and said, "You are His disciple; we are disciples of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses, but we do not know where this man is from."

"That is remarkable indeed!" the man said. "You do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but He does listen to the one who worships Him and does His will. Never before has anyone heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, He could do no such thing."

They replied, "You were born in utter sin, and you are instructing us?" And they threw him out.

When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, He found the man and said, "Do you believe in the Son of God ?"

"Who is He, Sir?" he replied. "Tell me so that I may believe in Him."

"You have already seen Him," Jesus answered. "He is the One speaking with you."

"Lord, I believe," he said. And he worshiped Jesus.

Then Jesus declared, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind may see and those who see may become blind."

Some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard this, and they asked Him, "Are we blind too?"

"If you were blind," Jesus replied, "you would not be guilty of sin. But since you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains."

"Truly, truly, I tell you, whoever does not enter the sheepfold by the gate, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber. But the one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen for his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

When he has brought out his own sheep, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will flee from him because they do not recognize his voice."

Jesus spoke to them using this illustration, but they did not understand what He was telling them. So He said to them again, "Truly, truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. If anyone enters through Me, he will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life, and have it in all its fullness.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd, and the sheep are not his own. When he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf pounces on them and scatters the flock. The man runs away because he is a hired servant and is unconcerned for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd. I know My sheep and My sheep know Me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father. And I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them in as well, and they will listen to My voice. Then there will be one flock and one shepherd.

The reason My Father loves Me is that I lay down My life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from My Father."

Therefore there was again division among the Jews because of Jesus' message. Many of them said, "He is

demon-possessed and insane. Why would you listen to Him?"

But others replied, "These are not the words of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

At that time the Feast of Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple courts in Solomon's Colonnade. So the Jews gathered around Him and demanded, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."

"I already told you," Jesus replied, "but you did not believe. The works I do in My Father's name testify on My behalf. But because you are not My sheep, you refuse to believe, just as I said to you. My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them out of My hand. My Father who has given them to Me is greater than all. No one can snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

At this, the Jews again picked up stones to stone Him. But Jesus responded, "I have shown you many good works from My Father. For which of these do you stone Me?"

"We are not stoning You for any good work," said the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because You, who are a man, declare Yourself to be God."

Jesus replied, "Is it not written in your Law: 'I have said you are gods' ? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came — and the Scripture cannot be broken — then what about the One whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world? How then can you accuse Me of blasphemy for stating that I am the Son of God?

If I am not doing the works of My Father, then do not believe Me. But if I am doing them, even though you do not believe Me, believe the works themselves, so that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I am in Him. "

At this, they tried again to seize Him, but He escaped their grasp.

Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had first been baptizing, and He stayed there. Many came to Him and said, "Although John never performed a sign, everything he said about this man was true." And many in that place believed in Jesus.

At this time a man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (Mary, whose brother Lazarus was sick, was to anoint the Lord with perfume and wipe His feet with her hair.) So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one You love is sick."

When Jesus heard this, He said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So on hearing that Lazarus was sick, He stayed where He was for two days, and then He said to the disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

"Rabbi," they replied, "the Jews just tried to stone You, and You are going back there?"

Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? If anyone walks in the daytime, he will not stumble, because he sees by the light of this world. But if anyone walks at night, he will stumble, because he has no light."

After He had said this, He told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to wake him up."

His disciples replied, "Lord, if he is sleeping, he will get better." They thought that Jesus was talking about actual sleep, but He was speaking about the death of Lazarus.

So Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

Then Thomas called Didymus said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him."

When Jesus arrived, He found that Lazarus had already spent four days in the tomb. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, a little less than two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to the women around Martha and Mary to console them in the loss of their brother. So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet Him, but Mary stayed at home.

Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give You whatever You ask of Him."

"Your brother will rise again," Jesus told her.

Martha replied, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me will live, even though he dies. And everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

"Yes, Lord," she answered, "I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

After Martha had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside to tell her, "The Teacher is here and is asking for you." And when Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to Him.

Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was at the place where Martha had met Him. When the Jews who were in the house consoling Mary saw how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, saying that she was going to the tomb to mourn there. When Mary came to Jesus and saw Him, she fell at His feet and said, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you put him?" He asked.

"Come and see, Lord," they answered.

Jesus wept.

Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!"

But some of them asked, "Could not this man who opened the eyes of the blind also have kept Lazarus from dying?"

Jesus, once again deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. "Take away the stone," Jesus said.

"Lord, by now he stinks," said Martha, the sister of the dead man. "It has already been four days."

Jesus replied, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

So they took away the stone from where the dead man was lying. Then Jesus lifted His eyes upward and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me, but I say this for the benefit of the people standing here, so they may believe that You sent Me."

After Jesus had said this, He called out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

The man who had been dead came out with his hands and feet bound in strips of linen, and his face wrapped in a cloth.

"Unwrap him and let him go," Jesus told them.

Therefore many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in Him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

Then the chief priests and Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin and said, "What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. If we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

But one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for us that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."

Caiaphas did not say this on his own. Instead, as high priest that year, he was prophesying that Jesus would die for the nation, and not only for the nation, but also for the scattered children of God, to gather them together into one.

So from that day on they plotted together to kill Him. As a result, Jesus no longer went about publicly among the Jews, but He withdrew to a town called Ephraim in an area near the wilderness. And He spent time there with His disciples.

Now the Jewish Passover was near, and many people went up from the country to Jerusalem to purify themselves before the Passover. They kept looking for Jesus and asking one another as they stood in the temple courts, "What do you think? Will He come to the feast at all?" But the chief priests and Pharisees had given an order that anyone who knew where He was must report it, so that they could arrest Him.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, the hometown of Lazarus who had died, whom He had raised from the dead. So they hosted a dinner for Jesus there. Martha served, and Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with Him. Then Mary took about a pint of expensive perfume, made of pure nard, and she anointed Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, who was going to betray Him, asked, "Why wasn't this perfume sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" Judas did not say this because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief. As keeper of the money bag, he used to take from what was put into it.

"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "She has kept this perfume in preparation for the day of My burial. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have Me."

Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews learned that Jesus was there. And they came not only because of Him, but also to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were deserting them and believing in Jesus.

The next day a great crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet Him, crying out:

> "Hosanna!" "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the King of Israel!"

Finding a young donkey, Jesus sat on it, as it is written:

> "Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion. See, your King is coming, seated on the colt of a donkey."

At first His disciples did not understand these things, but after Jesus was glorified they remembered what had been done to Him, and they realized that these very things had also been written about Him.

Meanwhile, many people who had been with Jesus when He called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify. That is also why the crowd went out to meet Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign.

Then the Pharisees said to one another, "You can see that this is doing you no good. Look how the whole world has gone after Him!"

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and requested of him, "Sir, we want to see Jesus." Philip relayed this appeal to Andrew, and both of them went and told Jesus.

But Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a seed. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life will lose it, but whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, My servant will be as well. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? No, it is for this purpose that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify Your name!"

Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

The crowd standing there heard it and said that it had thundered. Others said that an angel had spoken to Him.

In response, Jesus said, "This voice was not for My benefit, but yours. Now judgment is upon this world; now the prince of this world will be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw everyone to Myself." He said this to indicate the kind of death He was going to die.

The crowd replied, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever. So how can You say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?"

Then Jesus told them, "For a little while longer, the Light will be with you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going.

While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of light."

After Jesus had spoken these things, He went away and was hidden from them.

Although Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still did not believe in Him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet:

> "Lord, who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

For this reason they were unable to believe. For again, Isaiah says:

> "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so that they cannot see with their eyes, and understand with their hearts, and turn, and I would heal them."

Isaiah said these things when he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about Him. Nevertheless, many of the leaders believed in Him. But because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue. For they loved praise from men more than praise from God.

Then Jesus cried out, "Whoever believes in Me does not believe in Me alone, but in the One who sent Me. And whoever sees Me sees the One who sent Me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in Me should remain in darkness.

As for anyone who hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him. For I have not come to judge the world, but to save the world. There is a judge for the one who rejects Me and does not receive My words: The word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.

I have not spoken on My own, but the Father who sent Me has commanded Me what to say and how to say it. And I know that His command leads to eternal life. So I speak exactly what the Father has told Me to say."

It was now just before the Passover Feast, and Jesus knew that His hour had come to leave this world and return to the Father. Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the very end. By the time the evening meal had ended, the devil had already put into the heart of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.

Jesus knew that the Father had delivered all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was returning to God. So He got up from the supper, laid aside His outer garments, and wrapped a towel around His waist. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel that was around Him.

He came to Simon Peter, who asked Him, "Lord, are You going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

"Never shall You wash my feet!" Peter told Him.

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me."

"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not only my feet, but my hands and my head as well!"

Jesus told him, "Whoever has already bathed needs only to wash his feet, and he will be completely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For He knew who would betray Him. That is why He said, "Not all of you are clean."

When Jesus had washed their feet and put on His outer garments, He reclined with them again and asked, "Do you know what I have done for you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and rightly so, because I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example so that you should do as I have done for you. Truly, truly, I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

I am not speaking about all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the Scripture: 'The one who shares bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.' I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it comes to pass, you will believe that I am He. Truly, truly, I tell you, whoever receives the one I send receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives the One who sent Me."

After Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit and testified, "Truly, truly, I tell you, one of you will betray Me."

The disciples looked at one another, perplexed as to which of them He meant. One of His disciples, the one whom Jesus loved, was reclining at His side. So Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus which one He was talking about. Falling back upon Jesus, he asked, "Lord, who is it?"

Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I give this morsel after I have dipped it." Then He dipped the morsel and gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And when Judas had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him.

Then Jesus said to Judas, "What you are about to do, do quickly." But no one at the table knew why Jesus had said this to him. Since Judas kept the money bag, some thought that Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the feast, or to give something to the poor. As soon as he had received the morsel, Judas went out into the night.

When Judas had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify the Son in Himself — and will glorify Him at once.

Little children, I am with you only a little while longer. You will look for Me, and as I said to the Jews, so now I say to you: 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'

A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another."

"Lord, where are You going?" Simon Peter asked.

Jesus answered, "Where I am going, you cannot follow Me now, but you will follow Me later."

"Lord," said Peter, "why can't I follow You now? I will lay down my life for You."

"Will you lay down your life for Me?" Jesus replied. "Truly, truly, I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe in Me as well. In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go, I will prepare a place for you. I will come back and

welcome you into My presence, so that you also may be where I am. You know the place where I am going and you know the way. ”

“Lord,” said Thomas, “we do not know where You are going, so how can we know the way?”

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would know My Father as well. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him.”

Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us.”

Jesus replied, “Philip, I have been with you all this time, and still you do not know Me? Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words I say to you, I do not speak on My own. Instead, it is the Father dwelling in Me, performing His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me — or at least believe Me on account of the works themselves.

Truly, truly, I tell you, whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I am doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to My Father. And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me for anything in My name, I will do it.

If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate to abide with you forever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot receive Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you do know Him, for He abides with you and will be in you.

I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. In a little while the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you are in Me, and I am in you. Whoever has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me. The one who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and reveal Myself to him.”

Judas (not Iscariot) asked Him, “Lord, why are You going to reveal Yourself to us and not to the world?”

Jesus replied, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. Whoever does not love Me does not keep My words. The word that you hear is not My own, but it is from the Father who sent Me.

All this I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have told you.

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled; do not be afraid. You heard Me say, ‘I am going away, and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved Me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because My Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it happens, so that when it does happen, you will believe.

I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming, and he has no claim on Me. But I do exactly what the Father has commanded Me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.

Get up! Let us go on from here.”

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the keeper of the vineyard. He cuts off every branch in Me that bears no fruit, and every branch that does bear fruit, He prunes to make it even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. Just as no branch can bear fruit by itself unless it remains in the vine, neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me.

I am the vine and you are the branches. The one who remains in Me, and I in him, will bear much fruit. For apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in Me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers. Such branches are gathered up, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, then you will ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to My Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, proving yourselves to be My disciples.

As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Remain in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and remain in His love. I have told you these things so that My joy may abide in you and your joy may be complete.

This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not understand what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, because everything I have learned from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will remain — so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you. This is My command to you: Love one another.

If the world hates you, understand that it hated Me first. If you were of the world, it would love you as its own. Instead, the world hates you, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world.

Remember the word that I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you as well; if they kept My word, they will keep yours as well. But they will treat you like this because of My name, since they do not know the One who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin.

Whoever hates Me hates My Father as well. If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: ‘They hated Me without reason.’

When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father — the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father — He will testify about Me. And you also must testify, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”

"I have told you these things so that you will not fall away. They will put you out of the synagogues. In fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do these things because they have not known the Father or Me. But I have told you these things so that when the hour comes, you will remember that I told you about them. I did not tell you these things from the beginning, because I was with you.

Now, however, I am going to Him who sent Me; yet none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' Instead, your hearts are filled with sorrow because I have told you these things. But I tell you the truth, it is for your benefit that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.

And when He comes, He will convict the world in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because they do not believe in Me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to My Father and you will no longer see Me; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world has been condemned.

I still have much to tell you, but you cannot yet bear to hear it. However, when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. For He will not speak on His own, but He will speak what He hears, and He will declare to you what is to come. He will glorify Me by taking from what is Mine and disclosing it to you. Everything that belongs to the Father is Mine. That is why I said that the Spirit will take from what is Mine and disclose it to you.

In a little while you will not see Me, and then after a little while you will see Me, because I am going away to the Father. "

Then some of His disciples asked one another, "Why is He telling us, 'In a little while you will not see Me, and then after a little while you will see Me' and 'Because I am going to the Father'?" They kept asking, "Why is He saying, 'a little while'? We do not understand what He is saying."

Aware that they wanted to question Him, Jesus said to them, "Are you asking one another why I said, 'In a little while you will not see Me, and then after a little while you will see Me'? Truly, truly, I tell you, you will weep and wail while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A woman has pain in childbirth because her time has come; but when she brings forth her child, she forgets her anguish because of her joy that a child has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

In that day you will no longer ask Me anything. Truly, truly, I tell you, whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you. Until now you have not asked for anything in My name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.

I have spoken these things to you in figures of speech. But an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you this way, but will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in My name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and entered the world. In turn, I will leave the world and go to the Father."

His disciples said to Him, "See, now You are speaking plainly and without figures of speech. Now we understand that You know all things and that You have no need for anyone to question You. Because of this, we believe that You came from God."

"Do you finally believe?" Jesus replied. "Look, an hour is coming and has already come when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and you will leave Me all alone. Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take courage; I have overcome the world!"

When Jesus had spoken these things, He lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son may also glorify You. For You granted Him authority over all people, so that He will give eternal life to all those You have given Him. Now this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent. I have glorified You on earth. I have accomplished the work You gave Me to do. And now, Father, glorify Me in Your presence with the glory I had with You before the world existed.

I have revealed Your name to those You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours; You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they know that everything You have given Me comes from You. For I have given them the words You gave Me, and they have received them. They knew with certainty that I came from You, and they believed that You sent Me.

I ask on their behalf. I do not ask on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those You have given Me; for they are Yours. All I have is Yours, and all You have is Mine; and in them I have been glorified. I will no longer be in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to You.

Holy Father, protect them by Your name, the name You gave Me, so that they may be one as We are one. While I was with them in the world, I protected and preserved by Your name those You gave Me. Not one of them has been lost, except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

But now I am coming to You; and I am saying these things while I am in the world, so that they may have My joy fulfilled within them. I have given them Your word and the world has hated them. For they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

I am not asking that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I have also sent them into the world. For them I sanctify Myself, so that they too may be sanctified by the truth.

I am not asking on behalf of them alone, but also on behalf of those who will believe in Me through their message, that all of them may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I am in You. May they also be one in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

I have given them the glory You gave Me, so that they may be one as We are one — I in them and You in Me — that they may be perfectly united and that the world may know that You sent Me and have loved them just as You have loved Me.

Father, I want those You have given Me to be with Me where I am, that they may see the glory You gave Me because You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

Righteous Father, although the world has not known You, I know You, and they know that You sent Me. And I have made Your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love You have for Me may be in them, and I in them."

After Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples across the Kidron Valley, where they entered a garden. Now Judas His betrayer also knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with His disciples. So Judas brought a band of soldiers and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees. They arrived at the garden carrying lanterns, torches, and weapons.

Jesus, knowing all that was coming upon Him, stepped forward and asked them, "Whom are you seeking?"

"Jesus of Nazareth," they answered.

Jesus said, "I am He."

And Judas His betrayer was standing there with them. When Jesus said, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground.

So He asked them again, "Whom are you seeking?"

"Jesus of Nazareth," they answered.

"I told you that I am He," Jesus replied. "So if you are looking for Me, let these men go." This was to fulfill the word He had spoken: "I have not lost one of those You have given Me."

Then Simon Peter drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

"Put your sword back in its sheath!" Jesus said to Peter. "Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given Me?"

Then the band of soldiers, with its commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him. They led Him away first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be better if one man perished for the people.

Now Simon Peter and the other disciple were following Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he also went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest. But Peter stood outside at the door. Then the disciple who was known to the high priest went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in.

At this, the servant girl watching the door said to Peter, "Aren't you also one of this man's disciples?"

"I am not," he answered.

Because it was cold, the servants and officers were standing around a charcoal fire they had made to keep warm. And Peter was standing with them, warming himself.

Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about His disciples and His teaching.

"I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus answered. "I always taught in the synagogues and at the temple, where the Jews always come together. I said nothing in secret. Why are you asking Me? Ask those who heard My message. Surely they know what I said."

When Jesus had said this, one of the officers standing nearby slapped Him in the face and said, "Is this how You answer the high priest?"

Jesus replied, "If I said something wrong, testify as to what was wrong. But if I spoke correctly, why did you strike Me?"

Then Annas sent Him, still bound, to Caiaphas the high priest.

Simon Peter was still standing and warming himself. So they asked him, "Aren't you also one of His disciples?"

He denied it and said, "I am not."

One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Didn't I see you with Him in the garden?"

Peter denied it once more, and immediately a rooster crowed.

Then they led Jesus away from Caiaphas into the Praetorium. By now it was early morning, and the Jews did not enter the Praetorium, to avoid being defiled and unable to eat the Passover.

So Pilate went out to them and asked, "What accusation are you bringing against this man?"

"If He were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed Him over to you."

"You take Him and judge Him by your own law," Pilate told them.

"We are not permitted to execute anyone," the Jews then replied. This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to indicate the kind of death He was going to die.

Pilate went back into the Praetorium, summoned Jesus, and asked Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?"

"Are you saying this on your own," Jesus asked him,"or did others tell you about Me?"

"Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed You over to me. What have You done?"

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world; if it were, My servants would fight to prevent My arrest by the Jews. But now My kingdom is not of this realm."

"Then You are a king!" Pilate said.

"You say that I am a king," Jesus answered. "For this reason I was born and have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to My voice."

"What is truth?" Pilate asked.

And having said this, he went out again to the Jews and told them, "I find no basis for a charge against Him. But it is your custom that I release to you one prisoner at the Passover. So then, do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?"

"Not this man," they all shouted, "but Barabbas!" (Now Barabbas was an insurrectionist.)

Then Pilate took Jesus and had Him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns, set it on His head, and dressed Him in a purple robe. And they kept saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and slapping Him in the face.

Once again Pilate came out and said to the Jews, "Look, I am bringing Him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against Him." When Jesus

came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, “Here is the man!”

As soon as the chief priests and officers saw Him, they shouted, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”

“You take Him and crucify Him,” Pilate replied, “for I find no basis for a charge against Him.”

“We have a law,” answered the Jews, “and according to our law He must die, because He declared Himself to be the Son of God.”

When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid, and he went back into the Praetorium. “Where are You from?” he asked.

But Jesus gave no answer.

So Pilate said to Him, “Do You refuse to speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to crucify You and authority to release You?”

Jesus answered, “You would have no authority over Me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed Me over to you is guilty of greater sin.”

From then on, Pilate tried to release Him, but the Jews kept crying out, “If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who declares himself a king is defying Caesar.”

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat on the judgment seat at a place called the Stone Pavement, which in Hebrew is Gabbatha. It was the day of Preparation for the Passover, about the sixth hour. And Pilate said to the Jews, “Here is your King!”

At this, they shouted, “Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him!”

“Shall I crucify your King?” Pilate asked.

“We have no king but Caesar,” replied the chief priests.

Then Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified, and the soldiers took Him and led Him away. Carrying His own cross, He went out to a place called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha.

There they crucified Him, and with Him two others, one on each side, with Jesus in the middle.

Pilate also had a notice posted on the cross. It read:

JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Many of the Jews read this sign, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but only that He said, ‘I am the King of the Jews.’”

Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they divided His garments into four parts, one for each soldier, with the tunic remaining. It was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. So they said to one another, “Let us not tear it. Instead, let us cast lots to see who will get it.” This was to fulfill the Scripture:

> “They divided My garments among them, and cast lots for My clothing.”

So that is what the soldiers did.

Near the cross of Jesus stood His mother and her sister, as well as Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, “Woman, here is your son.” Then He said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” So from that hour, this disciple took her into his home.

After this, seeing that everything had now been accomplished, and to fulfill the Scripture, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” A jar of sour wine was sitting there. So they soaked a sponge in the wine, put it on a stalk of hyssop, and lifted it to His mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished.” And bowing His head, He yielded up His spirit.

It was the day of Preparation, and the next day was a High Sabbath. In order that the bodies would not remain on the cross during the Sabbath, the Jews asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies removed. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and those of the other.

But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water flowed out. The one who saw it has testified to this, and his testimony is true. He knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe.

Now these things happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled: “Not one of His bones will be broken.” And, as another Scripture says: “They will look on the One they have pierced.”

Afterward, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus (but secretly for fear of the Jews), asked Pilate to let him remove the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission, so he came and removed the body of Jesus. Nicodemus, who had previously come to Jesus at night, also brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. So they took the body of Jesus and wrapped it in linen cloths with the spices, according to the Jewish burial custom.

Now there was a garden in the place where Jesus was crucified, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. And because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and the tomb was nearby, they placed Jesus there.

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb,” she said, “and we do not know where they have put Him!”

Then Peter and the other disciple set out for the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down and looked in at the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in.

Simon Peter arrived just after him. He entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there. The cloth that had been around Jesus’ head was rolled up, lying separate from the linen cloths. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in. And he saw and believed. For they still did not understand from the Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.

Then the disciples returned to their homes. But Mary stood outside the tomb weeping. And as she wept, she bent down to look into the tomb, and she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and the other at the feet.

“Woman, why are you weeping?” they asked.

"Because they have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I do not know where they have put Him."

When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there. But she did not recognize that it was Jesus.

"Woman, why are you weeping?" Jesus asked. "Whom are you seeking?"

Thinking He was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried Him off, tell me where you have put Him, and I will get Him."

Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

"Do not cling to Me," Jesus said, "for I have not yet ascended to My Father. But go and tell My brothers, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.'"

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples that she had seen the Lord. And she told them what He had said to her.

It was the first day of the week, and that very evening, while the disciples were gathered together with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them. "Peace be with you!" He said to them. After He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side.

The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, so also I am sending you." When He had said this, He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld."

Now Thomas called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he replied, "Unless I see the nail marks in His hands, and put my finger where the nails have been, and put my hand into His side, I will never believe."

Eight days later, His disciples were once again inside with the doors locked, and Thomas was with them. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

Then Jesus said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and look at My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side. Stop doubting and believe."

Thomas replied, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.

Later, by the Sea of Tiberias, Jesus again revealed Himself to the disciples. He made Himself known in this way: Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. Simon Peter told them, "I am going fishing."

"We will go with you," they said. So they went out and immediately got into the boat, but caught nothing that night.

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not recognize that it was Jesus. So He called out to them, "Children, do you have any fish?"

"No," they answered.

He told them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it there, and they were unable to haul it in because of the great number of fish.

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it. . .) and jumped into the sea. The other disciples came ashore in the boat. They dragged in the net full of fish, for they were not far from land, only about a hundred yards.

When they landed, they saw a charcoal fire there with fish on it, and some bread.

Jesus told them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many, the net was not torn.

"Come, have breakfast," Jesus said to them. None of the disciples dared to ask Him, "Who are You?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and He did the same with the fish.

This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.

When they had finished eating, Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he answered, "You know I love You."

Jesus replied, "Feed My lambs."

Jesus asked a second time, "Simon son of Jonah, do you love Me?"

"Yes, Lord," he answered, "You know I love You."

Jesus told him, "Shepherd My sheep."

Jesus asked a third time, "Simon son of Jonah, do you love Me?"

Peter was deeply hurt that Jesus had asked him a third time, "Do you love Me?"

"Lord, You know all things," he replied. "You know I love You."

Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep.

Truly, truly, I tell you, when you were young, you dressed yourself and walked where you wanted; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.

And after He had said this, He told him, "Follow Me."

Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them. He was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper to ask, "Lord, who is going to betray You?" When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?"

Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain until I return, what is that to you? You follow Me!" Because of this, the rumor spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die. However, Jesus did not say that he would not die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I return, what is that to you?"

This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who has written them down. And we know that his testimony is true.

There are many more things that Jesus did. If all of them were written down, I suppose that not even the world itself would have space for the books that would be written. Amen.

Acts

Acts of the Apostles

In my first book, O Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach, until the day He was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles He had chosen. After His suffering, He presented Himself to them with many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a span of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

And while they were gathered together, He commanded them: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift the Father promised, which you have heard Me discuss . For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. "

So when they came together, they asked Him, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Jesus replied, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

After He had said this, they watched as He was taken up, and a cloud hid Him from their sight. They were looking intently into the sky as He was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven."

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is near the city, a Sabbath day's journey away. When they arrived, they went to the upper room where they were staying: Peter and James, John and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. With one accord they all continued in prayer and petition, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

In those days Peter stood up among the disciples (a gathering of about a hundred and twenty) and said, "Brothers, this Scripture had to be fulfilled that the Holy Spirit foretold through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus. He was one of our number and shared in this ministry."

(Now with the reward for his wickedness Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong and burst open in the middle, and all his intestines spilled out. This became known to all who lived in Jerusalem, so they called that field in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

"For it is written in the book of Psalms:

> 'May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,'

and,

> 'May another take his position.'

Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have accompanied us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism until the day Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."

So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabas(also known as Justus) and Matthias. And they prayed, "Lord, You know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two You have chosen to receive a portion in this ministry and apostleship that Judas abandoned to go to his rightful place."

Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias. So he was added to the eleven apostles.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all with one accord in one place. Suddenly a sound like a mighty rushing wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw tongues like flames of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. And when this sound rang out, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking his own language.

Astounded and amazed, they asked one another, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? How is it then that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism; Cretans and Arabs— we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

Astounded and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

But others mocked them and said, "They are drunk on new wine!"

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, lifted up his voice, and addressed the crowd: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen carefully to my words. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It is only the third hour of the day! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

> 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on My menservants and maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the coming of the great and glorious Day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Men of Israel, listen to this message: Jesus of Nazareth was a man certified by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did among you through Him, as you yourselves know. He was delivered up

by God's set plan and foreknowledge, and you, by the hands of the lawless, took and put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross. But God raised Him from the dead, releasing Him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep Him in its grip.

David says about Him:

> 'I saw the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will dwell in hope, because You will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor will You let Your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence.'

Brothers, I can tell you with confidence that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that from his descendants according to the flesh He would raise up the Christ to seat Him on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not abandoned to Hades, nor did His body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, to which we are all witnesses.

Exalted, then, to the right hand of God, He has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend into heaven, but he himself says:

> 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."'

Therefore let all Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ!"

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and asked Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise belongs to you and your children and to all who are far off — to all whom the Lord our God will call to Himself."

With many other words he testified, and he urged them, "Be saved from this corrupt generation." Those who gladly embraced his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to the believers that day.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. A sense of awe came over everyone, and the apostles performed many wonders and signs.

All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they shared with anyone who was in need.

With one accord they continued to meet daily in the temple courts and to break bread from house to house, sharing their meals with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

One afternoon Peter and John were going up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those entering the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money.

Peter looked directly at him, as did John. "Look at us!" said Peter. So the man gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!"

Taking him by the right hand, Peter helped him up, and at once the man's feet and ankles were made strong. He sprang to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and leaping and praising God.

When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the man who used to sit begging at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

While the lame man who had been healed clung to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and ran to them in the walkway called Solomon's Colonnade. And when Peter saw this, he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why are you surprised by this? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus. You handed Him over and rejected Him before Pilate, even though he had decided to release Him. You rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the Author of life, but God raised Him from the dead, and we are witnesses of this fact.

By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know has been made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through Him that has given him this complete healing in your presence.

And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But in this way God has fulfilled what He foretold through all His prophets, saying that the Christ would suffer. Repent, then, and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped away, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus, the Christ, who has been appointed for you.

Heaven must take Him in until the time comes for the restoration of all things, which God announced long ago through all His holy prophets. For Moses said to the fathers, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers. You must listen to Him in everything He tells you. Everyone who does not listen to Him will be completely cut off from among his people.'

Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have proclaimed these days. And you are sons of the prophets and of the covenant God made with our fathers when He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all the families of the earth will be blessed.' When God raised up His servant Jesus, He sent Him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."

While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, greatly disturbed that they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in custody until the next day. But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.

The next day the rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, along with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and many others from the high priest's family. They had Peter and John brought in and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people of Israel! If we are being examined today about a kind service to a man who was lame, to determine how he was healed, then let this be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. This Jesus is

> 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.'

Salvation exists in no one else, for there is no other name given to men by which we must be saved."

When they saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they marveled and took note that these men had been with Jesus. And seeing the man who had been healed standing there with them, they had nothing to say in response. So they ordered them to leave the Sanhedrin and then conferred together.

"What shall we do with these men?" they asked. "It is clear to everyone living in Jerusalem that a remarkable miracle has occurred through them, and we cannot deny it. But to keep this message from spreading any further among the people, we must strictly warn them not to speak to anyone in this name."

Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to listen to you rather than God. For we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

After further threats they let them go. They could not find a way to punish them, because all the people were glorifying God for what had happened. For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.

On their release, Peter and John returned to their own people and reported everything that the chief priests and elders had said to them. When the believers heard this, they lifted up their voices to God with one accord. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "You are God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them. You spoke through the mouth of Your servant David:

> 'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against His Anointed One.'

In fact, Herod and Pontius Pilate conspired with the Gentiles and the people of Israel against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed. They carried out what Your hand and will had decided beforehand would happen. And now, Lord, consider their threats, and enable Your servants to speak Your word with complete boldness, as You stretch out Your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of Your holy servant Jesus."

After they had prayed, their meeting place was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

The multitude of believers was one in heart and soul. No one claimed that any of their possessions was his own, but they shared everything they owned. With great power the apostles continued to give their testimony about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And abundant grace was upon them all.

There were no needy ones among them, because those who owned lands or houses would sell their property , bring the proceeds from the sales, and lay them at the apostles' feet for distribution to anyone as he had need.

Joses, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas(meaning Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned, brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife's full knowledge, he kept back some of the proceeds for himself, but brought a portion and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and withhold some of the proceeds from the land? Did it not belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? How could you conceive such a deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God!"

On hearing these words, Ananias fell down and died. And great fear came over all who heard what had happened. Then the young men stepped forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

About three hours later his wife also came in, unaware of what had happened. "Tell me," said Peter, "is this the price you and your husband got for the land?"

"Yes," she answered, "that is the price."

"How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord?" Peter replied. "Look, the feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also."

At that instant she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. And great fear came over the whole church and all who heard about these events.

The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people, and with one accord the believers gathered together in Solomon's Colonnade. Although the people regarded them highly, no one else dared to join them. Yet more and more believers were brought to the Lord — large numbers of both men and women.

As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, so that at least

Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those tormented by unclean spirits, and all of them were healed.

Then the high priest and all his associates, who belonged to the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They went out and arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out, saying, "Go, stand in the temple courts and tell the people the full message of this new life."

At daybreak the apostles entered the temple courts as they had been told and began to teach the people.

When the high priest and his associates arrived, they convened the Sanhedrin— the full assembly of the elders of Israel— and sent to the jail for the apostles. But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they returned with the report: "We indeed found the jail securely locked, with the guards posted before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside."

When the high priest and the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests heard this account, they were perplexed as to what was happening. Then someone came in and announced, "Look, the men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people!"

At that point, the captain went with the officers and brought the apostles — but not by force, for fear the people would stone them. They brought them in and made them stand before the Sanhedrin, where the high priest interrogated them. "Did we not give you strict orders not to teach in this name?" he asked. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us responsible for this man's blood."

But Peter and the other apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging Him on a tree. God exalted Him to His right hand as Prince and Savior, in order to grant repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. We are His witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him."

When the Council members heard this, they were enraged, and they resolved to put the apostles to death. But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the apostles be put outside for a short time.

"Men of Israel," he said, "consider carefully what you are about to do to these men. Some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and drew away many people after him. He too perished, and all his followers were scattered.

So in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone. Let them go! For if their purpose or endeavor is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you cannot stop it. You may even find yourselves fighting against God."

At this, they yielded to Gamaliel. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and released them.

The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the name of Jesus. Every day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they did not stop teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

In those days when the disciples were increasing in number, the Grecian Jews among them began to grumble against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food .

So the Twelve summoned all the disciples and said, "It is unacceptable for us to neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men confirmed to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. We will assign this responsibility to them and will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, as well as Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these seven to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

So the word of God continued to spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem grew rapidly, and a great number of priests became obedient to the faith.

Now Stephen, who was full of faith and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. But resistance arose from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and men from the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. They disputed with Stephen, but they could not stand up to his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke.

Then they prompted some men to say, "We heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God."

So they stirred up the people, elders, and scribes and confronted Stephen. They seized him and brought him before the Sanhedrin, where they presented false witnesses who said, "This man never stops speaking blasphemies against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs that Moses handed down to us."

All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

Then the high priest asked Stephen, "Are these charges true?"

And Stephen declared: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and told him, 'Leave your country and your kindred and go to the land I will show you.' So Abraham left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After his father died, God brought him out of that place and into this land where you are now living.

He gave him no inheritance here, not even a foot of ground. But God promised to give possession of the land

to Abraham and his descendants, even though he did not yet have a child. God told him that his descendants would be foreigners in a strange land, and that they would be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. ‘But I will punish the nation that enslaves them,’ God said, ‘and afterward they will come forth and worship Me in this place.’

Then God gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision, and Abraham became the father of Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day. And Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him and rescued him from all his troubles. He granted Joseph favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt, who appointed him ruler over Egypt and all his household.

Then famine and great suffering swept across the land of Egypt and Canaan, and our fathers could not find food. When Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers on their first visit. On their second visit, Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers, and his family became known to Pharaoh. Then Joseph sent for his father Jacob and all his relatives, seventy-five in all.

So Jacob went down to Egypt, where he and our fathers died. Their bones were carried back to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor of Shechem for a price he paid in silver.

As the time drew near for God to fulfill His promise to Abraham, our people in Egypt increased greatly in number. Then another king, who knew nothing of Joseph, arose. He exploited our people and oppressed our fathers, forcing them to abandon their infants so they would die.

At that time Moses was born, and he was beautiful in the sight of God. For three months he was nurtured in his father’s house. When he was set outside, Pharaoh’s daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. So Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.

When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his brothers, the children of Israel. And when he saw one of them being mistreated, Moses went to his defense and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian who was oppressing him. He assumed his brothers would understand that God was using him to deliver them, but they did not.

The next day he came upon two Israelites who were fighting, and he urged them to make peace, saying, ‘Men, you are brothers. Why are you mistreating each other?’

But the man who was abusing his neighbor pushed Moses aside and said, ‘Who made you ruler and judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?’ At this remark, Moses fled to the land of Midian, where he lived as a foreigner and had two sons.

After forty years had passed, an angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight. As he approached to look more closely, the voice of the Lord came to him: ‘I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’ Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look.

Then the Lord said to him, ‘Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. I have indeed seen the oppression of My people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to deliver them. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt.’

This Moses, whom they had rejected with the words, ‘Who made you ruler and judge?’ is the one whom God sent to be their ruler and redeemer through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. He led them out and performed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, at the Red Sea, and for forty years in the wilderness.

This is the same Moses who told the Israelites, ‘The Lord our God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers.’ He was in the assembly in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. And he received a living word to pass on to us.

But our fathers refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and in their heart turned back to Egypt. They said to Aaron, ‘Make us gods who will go before us! As for this Moses who led us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him.’

At that time they made a calf and offered a sacrifice to the idol, rejoicing in the works of their hands. But God turned away from them and gave them over to the worship of the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets:

> ‘Did you bring Me sacrifices and offerings forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You have taken along the tabernacle of Molech and the star of your god Remphan, the idols you made to worship. Therefore I will send you into exile beyond Babylon.’

Our fathers had the tabernacle of the Testimony with them in the wilderness. It was constructed exactly as God had directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen. And our fathers who received it brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations God drove out before them. It remained until the time of David, who found favor in the sight of God and asked to provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built the house for Him.

However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made by human hands. As the prophet says:

> ‘Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. What kind of house will you build for Me, says the Lord, or where will My place of repose be? Has not My hand made all these things?’

You stiff-necked people with uncircumcised heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit, just as your fathers did. Which of the prophets did your fathers fail to persecute? They even killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One. And now you are His betrayers and murderers — you who received the law ordained by angels, yet have not kept it.”

On hearing this, the members of the Sanhedrin were enraged, and they gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked intently into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look,” he said, “I see heaven

open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

At this they covered their ears, cried out in a loud voice, and rushed together at him. They dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile the witnesses laid their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.

While they were stoning him, Stephen appealed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Falling on his knees, he cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

And Saul was there, giving approval to Stephen's death.

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. God-fearing men buried Stephen and mourned deeply over him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ to them. The crowds all paid close attention to Philip's message and to the signs they saw him perform. With loud shrieks, unclean spirits came out of many who were possessed, and many of the paralyzed and lame were healed. So there was great joy in that city.

Prior to that time, a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and astounded the people of Samaria. He claimed to be someone great, and from the least to the greatest they heeded his words and said, "This man is the great power of God." They paid close attention to him because he had astounded them for a long time with his sorcery.

But when they believed Philip as he preached the gospel of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Even Simon himself believed and was baptized. He followed Philip closely and was astounded by the miracles and signs he observed.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. On their arrival, they prayed for them to receive the Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of Jesus Christ. Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

When Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money. "Give me this power as well," he said, "so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

But Peter replied, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in our ministry, because your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore, of your wickedness, and pray to God. Perhaps He will forgive you for the intent of your heart. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and captive to iniquity."

Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord for me, so that nothing you have said may happen to me."

And after Peter and John had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many of the Samaritan villages.

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go south to the desert road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official in charge of the entire treasury of Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians. He had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his return was sitting in his chariot reading Isaiah the prophet.

The Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to that chariot and stay by it."

So Philip ran up and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked.

"How can I," he said, "unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture:

> "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so He did not open His mouth. In His humiliation He was deprived of justice. Who can recount His descendants? For His life was removed from the earth."

"Tell me," said the eunuch, "who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?"

Then Philip began with this very Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

As they traveled along the road and came to some water, the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is there to prevent me from being baptized?"

And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, but went on his way rejoicing. But Philip appeared at Azotus and traveled through that region, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord. He approached the high priest and requested letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any men or women belonging to the Way, he could bring them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

As Saul drew near to Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?"

"Who are You, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," replied the Lord. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless. They heard the voice but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could not see a thing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was without sight, and he did not eat or drink anything.

In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, "Ananias!"

"Here I am, Lord," he answered.

"Get up!" the Lord told him. "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place a hand on him to restore his sight."

But Ananias answered, "Lord, many people have told me about this man and all the harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And now he is here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on Your name."

"Go!" said the Lord. "This man is My chosen instrument to carry My name before the Gentiles and their kings, and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for My name."

So Ananias went to the house, and when he arrived, he placed his hands on Saul. "Brother Saul," he said, "the Lord, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here, has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

At that instant, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and his sight was restored. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. And Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus.

Saul promptly began to proclaim Christ in the synagogues, declaring , "He is the Son of God."

All who heard him were astounded and asked, "Isn't this the man who wreaked havoc in Jerusalem on those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?"

But Saul was empowered all the more, and he confounded the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

After many days had passed, the Jews conspired to kill him, but Saul learned of their plot. Day and night they watched the city gates in order to kill him. One night, however, the disciples took him and lowered him in a basket through a window in the wall.

When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and described how Saul had seen the Lord, who had spoken to him on the road to Damascus, and how Saul had spoken boldly in that city in the name of Jesus.

So Saul stayed with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem and speaking boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus. He talked and debated with the Grecian Jews, but they tried to kill him. When the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

Then the churches throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria experienced a time of peace. They grew in strength and numbers, living in the fear of the Lord and the encouragement of the Holy Spirit.

As Peter traveled throughout the area, he went to visit the saints in Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas who had been paralyzed and bedridden for eight years. "Aeneas," Peter said to him, "Jesus Christ heals you! Get up and put away your mat." Immediately Aeneas got up, and all who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which is translated as Dorcas), who was always occupied with works of kindness and charity. At that time, however, she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upper room. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent to urge him, "Come to them without delay."

So Peter got up and went with them. On his arrival, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood around him, weeping and showing him the tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

Then Peter sent them all out of the room. He knelt down and prayed, and turning toward her body, he said, "Tabitha, get up!" She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. Peter took her by the hand and helped her up. Then he called the saints and widows and presented her to them alive.

This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. And Peter stayed for several days in Joppa with a tanner named Simon.

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was called the Italian Regiment. He and all his household were devout and God-fearing. He gave generously to the people and prayed to God regularly. One day at about the ninth hour, he had a clear vision of an angel of God who came to him and said, "Cornelius!"

Cornelius stared at him in fear and asked, "What is it, Lord?"

The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have ascended as a memorial offering before God. Now send men to Joppa to call for Simon who is called Peter. He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea."

When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among his attendants. He explained what had happened and sent them to Joppa.

The next day at about the sixth hour, as the men were approaching the city on their journey, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance.

He saw heaven open and something like a large sheet being let down to earth to him, bound at its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, and reptiles, as well as birds of the air. Then a voice said to him: "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!"

"No, Lord!" Peter answered. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

The voice spoke to him a second time: "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

This happened three times, and again the sheet was taken back up into heaven.

While Peter was puzzling over the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found Simon's house and approached the gate. They called out to ask if Simon called Peter was staying there.

As Peter continued to reflect on the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, men are looking for you. So get up! Go downstairs and accompany them without hesitation, because I have sent them."

So Peter went down to the men and said, "Here am I, the one you are looking for. Why have you come?"

"Cornelius the centurion has sent us ," they said. "He is a righteous and God-fearing man with a good reputation among the whole Jewish nation. A holy angel instructed him to request your presence in his home so he could hear a message from you."

So Peter invited them in as his guests. And the next day he went with them, accompanied by some of the brothers from Joppa.

The following day they arrived in Caesarea, where Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. As Peter was about to enter, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet to worship him. But Peter helped him up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself."

As Peter talked with him, he went inside and found many people gathered together. He said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with a foreigner or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. So when I was invited, I came without objection. I ask, then, why have you sent for me?"

Cornelius answered: "Four days ago I was in my house fasting and praying at this, the ninth hour. Suddenly a man in radiant clothing stood before me and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your gifts to the poor have been remembered before God. Therefore send to Joppa for Simon, who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, by the sea. He will speak to you when he arrives.'

So I sent for you immediately, and you were kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything God has instructed you to tell us."

Then Peter began to speak: "I now truly understand that God does not show favoritism, but welcomes those from every nation who fear Him and do what is right. He has sent this message to the people of Israel, proclaiming the gospel of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

You yourselves know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee with the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with Him.

We are witnesses of all that He did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. And although they put Him to death by hanging Him on a tree, God raised Him up on the third day and caused Him to be seen — not by all the people, but by the witnesses God had chosen beforehand, by us who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that He is the One appointed by God to judge the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about Him that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name."

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard his message. All the circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and exalting God.

Then Peter said, "Can anyone withhold the water to baptize these people? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have!" So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay for a few days.

The apostles and brothers throughout Judea soon heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers took issue with him and said, "You visited uncircumcised men and ate with them."

But Peter began and explained to them the whole sequence of events: "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision of something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came right down to me. I looked at it closely and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles, and birds of the air. Then I heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter, kill and eat.'

'No, Lord,' I said, 'for nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.'

But the voice spoke to me from heaven a second time, 'Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.'

This happened three times, and everything was drawn back up into heaven.

Just then three men sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying. The Spirit told me to accompany them without hesitation. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man's home. He told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send men to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He will convey to you a message by which you and all your household will be saved.'

As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as He had fallen upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' So if God gave them the same gift He gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to hinder the work of God?"

When they heard this, they had no further objections, and they glorified God, saying, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life."

Meanwhile those scattered by the persecution that began with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the message only to Jews. But some of them, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks, proclaiming the good news about the Lord Jesus. The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

When news of this reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem, they sent out Barnabas, that he should go to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced and encouraged them all to abide in the Lord with all their hearts. Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. So for a full year they met together with the church and

taught large numbers of people. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.

In those days some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up and predicted through the Spirit that a great famine would sweep across the whole world.(This happened under Claudius Caesar.) So the disciples, each according to his ability, decided to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gifts to the elders with Barnabas and Saul.

About that time, King Herod reached out to harm some who belonged to the church. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword.

And seeing that this pleased the Jews, Herod proceeded to seize Peter during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. He arrested him and put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out to the people after the Passover.

So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

On the night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, with sentries standing guard at the entrance to the prison. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and woke him up, saying, “Get up quickly.” And the chains fell off his wrists. “Get dressed and put on your sandals,” said the angel. Peter did so, and the angel told him, “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.”

So Peter followed him out, but he was unaware that what the angel was doing was real. He thought he was only seeing a vision. They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city, which opened for them by itself. When they had gone outside and walked the length of one block, the angel suddenly left him.

Then Peter came to himself and said, “Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent His angel and rescued me from Herod’s grasp and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating.”

And when he had realized this, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered together and were praying. Peter knocked at the outer gate, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer it. When she recognized Peter’s voice, she was so overjoyed that she forgot to open the gate, but ran inside and announced, “Peter is standing at the gate!”

“You are out of your mind,” they told her. But when she kept insisting it was so, they said, “It must be his angel.”

But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astounded. Peter motioned with his hand for silence, and he described how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. “Send word to James and to the brothers,” he said, and he left for another place.

At daybreak there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. After Herod had searched for him unsuccessfully, he examined the guards and ordered that they be executed. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and spent some time there.

Now Herod was in a furious dispute with the people of Tyre and Sidon, and they convened before him. Having secured the support of Blastus, the king’s chamberlain, they asked for peace, because their region depended on the king’s country for food. On the appointed day, Herod donned his royal robes, sat on his throne, and addressed the people. And they began to shout, “This is the voice of a god, not a man!”

Immediately, because Herod did not give glory to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

But the word of God continued to spread and multiply.

When Barnabas and Saul had fulfilled their mission to Jerusalem, they returned, bringing with them John, also called Mark.

Now in the church at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch), and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” And after they had fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

So Barnabas and Saul, sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. And John was with them as their helper.

They traveled through the island as far as Paphos, where they found a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, a man of intelligence, summoned Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith.

Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked directly at Elymas and said, “O child of the devil and enemy of all righteousness, you are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery! Will you never stop perverting the straight ways of the Lord? Now look, the hand of the Lord is against you, and for a time you will be blind and unable to see the light of the sun.” Immediately mist and darkness fell over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord.

After setting sail from Paphos, Paul and his companions came to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem. And from Perga, they traveled inland to Pisidian Antioch, where they entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and sat down. After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue leaders sent word to them: “Brothers, if you have a word of encouragement for the people, please speak.”

Paul stood up, motioned with his hand, and began to speak: “Men of Israel and you Gentiles who fear God, listen to me! The God of the people chose our fathers.

He made them into a great people during their stay in Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He led them out of that land. He endured their conduct for about forty years in the wilderness. And having vanquished seven nations in Canaan, He gave their land to His people as their inheritance. All this took about 450 years.

After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet. Then the people asked for a king, and God gave them Saul son of Kish, from the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. After removing Saul, He raised up David as their king and testified about him: 'I have found David son of Jesse a man after My own heart; he will carry out My will in its entirety.'

From the descendants of this man, God has brought to Israel salvation, as He promised. Before the arrival of Jesus, John preached a baptism of repentance to Israel. As John was completing his course, he said, 'Who do you suppose I am? I am not that One. But there is One coming after me whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.'

Brothers, children of Abraham, and you Gentiles who fear God, it is to you that this message of salvation has been sent. The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning Him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. And though they found no ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have Him executed.

When they had carried out all that was written about Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead, and for many days He was seen by those who had accompanied Him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are His witnesses to our people.

And now we proclaim to you the good news: What God promised our fathers He has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm:

> 'You are My Son; today I have become Your Father.'

In fact, God raised Him from the dead, never to see decay. As He has said:

> 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.'

So also, He says in another Psalm:

> 'You will not let Your Holy One see decay.'

For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep. His body was buried with his fathers and saw decay. But the One whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.

Therefore let it be known to you, brothers, that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through Him everyone who believes is justified from everything from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. Watch out, then, that what was spoken by the prophets does not happen to you:

> 'Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish! For I am doing a work in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you.'"

As the Jews were leaving the synagogue, the Gentiles urged Paul and Barnabas to continue this message on the next Sabbath. After the synagogue was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

On the following Sabbath, nearly the whole city gathered to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and they blasphemously opposed and contradicted what Paul was saying.

Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "It was necessary to speak the word of God to you first. But since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us:

> 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'"

When the Gentiles heard this, they rejoiced and glorified the word of the Lord, and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord spread throughout that region.

The Jews, however, incited the religious women of prominence and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas and drove them out of their district. So they shook the dust off their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

At Iconium, Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue, where they spoke so well that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who affirmed the message of His grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders.

The people of the city were divided. Some sided with the Jews, and others with the apostles. But when the Gentiles and Jews, together with their rulers, set out to mistreat and stone them, they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding region, where they continued to preach the gospel.

In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. This man was listening to the words of Paul, who looked intently at him and saw that he had faith to be healed. In a loud voice Paul called out, "Stand up on your feet!" And the man jumped up and began to walk.

When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices in the Lycaonian language: "The gods have come down to us in human form!" Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside their city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates, hoping to offer a sacrifice along with the crowds.

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul found out about this, they tore their clothes and rushed into the crowd, shouting, "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. In past generations, He let all nations go their own way. Yet He has not left Himself without testimony to His goodness: He gives you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

Even with these words, Paul and Barnabas could hardly stop the crowds from sacrificing to them.

Then some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and won over the crowds. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, presuming he was dead. But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. And the next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe.

They preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples and encouraging them to continue in the faith. "We must endure many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.

Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church, praying and fasting as they entrusted them to the Lord, in whom they had believed.

After passing through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

From Attalia they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work they had just completed. When they arrived, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them, and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. And they spent a long time there with the disciples.

Then some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." Therefore after engaging these men in sharp debate, Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers , to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.

Sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, recounting the conversion of the Gentiles and bringing great joy to all the brothers. On their arrival in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and apostles and elders, to whom they reported all that God had done through them.

But some believers from the party of the Pharisees stood up and declared, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses." So the apostles and elders met to look into this matter.

After much debate, Peter got up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among us that the Gentiles would hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, showed His approval by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as He did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for He cleansed their hearts by faith.

Now then, why do you test God by placing on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe it is through the grace of the Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

The whole assembly fell silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul describing the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. When they had finished speaking, James declared, "Brothers, listen to me! Simon has told us how God first visited the Gentiles to take from them a people to be His own. The words of the prophets agree with this, as it is written:

> 'After this I will return and rebuild the fallen tent of David. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, so that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord who does all these things.'

Known for ages to God are all His works.

It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not cause trouble for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead, we should write and tell them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals, and from blood. For Moses has been proclaimed in every city from ancient times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath."

Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to select men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas called Barsabbas and Silas, two leaders among the brothers, and sent them with this letter:

The apostles, elders, and brothers,
To the brothers among the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia:
Greetings.

It has come to our attention that some went out from us without our authorization and unsettled you, troubling your minds by saying that you must be circumcised and keep the law. So we all agreed to send chosen men to you along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to tell you in person the same things we are writing.

It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond these essential requirements: You must abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.

Farewell.

So the men were sent off and went to Antioch, where they assembled the congregation and delivered the letter. When the people read it, they rejoiced at its encouraging message.

Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers. After spending some time there, they were sent off by the brothers in peace to return to the apostles. But Paul and Barnabas remained at Antioch, along with many others, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord.

Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit our brothers in every town where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, to see how they are doing." Barnabas wanted to take John called Mark. But Paul thought it best not to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not accompanied them in the work.

Their disagreement was so sharp that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of God. And he traveled through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where he found a disciple named Timothy, the son of a believing

Jewish woman and a Greek father. The brothers in Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, so he took him and circumcised him on account of the Jews in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

As they went from town to town, they delivered the decisions handed down by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

After the Holy Spirit had prevented them from speaking the word in the province of Asia, they traveled through the region of Phrygia and Galatia. And when they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit would not permit them. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.

During the night, Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and pleading with him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." As soon as Paul had seen the vision, we got ready to leave for Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Therefore we sailed from Troas straight to Samothrace, and the following day on to Neapolis. From there we went to the Roman colony of Philippi, the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

On the Sabbath we went outside the city along the river, where it was customary to find a place of prayer. After sitting down, we spoke to the women who had gathered there.

Among those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, "If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

One day as we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl with a spirit of divination, who earned a large income for her masters by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to us the way of salvation!"

She continued this for many days. Eventually Paul grew so aggravated that he turned and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" And the spirit left her at that very moment.

When the girl's owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities in the marketplace. They brought them to the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews and are throwing our city into turmoil by promoting customs that are unlawful for us Romans to adopt or practice."

The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered that they be stripped and beaten with rods. And after striking them with many blows, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to guard them securely. On receiving this order, he placed them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly a strong earthquake shook the foundations of the prison. At once all the doors flew open and everyone's chains came loose.

When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, presuming that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul called out in a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself! We are all here!"

Calling for lights, the jailer rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household." Then Paul and Silas spoke the word of the Lord to him and to everyone in his house. At that hour of the night, the jailer took them and washed their wounds. And without delay, he and all his household were baptized. Then he brought them into his home and set a meal before them. So he and all his household rejoiced that they had come to believe in God.

When daylight came, the magistrates sent their officers with the order: "Release those men."

The jailer informed Paul: "The magistrates have sent orders to release you. Now you may go on your way in peace."

But Paul said to the officers, "They beat us publicly without a trial and threw us into prison, even though we are Roman citizens. And now do they want to send us away secretly? Absolutely not! Let them come themselves and escort us out!"

So the officers relayed this message to the magistrates, who were alarmed to hear that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. They came to appease them and led them out, requesting that they leave the city. After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house to see the brothers and encourage them. Then they left the city .

When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbaths he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ," he declared . Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few leading women.

The unbelieving Jews, however, brought in some troublemakers from the marketplace, formed a mob, and sent the city into an uproar. They raided Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas, hoping to bring them out to the people. But when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have now come here, and Jason has welcomed them into his home. They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, named Jesus!"

On hearing this, the crowd and city officials were greatly disturbed. And they collected bond from Jason and the others and then released them.

As soon as night had fallen, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they

went into the Jewish synagogue. Now the Bereans were more noble-minded than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if these teachings were true. As a result, many of them believed, along with quite a few prominent Greek women and men.

But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that Paul was also proclaiming the word of God in Berea, they went there themselves to incite the crowds. The brothers immediately sent Paul away as if to the coast, but Silas and Timothy remained in Berea. Those who escorted Paul brought him to Athens and then returned with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply disturbed in his spirit to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and God-fearing Gentiles, and in the marketplace with those he met each day.

Some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also began to debate with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others said, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was proclaiming the good news of Jesus and the resurrection.

So they took Paul and brought him to the Areopagus, where they asked him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? For you are bringing some strange notions to our ears, and we want to know what they mean."

Now all the Athenians and foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing more than hearing and articulating new ideas.

Then Paul stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and examined your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription:

TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.

Therefore Him whom you worship as something unknown, I now proclaim to you.

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples made by human hands. Nor is He served by the hands of men, as if He needed anything, because He Himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one blood He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands.

The Lord intended that they would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. 'For in Him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are His offspring.' Therefore, being offspring of God, we should not think that the Divine Being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by man's skill and imagination.

Although God overlooked the ignorance of earlier times, He now commands all people everywhere to repent. For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the Man He has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising Him from the dead."

When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some began to mock him, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this topic." At that, Paul left the Areopagus. But some joined him and believed, including Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others who were with them.

After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to visit them, and he stayed and worked with them because they were tentmakers by trade, just as he was.

Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks alike. And when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, testifying to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. But when they opposed and insulted him, he shook out his garments and told them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

So Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Justus, a worshiper of God. Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his whole household believed in the Lord. And many of the Corinthians who heard the message believed and were baptized.

One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking; do not be silent. For I am with you and no one will lay a hand on you, because I have many people in this city." So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching the word of God among the Corinthians.

While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews coordinated an attack on Paul and brought him before the judgment seat. "This man is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law," they said.

But just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio told the Jews, "If this matter involved a wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to hear your complaint . But since it is a dispute about words and names and your own law, settle it yourselves. For I refuse to be a judge of such things." And he drove them away from the judgment seat.

At this, all the Greeks seized Sosthenes the synagogue leader and beat him in front of the judgment seat. But none of this was of concern to Gallio.

Paul remained in Corinth for quite some time before saying goodbye to the brothers. He had his head shaved in Cenchrea to keep a vow he had made , and then he sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila.

When he reached Ephesus, Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue there and reasoned with the Jews. When they asked him to stay with them for a while longer, he declined. But as he left, he said, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem, but I will come back to you if God is willing." And he set sail from Ephesus.

When Paul had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church at Jerusalem . Then he went down to Antioch.

After Paul had spent some time in Antioch, he traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, well versed in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord and was fervent in spirit. He spoke and taught accurately about the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

When Apollos resolved to cross over to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. On his arrival, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. For he powerfully refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the interior and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?"

"No," they answered, "we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

"Into what, then, were you baptized?" Paul asked.

"The baptism of John," they replied.

Paul explained: "John's baptism was indeed a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the One coming after him, that is, in Christ Jesus."

On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all.

Then Paul went into the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. But when some of them stubbornly refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way, Paul took his disciples and left the synagogue to conduct daily discussions in the lecture hall of a man named Tyrannus. This continued for two years, so that everyone who lived in the province of Asia, Jews and Greeks alike, heard the word of the Lord Jesus.

God did extraordinary miracles through the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were brought to the sick, and the diseases and evil spirits left them.

Now there were some itinerant Jewish exorcists who tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those with evil spirits. They would say, "I command you by Jesus, whom Paul proclaims." Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.

But one day the evil spirit responded, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" Then the man with the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them. The attack was so violent that they ran out of the house naked and wounded.

This became known to all the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, and fear came over all of them. So the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. Many who had believed now came forward, confessing and disclosing their deeds. And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books and burned them in front of everyone. When the value of the books was calculated, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. So the word of the Lord powerfully continued to spread and prevail.

After these things had happened, Paul resolved in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," he said, "I must see Rome as well." He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed for a time in the province of Asia.

About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. It began with a silversmith named Demetrius who made silver shrines of Artemis, bringing much business to the craftsmen.

Demetrius assembled the craftsmen, along with the workmen in related trades. "Men," he said, "you know that this business is our source of prosperity. And you can see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in nearly the whole province of Asia, this Paul has persuaded a great number of people to turn away. He says that man-made gods are no gods at all. There is danger not only that our business will fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited and her majesty deposed — she who is worshiped by all the province of Asia and the whole world."

When the men heard this, they were enraged and began shouting, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" Soon the whole city was in disarray. They rushed together into the theatre, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia.

Paul wanted to go before the assembly, but the disciples would not allow him. Even some of Paul's friends who were officials of the province of Asia sent word to him, begging him not to venture into the theatre.

Meanwhile the assembly was in turmoil. Some were shouting one thing and some another, and most of them did not even know why they were there. The Jews in the crowd pushed Alexander forward, and he motioned for silence so he could make his defense to the people. But when they realized that he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

Finally the city clerk quieted the crowd and declared, "Men of Ephesus, doesn't everyone know that the city of Ephesus is guardian of the temple of the great goddess Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? Since these things are undeniable, you ought to be calm and not do anything rash. For you have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed our temple nor blasphemed your goddess.

So if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open and proconsuls are available. Let them bring charges against one another there . But if you are seeking anything concerning other matters, it must be settled in a legal assembly. For we are in jeopardy of being charged with rioting for today's events, and we have no justification to account for this commotion."

After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.

When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples. And he said goodbye to them and left for Macedonia. After traveling through that area and speaking many words of encouragement, he arrived in Greece,

where he stayed three months. And when the Jews formed a plot against him as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to go back through Macedonia.

Paul was accompanied into the province of Asia by Sopater from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia. These men went on ahead and waited for us in Troas. And after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, we sailed from Philippi, and five days later we rejoined them in Troas, where we stayed seven days.

On the first day of the week, the disciples came together to break bread. Since Paul was ready to leave the next day, he talked to them and kept on speaking until midnight.

Now there were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. And a certain young man named Eutychus, seated in the window, was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell from the third story and was picked up dead. But Paul went down, threw himself on the young man, and embraced him. "Do not be alarmed!" he said. "He is still alive!"

Then Paul went back upstairs, broke bread, and ate. And after speaking until daybreak, he departed. And the people were greatly relieved to take the boy home alive.

We went to the ship and sailed to Assos, where we were to take Paul aboard. He had arranged this because he was going there on foot. And when he met us at Assos, we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene. Sailing on from there, we arrived the next day opposite Chios. The day after that we arrived at Samos. And after remaining at Trogyllium, on the following day we came to Miletus.

Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, because he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost.

From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church.

When they came to him, he said, "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I arrived in the province of Asia. I served the Lord with great humility and with many tears, especially in the trials that came upon me through the plots of the Jews. I did not shrink back from declaring anything that was helpful to you as I taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews and Greeks alike about repentance to God and faith in our Lord Jesus.

And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in town after town the Holy Spirit warns that chains and afflictions await me. But I consider my life of no value to me, if only I may finish my course with joy and complete the ministry I have received from the Lord Jesus — the ministry of testifying to the good news of God's grace.

Now I know that none of you among whom I have preached the kingdom of God will see my face again. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I did not shrink back from declaring to you the whole will of God.

Therefore keep watch over yourselves and the entire flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of the Lord and God, which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number, men will rise up and distort the truth to draw away disciples after them. Therefore be alert and remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

And now I commit you, brothers, to God and to the word of His grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all who are sanctified.

I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have ministered to my own needs and those of my companions. In everything, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus Himself: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

When Paul had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. They all wept openly as they embraced Paul and kissed him. They were especially grieved by his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

After we had torn ourselves away from them, we sailed directly to Cos, and the next day on to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. Finding a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we boarded it and set sail. After sighting Cyprus and passing south of it, we sailed on to Syria and landed at Tyre, where the ship was to unload its cargo.

We sought out disciples in Tyre and stayed with them seven days. Through the Spirit they kept telling Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. But when our time there had ended, we set out on our journey. All the disciples, with their wives and children, accompanied us out of the city and knelt down on the beach to pray with us. And after we had said our farewells, we went aboard the ship, and they returned home.

When we had finished our voyage from Tyre, we landed at Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for a day.

Leaving the next day, Paul and his companions went on to Caesarea and stayed at the home of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the Seven. He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

After we had been there several days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own feet and hands, and said, "The Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and hand him over to the Gentiles.'" When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem.

Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." When he would not be dissuaded, we quieted down and said, "The Lord's will be done."

After these days, we packed up and went on to Jerusalem. Some of the disciples from Caesarea accompanied us, and they took us to stay at the home of Mnason the Cypriot, an early disciple.

When we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers welcomed us joyfully. The next day Paul went in with us to see James, and all the elders were present. Paul greeted them and recounted one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

When they heard this, they glorified the Lord. Then they said to Paul, "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. But they are under the impression that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or observe our customs. What then should we do? Certainly a multitude will gather, for they will hear that you have come.

Therefore do what we advise you. There are four men with us who have taken a vow. Take these men, purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so they can have their heads shaved. Then everyone will know that there is no truth to these rumors about you, but that you also live in obedience to the law.

As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they should observe no such thing, except that they must abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality."

So the next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he entered the temple to give notice of the date when their purification would be complete and the offering would be made for each of them.

When the seven days were almost over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, crying out, "Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against our people and against our law and against this place. Furthermore, he has brought Greeks into the temple and defiled this holy place." For they had seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple.

The whole city was stirred up, and the people rushed together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut. While they were trying to kill him, the commander of the Roman regiment received a report that all Jerusalem was in turmoil. Immediately he took some soldiers and centurions and ran down to the crowd. When the people saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

The commander came up and arrested Paul, ordering that he be bound with two chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done.

Some in the crowd were crying out one thing, and some another. And since the commander could not get at the truth because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be brought into the barracks. When Paul reached the steps, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. For the crowd that followed him kept shouting, "Away with him!"

As they were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the commander, "May I speak to you?"

"Do you speak Greek?" he replied. "Aren't you the Egyptian who incited a rebellion some time ago and led four thousand members of the Assassins into the wilderness?"

But Paul answered, "I am a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. Now I beg you to allow me to speak to the people."

Having received permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. A great hush came over the crowd, and he addressed them in Hebrew:

"Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense before you." When they heard him speak to them in Hebrew, they became even more quiet.

Then Paul declared, "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but raised in this city. I was educated at the feet of Gamaliel in strict conformity to the law of our fathers. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today.

I persecuted this Way even to the death, detaining both men and women and throwing them into prison, as the high priest and the whole Council can testify about me. I even obtained letters from them to their brothers in Damascus, and I was on my way to apprehend these people and bring them to Jerusalem to be punished.

About noon as I was approaching Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?'

'Who are You, Lord?' I asked.

'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,' He replied. My companions saw the light and were terrified, but they could not understand the voice of the One speaking to me.

Then I asked, 'What should I do, Lord?'

'Get up and go into Damascus,' He told me. 'There you will be told all that you have been appointed to do.'

Because the brilliance of the light had blinded me, my companions led me by the hand into Damascus. There a man named Ananias, a devout observer of the law who was highly regarded by all the Jews living there, came and stood beside me. 'Brother Saul,' he said, 'receive your sight.' And at that moment I could see him.

Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear His voice. You will be His witness to everyone of what you have seen and heard. And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized, and wash your sins away, calling on the name of the Lord.'

Later, when I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance and saw the Lord saying to me, 'Hurry! Leave Jerusalem quickly, because the people here will not accept your testimony about Me.'

'Lord,' I answered, 'they know very well that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in You. And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval to his death and watching over the garments of those who killed him.'

Then He said to me, 'Go! I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"

The crowd listened to Paul until he made this statement. Then they lifted up their voices and shouted, "Rid the earth of him! He is not fit to live!"

As they were crying out and throwing off their cloaks and tossing dust into the air, the commander ordered that Paul be brought into the barracks. He directed that Paul be flogged and interrogated to determine the reason for this outcry against him.

But as he stretched him out to strap him down, Paul said to the centurion standing there, “Is it lawful for you to flog a Roman citizen without a trial?”

On hearing this, the centurion went and reported it to the commander. “Consider what you are about to do,” he said. “This man is a Roman citizen.”

The commander went to Paul and asked, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?”

“Yes,” he answered.

“I paid a high price for my citizenship,” said the commander.

“But I was born a citizen,” Paul replied.

At once those who were about to interrogate Paul stepped back, and the commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put a Roman citizen in chains.

The next day the commander, wanting to learn the real reason Paul was accused by the Jews, released him from the bonds and ordered the chief priests and their whole Sanhedrin to assemble. Then he brought Paul down and had him stand before them.

Paul looked directly at the Sanhedrin and said, “Brothers, I have conducted myself before God in all good conscience to this day.”

At this, the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth.

Then Paul said to him, “God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit here to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck.”

But those standing nearby said, “How dare you insult the high priest of God!”

“Brothers,” Paul replied, “I was not aware that he was the high priest, for it is written: ‘Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.’”

Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. It is because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.”

As soon as he had said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is neither a resurrection nor angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.

A great clamor arose, and some scribes from the party of the Pharisees got up and contended sharply, “We find nothing wrong with this man. If a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God.” The dispute grew so violent that the commander was afraid they would tear Paul to pieces. He ordered the soldiers to go down and remove him by force and bring him into the barracks.

The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “Take courage, Paul! As you have testified about Me in Jerusalem, so also you must testify in Rome.”

When daylight came, some of the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. More than forty of them were involved in this plot. They went to the chief priests and elders and said, “We have bound ourselves with a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul. Now then, you and the Sanhedrin petition the commander to bring him down to you tomorrow on the pretext of examining his case more carefully. We are ready to kill him on the way.”

But when the son of Paul’s sister heard about the plot, he went into the barracks and told Paul. Then Paul called one of the centurions and said, “Take this young man to the commander; he has something to tell him.”

So the centurion took him to the commander and said, “Paul the prisoner sent and asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to tell you.”

The commander took the young man by the hand, drew him aside, and asked, “What do you need to tell me?”

He answered, “The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul to the Sanhedrin tomorrow on the pretext of acquiring more information about him. Do not let them persuade you, because more than forty men are waiting to ambush him. They have bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him; they are ready now, awaiting your consent.”

So the commander dismissed the young man and instructed him, “Do not tell anyone that you have reported this to me.”

Then he called two of his centurions and said, “Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea in the third hour of the night. Provide mounts for Paul to take him safely to Governor Felix.” And he wrote the following letter:

Claudius Lysias,
To His Excellency, Governor Felix:
Greetings.
This man was seized by the Jews, and they were about to kill him when I came with my troops to rescue him. For I had learned that he is a Roman citizen, and since I wanted to know their charges against him, I brought him down to their Sanhedrin. I found that the accusation involved questions about their own law, but there was no charge worthy of death or imprisonment.
When I was informed that there was a plot by the Jews against the man, I sent him to you at once. I also instructed his accusers to present their case against him before you. Farewell.

So the soldiers followed their orders and brought Paul by night to Antipatris. The next day they returned to the barracks and let the horsemen go on with him. When the horsemen arrived in Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and presented Paul to him.

The governor read the letter and asked what province Paul was from. Learning that he was from Cilicia, he said, “I will hear your case when your accusers arrive.” Then he ordered that Paul be kept under guard in Herod’s Praetorium.

Five days later the high priest Ananias came down with the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, who presented to the governor their case against Paul.

When Paul had been called in, Tertullus opened the prosecution: “Because of you, we have enjoyed a lasting peace, and your foresight has brought worthy reforms

to this nation. In every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with all gratitude. But in order not to delay you any further, I beg your indulgence to hear us briefly.

We have found this man to be a pestilence, stirring up dissension among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, and he even tried to desecrate the temple; so we seized him. By examining him yourself, you will be able to learn the truth about all our charges against him."

The Jews concurred, asserting that these charges were true.

When the governor motioned for Paul to speak, he began his response: "Knowing that you have been a judge over this nation for many years, I gladly make my defense. You can verify for yourself that no more than twelve days ago I went up to worship in Jerusalem. Yet my accusers did not find me debating with anyone in the temple or riling up a crowd in the synagogues or in the city. Nor can they prove any of their charges against me.

I do confess to you, however, that I worship the God of our fathers according to the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is written throughout the Law and the Prophets, and I have the same hope in God that they themselves cherish, that there will be a resurrection of the dead— of both the righteous and the wicked. In this hope, I strive always to maintain a clear conscience before God and man.

After several years, then, I returned to Jerusalem to bring alms to my people and to present offerings. At the time they found me in the temple, I was ceremonially clean and was not inciting a crowd or an uproar. But there are some Jews from the province of Asia who ought to appear before you and bring charges, if they have anything against me. Otherwise, let these men state for themselves any crime they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin, unless it was this one thing I called out as I stood in their presence: 'It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am being tried by you today.'"

On hearing these things Felix, who was well informed about the Way, adjourned the hearing and said, "When Lysias the commander comes, I will decide your case." He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard, but to allow him some freedom and permit his friends to come and minister to his needs.

After several days, Felix returned with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and listened to him speak about faith in Christ. As Paul expounded on righteousness, self-control, and the coming judgment, Felix became frightened and said, "You may go for now. When I find the time, I will call for you." At the same time, he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe to release him. So he sent for Paul frequently and talked with him.

After two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.

Three days after his arrival in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, where the high priest and Jewish leaders presented their case against Paul. They urged Festus to grant them a concession against Paul by summoning him to Jerusalem, because they were preparing an ambush to kill him along the way.

But Festus replied, "Paul is being held in Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon. So if this man has done anything wrong, let some of your leaders come down with me and accuse him there."

After spending more than ten days with them, Festus went down to Caesarea. The next day he sat on the judgment seat and ordered that Paul be brought in. When Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, laying against Paul many serious charges that they could not prove.

Then Paul made his defense: "I have committed no offense against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar."

But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem to stand trial before me on these charges?"

Paul replied, "I am standing before the judgment seat of Caesar, where I ought to be tried. I have done nothing wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. If, however, I am guilty of anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die. But if there is no truth to their accusations against me, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!"

Then Festus conferred with his council and replied, "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!"

After several days had passed, King Agrippa and Bernice came down to Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus. Since he was staying several days, Festus laid out Paul's case before the king: "There is a certain man whom Felix left in prison. While I was in Jerusalem, the chief priests and elders of the Jews presented their case and requested a judgment against him. I told them that it is not the Roman custom to hand a man over to die before he has had an opportunity to face his accusers and defend himself against their charges.

So when they came here with me, I did not delay. The next day I sat on the judgment seat and ordered that the man be brought in. But when his accusers rose to speak, they did not charge him with anything I had expected. They only had some contentions with him regarding their own religion and a certain Jesus who had died, but whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

Since I was at a loss as to how to investigate this matter, I asked if he was willing to go to Jerusalem and be tried there on these charges. But when Paul appealed to be held over for the decision of the Emperor, I ordered that he be held until I could send him to Caesar."

Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I would like to hear this man myself."

"Tomorrow you will hear him," Festus declared.

The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the auditorium, along with the commanders and leading men of the city. And Festus ordered that Paul be brought in.

Then Festus said, "King Agrippa and all who are present with us, you see this man. The whole Jewish community has petitioned me about him, both here and in Jerusalem, crying out that he ought not to live any longer. But I found he had done nothing worthy of

death, and since he has now appealed to the Emperor, I decided to send him.

I have nothing definite to write to our sovereign about him. Therefore I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after this inquiry I may have something to write. For it seems unreasonable to me to send on a prisoner without specifying the charges against him."

Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself."

Then Paul stretched out his hand and began his defense: "King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today to defend myself against all the accusations of the Jews, especially since you are acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. I beg you, therefore, to listen to me patiently.

Surely all the Jews know how I have lived from my earliest childhood among my own people in Jerusalem. They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I lived as a Pharisee, adhering to the strictest sect of our religion.

And now I stand on trial because of my hope in the promise that God made to our fathers, the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. It is because of this hope, O King Agrippa, that I am accused by the Jews. Why would any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

So then, I too was convinced that I ought to do all I could to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is what I did in Jerusalem. With authority from the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were condemned to death, I cast my vote against them. I frequently had them punished in the synagogues, and I tried to make them blaspheme. In my raging fury against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.

In this pursuit I was on my way to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice say to me in Hebrew,'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

'Who are You, Lord?' I asked.

'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' He replied. 'But get up and stand on your feet. For I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those sanctified by faith in Me.'

So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. First to those in Damascus and Jerusalem, then to everyone throughout the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I declared that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds worthy of their repentance. For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me.

But I have had God's help to this day, and I stand here to testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen: that the Christ would suffer, and as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to our people and to the Gentiles."

At this stage of Paul's defense, Festus exclaimed in a loud voice, "You are insane, Paul! Your great learning is driving you to madness!"

But he answered, "I am not insane, most excellent Festus; I am speaking words of truth and sobriety. For the king knows about these matters, and I can speak freely to him. I am confident that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do."

Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Can you persuade me in such a short time to become a Christian?"

"Short time or long," Paul replied, "I wish to God that not only you but all who hear me this day may become what I am, except for these chains."

When he had spoken these things, the king and the governor rose, along with Bernice and those seated with them. On their way out, they said to one another, "This man has done nothing worthy of death or imprisonment."

And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been released if he had not appealed to Caesar."

When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius, who belonged to the Imperial Regiment. We boarded an Adramyttian ship about to sail for ports along the coast of Asia, and we put out to sea. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was with us.

The next day we landed at Sidon, and Julius treated Paul with consideration, allowing him to visit his friends and receive their care. After putting out from there, we sailed to the lee of Cyprus because the winds were against us. And when we had sailed across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and put us on board.

After sailing slowly for many days, we arrived off Cnidus. When the wind impeded us, we sailed to the lee of Crete, opposite Salmone. After we had moved along the coast with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea.

By now much time had passed, and the voyage had already become dangerous because it was after the Fast. So Paul advised them, "Men, I can see that our voyage will be filled with disaster and great loss, not only to ship and cargo, but to our own lives as well."

But contrary to Paul's advice, the centurion was persuaded by the pilot and by the owner of the ship. Since the harbor was unsuitable to winter in, the majority decided to sail on, hoping that somehow they could reach Phoenix to winter there. Phoenix was a harbor in Crete facing both southwest and northwest.

When a gentle south wind began to blow, they thought they had their opportunity. So they weighed anchor and sailed along, hugging the coast of Crete. But it was not long before a cyclone called the Northeaster

swept down across the island. Unable to head into the wind, the ship was caught up. So we gave way and let ourselves be driven along.

Passing to the lee of a small island called Clauda, we barely managed to secure the lifeboat. After hoisting it up, the crew used ropes to undergird the ship. And fearing that they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis, they lowered the sea anchor and were driven along.

We were tossed so violently that the next day the men began to jettison the cargo. On the third day, we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands. When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the great storm continued to batter us, we abandoned all hope of being saved.

After the men had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have followed my advice not to sail from Crete. Then you would have averted this disaster and loss. But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because you will not experience any loss of life, but only of the ship. For just last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And look, God has granted you the lives of all who sail with you.'

So take courage, men, for I believe God that it will happen just as He told me. However, we must run aground on some island."

On the fourteenth night we were still being driven across the Adriatic Sea. About midnight the sailors sensed they were approaching land. They took soundings and found that the water was twenty fathoms deep. Going a little farther, they took another set of soundings that read fifteen fathoms. Fearing that we would run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daybreak.

Meanwhile, the sailors attempted to escape from the ship. Pretending to lower anchors from the bow, they let the lifeboat down into the sea. But Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men remain with the ship, you cannot be saved." So the soldiers cut the ropes to the lifeboat and set it adrift.

Right up to daybreak, Paul kept urging them all to eat: "Today is your fourteenth day in constant suspense, without taking any food. So for your own preservation, I urge you to eat something, because not a single hair of your head will be lost."

After he had said this, Paul took bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. They were all encouraged and took some food themselves. In all, there were 276 of us on board. After the men had eaten their fill, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.

When daylight came, they did not recognize the land, but they sighted a bay with a sandy beach, where they decided to run the ship aground if possible. Cutting away the anchors, they left them in the sea as they loosened the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach. But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, and the stern was being broken up by the pounding of the waves.

The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners so none of them could swim to freedom. But the centurion, wanting to spare Paul's life , thwarted their plan. He commanded those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. The rest were to follow on planks and various parts of the ship. In this way everyone was brought safely to land.

Once we were safely ashore, we learned that the island was called Malta. The islanders showed us extraordinary kindness. They kindled a fire and welcomed all of us because it was raining and cold.

Paul gathered a bundle of sticks, and as he laid them on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself to his hand. When the islanders saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "Surely this man is a murderer. Although he was saved from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live." But Paul shook the creature off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. The islanders were expecting him to swell up or suddenly drop dead. But after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god.

Nearby stood an estate belonging to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us and entertained us hospitably for three days. The father of Publius was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him, and after praying and placing his hands on him, he healed the man. After this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured as well.

The islanders honored us in many ways and supplied our needs when we were ready to sail.

After three months we set sail in an Alexandrian ship that had wintered in the island. It had the Twin Brothers as a figurehead. Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed there three days. From there we sailed around and came to Rhegium. After one day, a south wind came up, and on the second day we arrived at Puteoli. There we found some brothers who invited us to spend the week with them. And so we came to Rome.

The brothers there had heard about us and traveled as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns to meet us. When Paul saw them, he was encouraged and gave thanks to God.

When we arrived in Rome, the centurion delivered up the prisoners to the captain of the guard, but Paul was permitted to stay by himself, with a soldier to guard him.

After three days, Paul called together the leaders of the Jews. When they had gathered, he said to them, "Brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, I was taken prisoner in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. They examined me and wanted to release me, because there was no basis for a death sentence against me. But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, even though I have no charge to bring against my nation. So for this reason I have called to see you and speak with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain."

The leaders replied, "We have not received any letters about you from Judea, nor have any of the brothers from there reported or even mentioned anything bad

about you. But we consider your views worth hearing, because we know that people everywhere are speaking against this sect."

So they set a day to meet with Paul, and many people came to the place he was staying. He expounded to them from morning to evening, testifying about the kingdom of God and persuading them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and the Prophets.

Some of them were convinced by what he said, but others refused to believe. They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: "The Holy Spirit was right when He spoke to our fathers through Isaiah the prophet:

> 'Go to this people and say, "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving." For this people's heart has grown callous; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn, and I would heal them.'

Be advised, therefore, that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!"

And when he had said these things, the Jews went away, disputing sharply among themselves.

Paul stayed there two full years in his own rented house, welcoming all who came to visit him. Boldly and freely he proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans

Epistle to the Romans

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, and set apart for the gospel of God— the gospel He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, regarding His Son, who was a descendant of David according to the flesh, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through Him and on behalf of His name, we received grace and apostleship to call all those among the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being proclaimed all over the world. God, whom I serve with my spirit in preaching the gospel of His Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times, asking that now at last by God's will I may succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, how often I planned to come to you(but have been prevented from visiting until now), in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles. I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, then to the Greek. For the gospel reveals the righteousness of God that comes by faith from start to finish, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. For what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from His workmanship, so that men are without excuse.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking and darkened in their foolish hearts. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images of mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

Therefore God gave them over in the desires of their hearts to impurity for the dishonoring of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is forever worthy of praise! Amen.

For this reason God gave them over to dishonorable passions. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. Likewise, the men abandoned natural relations with women and burned with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

Furthermore, since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, He gave them up to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, sexual immorality, evil, greed, and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful. They invent new forms of evil; they disobey their parents. They are senseless, faithless, heartless, unforgiving, merciless.

Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things are worthy of death, they not only continue to do these things, but also approve of those who practice them.

You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on another. For on whatever grounds you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. And we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, O man, pass judgment on others, yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you disregard the riches of His kindness, tolerance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you to repentance?

But because of your hard and unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of wrath, revelation, and God's righteous judgment. God "will repay each one according to his deeds." To those who by perseverance in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, He will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow wickedness, there will be anger and wrath.

There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil, first for the Jew, then for the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good, first for the Jew, then for the Greek. For God does not show favoritism.

All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but it is the doers of the law who will be declared righteous.

Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. So they show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts either accusing or defending them on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as proclaimed by my gospel.

Behold, you call yourself a Jew. You rely on the law and boast in God. And you know His will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law. And you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth. You, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who forbid adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. If a man who is not circumcised keeps the requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? The one who is physically uncircumcised yet keeps the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.

A man is not a Jew because he is one outwardly, nor is circumcision only outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew because he is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise does not come from men, but from God.

What, then, is the advantage of being a Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.

What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness? Certainly not! Let God be true and every man a liar. As it is written:

> "So that You may be proved right when You speak and victorious when You judge."

But if our unrighteousness highlights the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unjust to inflict His wrath on us? I am speaking in human terms. Certainly not! In that case, how could God judge the world? For if my falsehood accentuates God's truthfulness, to the increase of His glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner? Why not say, as some slanderously claim that we say, "Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is deserved!

What then? Are we any better? Not at all. For we have already made the charge that Jews and Greeks alike are all under sin. As it is written:

> "There is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The venom of vipers is on their lips." "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery lie in their wake, and the way of peace they have not known." "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be justified in His sight by works of the law. For the law merely brings awareness of sin.

But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been revealed, as attested by the Law and the Prophets. And this righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all and upon all who believe. There is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

God presented Him as an atoning sacrifice in His blood through faith, in order to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance He had passed over the sins committed beforehand. He did this to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and to justify the one who has faith in Jesus.

Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of works? No, but on that of faith. Therefore we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

Is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Certainly not! Instead, we uphold the law.

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has discovered? If Abraham was indeed justified by works, he had something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Now the wages of the worker are not credited as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness. And David speaks likewise of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

> "Blessed are they whose lawless acts are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."

Is this blessing only on the circumcised, or also on the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. In what context was it credited? Was it after his circumcision, or before? It was not after, but before.

And he received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but are not circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them as well. And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised, but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world was not given through the law, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. For if those who live by the law are heirs, faith is useless and the promise is worthless, because the law

brings wrath. For where there is no law, there is no transgression.

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may rest on grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring — not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the presence of God, in whom he believed, the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being what does not yet exist.

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he acknowledged neither the decrepitness of his body (since he was about a hundred years old) nor the lifelessness of Sarah's womb. Yet he did not waver through disbelief in the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God was able to do what He had promised. This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness."

Now the words "it was credited to him" were written not only for Abraham, but also for us, to whom righteousness will be credited— for us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our trespasses and was raised to life for our justification.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Not only that, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.

For at the right time, while we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God proves His love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Therefore, since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from wrath through Him! For if, when we were enemies of God, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life! Not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, so also death was passed on to all men, because all sinned. For sin was in the world before the law was given; but sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who did not sin in the way that Adam transgressed. He is a pattern of the One to come.

But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many! Again, the gift is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment that followed one sin brought condemnation, but the gift that followed many trespasses brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

So then, just as one trespass brought condemnation for all men, so also one act of righteousness brought justification and life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

The law came in so that the trespass would increase; but where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin so that grace may increase? Certainly not! How can we who died to sin live in it any longer? Or aren't you aware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with Him like this in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection. We know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. For anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, He cannot die again; death no longer has dominion over Him. The death He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life He lives, He lives to God. So you too must count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey it in its desires. Do not present the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and present the parts of your body to Him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law, but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that when you offer yourselves as obedient slaves, you are slaves to the one you obey, whether you are slaves to sin leading to death, or to obedience leading to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you once were slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were committed. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to esca-

lating wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.

For when you were slaves to sin, you were free of obligation to righteousness. What fruit did you reap at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? The outcome of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the fruit you reap leads to holiness, and the outcome is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Do you not know, brothers (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? For instance, a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she is joined to another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man.

Therefore, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. For when we lived according to the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, bearing fruit for death. But now, having died to what bound us, we have been released from the law, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

What then shall we say? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed, I would not have been mindful of sin if not for the law. For I would not have been aware of coveting if the law had not said, “Do not covet.” But sin, seizing its opportunity through the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from the law, sin is dead.

Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. So I discovered that the very commandment that was meant to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing its opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through the commandment put me to death.

So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good.

Has that which is good, then, become death to me? Certainly not! But in order that sin might be exposed as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do. But what I hate, I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I admit that the law is good. In that case, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it .

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh; for I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot discover how to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do. Instead, I keep on doing the evil I do not want to do. And if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it .

So this is the principle I have discovered: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law. But I see another law at work in my body, warring against the law of my mind and holding me captive to the law of sin that dwells within me.

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, with my mind I serve the law of God, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For in Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man, as an offering for sin. He thus condemned sin in the flesh, so that the righteous standard of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh; but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. The mind of the flesh is death, but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind of the flesh is hostile to God: It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the flesh cannot please God.

You, however, are controlled not by the flesh, but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you.

Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation, but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery that returns you to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption to sonship, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. And if we are children, then we are heirs: heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ — if indeed we suffer with Him, so that we may also be glorified with Him.

I consider that our present sufferings are not comparable to the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the revelation of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will, but because of the One who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until the present

time. Not only that, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved; but hope that is seen is no hope at all. Why would one hope for what he can already see? But if we hope for what we do not yet see, we wait for it patiently.

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses. For we do not know how we ought to pray, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans too deep for words. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

And we know that all things work together for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose. For those God foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers. And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified.

What then shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also, along with Him, freely give us all things? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is there to condemn us? For Christ, who died, and more than that was raised to life, is at the right hand of God— and He is interceding for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

> "For Your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities nor powers, neither the present nor the future, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I speak the truth in Christ; I am not lying, as confirmed by my conscience in the Holy Spirit. I have deep sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my own flesh and blood, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory and the covenants; theirs the giving of the law, the temple worship, and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them proceeds the human descent of Christ, who is God over all, forever worthy of praise! Amen.

It is not as though God's word has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are Abraham's descendants are they all his children. On the contrary, "Through Isaac your offspring will be reckoned." So it is not the children of the flesh who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as offspring. For this is what the promise stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son."

Not only that, but Rebecca's children were conceived by one man, our father Isaac. Yet before the twins were born or had done anything good or evil, in order that God's plan of election might stand, not by works but by Him who calls, she was told, "The older will serve the younger." So it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Certainly not! For He says to Moses:

> "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

So then, it does not depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed in all the earth." Therefore God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy , and He hardens whom He wants to harden .

One of you will say to me, "Why does God still find fault? For who can resist His will?" But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to Him who formed it, "Why did You make me like this?" Does not the potter have the right to make from the same lump of clay one vessel for special occasions and another for common use?

What if God, intending to show His wrath and make His power known, bore with great patience the vessels of His wrath, prepared for destruction? What if He did this to make the riches of His glory known to the vessels of His mercy, whom He prepared in advance for glory — including us, whom He has called not only from the Jews, but also from the Gentiles? As He says in Hosea:

> "I will call them 'My People' who are not My people, and I will call her 'My Beloved' who is not My beloved,"

and,

> "It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"

Isaiah cries out concerning Israel:

> "Though the number of the Israelites is like the sand of the sea, only the remnant will be saved. For the Lord will carry out His sentence thoroughly and decisively in righteousness, because He will cut short the matter on the earth."

It is just as Isaiah foretold:

> "Unless the Lord of Hosts had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have resembled Gomorrah."

What then will we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because their pursuit was not by faith, but as if it were by works of the law. For they stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written:

> "See, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense; and the one who believes in Him will never be put to shame."

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is for their salvation. For I testify about them that they are zealous for God, but not on the basis of knowledge. Because they were ignorant of God's righteousness and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the

end of the law, to bring righteousness to everyone who believes.

For concerning the righteousness that is by the law, Moses writes: "The man who does these things will live by them." But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down) or, 'Who will descend into the Abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)."

But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: that if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with your heart you believe and are justified, and with your mouth you confess and are saved.

It is just as the Scripture says: "Anyone who believes in Him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Greek: The same Lord is Lord of all, and gives richly to all who call on Him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

How then will they call on the One in whom they have not believed? And how will they believe in the One of whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without someone to preach? And how will they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of peace, who bring good news of good things!"

But not all of them welcomed the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" Consequently, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

But I ask, did they not hear? Indeed they did:

> "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."

I ask instead, did Israel not understand? First, Moses says:

> "I will make you jealous by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation without understanding."

And Isaiah boldly says:

> "I was found by those who did not seek Me; I revealed Myself to those who did not ask for Me."

But as for Israel he says:

> "All day long I have held out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."

I ask then, did God reject His people? Certainly not! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject His people, whom He foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says about Elijah, how he appealed to God against Israel, saying, "Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars. I am the only one left, and they are seeking my life as well "?

And what was the divine reply to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

In the same way, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if it is by grace, then it is no longer by works. Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace. But if it is by works, then it is no longer by grace. Otherwise, work would no longer be work.

What then? What Israel was seeking, it failed to obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened, as it is written:

> "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that could not see, and ears that could not hear, to this very day."

And David says:

> "May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution to them. May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever."

I ask then, did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Certainly not! However, because of their trespass, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel jealous. But if their trespass means riches for the world, and their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!

I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in the hope that I may provoke my own people to jealousy and save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? If the first part of the dough is holy, so is the whole batch; if the root is holy, so are the branches.

Now if some branches have been broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others to share in the nourishment of the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, remember this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.

You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." That is correct: They were broken off because of unbelief, but you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He will certainly not spare you either.

Take notice, therefore, of the kindness and severity of God: severity to those who fell, but kindness to you, if you continue in His kindness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And if they also do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut from a wild olive tree, and contrary to nature were grafted into one that is cultivated, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you will not be conceited: A hardening in part has come to Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

> "The Deliverer will come from Zion; He will remove godlessness from Jacob. And this is My covenant with them when I take away their sins."

Regarding the gospel, they are enemies on your account; but regarding election, they are loved on account of the patriarchs. For God's gifts and His call are irrevocable.

For just as you who formerly disobeyed God have now received mercy through their disobedience, so they too have now disobeyed, in order that they too may receive mercy through the mercy shown to you.

For God has consigned everyone to disobedience so that He may have mercy on everyone.

> O, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and untraceable His ways! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor?" "Who has first given to God, that God should repay him?" For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen.

Therefore I urge you, brothers, on account of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but think of yourself with sober judgment, according to the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and not all members have the same function, so in Christ we who are many are one body, and each member belongs to one another.

We have different gifts according to the grace given us. If one's gift is prophecy, let him use it in proportion to his faith; if it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is giving, let him give generously; if it is leading, let him lead with diligence; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Love must be sincere. Detest what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Outdo yourselves in honoring one another.

Do not let your zeal subside; keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, persistent in prayer.

Share with the saints who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but associate with the lowly. Do not be conceited.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Carefully consider what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible on your part, live at peace with everyone.

Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but leave room for God's wrath. For it is written: "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord."

Therefore,

> "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink. For in so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which is from God. The authorities that exist have been appointed by God. Consequently, whoever resists authority is opposing what God has set in place, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to bad. Do you want to be unafraid of the one in authority? Then do what is right, and you will have his approval. For he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not carry the sword in vain. He is God's servant, an agent of retribution to the wrongdoer.

Therefore it is necessary to submit to authority , not only to avoid punishment, but also as a matter of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes. For the authorities are God's servants, who devote themselves to their work. Therefore pay everyone what you owe him: taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.

Be indebted to no one, except to one another in love. For he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and any other commandments, are summed up in this one decree: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

And do this, understanding the occasion. The hour has come for us to wake up from our slumber, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day has drawn near. So let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Instead, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.

Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on his opinions. For one person has faith to eat all things, while another, who is weak, eats only vegetables. The one who eats everything must not belittle the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for God is able to make him stand.

One person regards a certain day above the others, while someone else considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes a special day does so to the Lord. And he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats does so to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.

For none of us lives to himself alone, and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this reason Christ died and rose and returned to life, that He might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

Why, then, do you judge your brother? Or why do you belittle your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. It is written:

> "As surely as I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow before Me; every tongue will confess to God."

So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Therefore let us stop judging one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.

I am convinced and fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. If your brother is distressed by what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother, for whom Christ died.

Do not allow what you consider good, then, to be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. For whoever serves Christ in these things is pleasing to God and approved by men.

So then, let us pursue what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to let his eating be a stumbling block. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything to cause your brother to stumble or to be hindered or weakened.

Keep your belief about such matters between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves. But the one who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that is not from faith is sin.

Now to Him who is able to strengthen you by my gospel and by the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery concealed for ages past but now revealed and made known through the writings of the prophets by the command of the eternal God, in order to lead all nations to the obedience that comes from faith — to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

We who are strong ought to bear with the shortcomings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please Himself, but as it is written: "The insults of those who insult You have fallen on Me." For what was written in the past was written for our instruction, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope.

Now may the God who gives endurance and encouragement grant you harmony with one another in Christ Jesus, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring glory to God. Now I tell you that Christ Jesus has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs, so that the Gentiles may glorify God for His mercy. As it is written:

> "Therefore I will praise You among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to Your name."

Again, it says:

> "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people."

And again:

> "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and extol Him, all you peoples."

And once more, Isaiah says:

> "The Root of Jesse will appear, One who will arise to rule over the Gentiles; in Him the Gentiles will put their hope."

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, brimming with knowledge, and able to instruct others. However, brothers, I have written you a bold reminder on some points, because of the grace God has given me to be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore I exult in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obedience by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, and by the power of the Spirit of God. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.

In this way I have aspired to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather, as it is written:

> "Those who were not told about Him will see, and those who have not heard will understand."

That is why I have often been hindered from coming to you.

But now that there are no further opportunities for me in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to visit you, I hope to come to see you on my way to Spain. And after I have enjoyed your company for a while, you can equip me for my journey.

Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem to serve the saints there. For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual blessings, they are obligated to minister to them with material blessings.

So after I have completed this service and have safely delivered this bounty to them, I will set off to Spain by way of you. I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

Now I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. Pray that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed.

The God of peace be with all of you. Amen.

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. Welcome her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her with anything she may need from you. For she has been a great help to many people, including me.

Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who have risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. Greet also the church that meets at their house.

Greet my beloved Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in Achaia.

Greet Mary, who has worked very hard for us.

Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow countrymen and fellow prisoners. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord.

Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys.

Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ.

Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.

Greet Herodion, my fellow countryman.

Greet those from the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.

Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, women who have worked hard in the Lord.

Greet my beloved Persis, who has worked very hard in the Lord.

Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me as well.

Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brothers with them.

Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the saints with them.

Greet one another with a holy kiss.

The churches of Christ send you greetings.

Now I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who create divisions and obstacles that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Turn away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice over you. But I want you to be wise indeed about what is good and innocent about what is evil.

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Timothy, my fellow worker, sends you greetings, as do Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my fellow countrymen.

I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.

Gaius, who has hosted me and all the church, sends you greetings.

Erastus, the city treasurer, sends you greetings, as does our brother Quartus. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

1 Corinthians

First Epistle to the Corinthians

Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes,

To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I always thank my God for you because of the grace He has given you in Christ Jesus. For in Him you have been enriched in every way, in all speech and all knowledge, because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you.

Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly await the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will sustain you to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree together, so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be united in mind and conviction. My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: Individuals among you are saying, "I follow Paul," "I follow Apollos," "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ."

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that I baptized into my name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that I do not remember if I baptized anyone else. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with words of wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

> "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."

Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know Him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

Jews demand a sign and Greeks search for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Greeks, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

Brothers, consider the time of your calling: Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were powerful; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly and despised things of the world, and the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast in His presence.

It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God: our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith would not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

Among the mature, however, we speak a message of wisdom — but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of the mysterious and hidden wisdom of God, which He destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it. For if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Rather, as it is written:

> "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no heart has imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him."

But God has revealed it to us by His Spirit.

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of man except his own spirit within him? So too, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. And this is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Holy Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

The natural man does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God. For they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man judges all things, but he himself is not subject to anyone's judgment. "For who has known the mind of the Lord, so as to instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual, but as worldly — as infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for solid food. In fact, you are still not ready, for you are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and dissension and division among you, are you not worldly? Are you not walking in the way of man? For when one of you says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not of the flesh?

Who then is Paul? And who is Apollos? They are servants through whom you believed, as the Lord has assigned to each his role . I planted the seed and Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. He who plants and he who waters are one in purpose , and each will be rewarded

according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one must be careful how he builds. For no one can lay a foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, his workmanship will be evident, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will prove the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive a reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss. He himself will be saved, but only as if through the flames.

Do you not know that you yourselves are God's temple, and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

Let no one deceive himself. If any of you thinks he is wise in this age, he should become a fool, so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness." And again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile."

Therefore, stop boasting in men. All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future. All of them belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Now it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.

I care very little, however, if I am judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not vindicate me. It is the Lord who judges me.

Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

Brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us not to think beyond what is written. Then you will not take pride in one man over another. For who makes you so superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

Already you have all you want. Already you have become rich. Without us, you have become kings. How I wish you really were kings, so that we might be kings with you! For it seems to me that God has displayed us apostles at the end of the procession , like prisoners appointed for death. We have become a spectacle to the whole world, to angels as well as to men.

We are fools for Christ, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are honored, but we are dishonored. To this very hour we are hungry and thirsty, we are poorly clothed, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands. When we are vilified, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer gently. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.

I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you as my beloved children. Even if you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me. That is why I have sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ, which is exactly what I teach everywhere in every church.

Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only what these arrogant people are saying, but what power they have. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. Which do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and with a gentle spirit?

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not even named among pagans: A man has his father's wife. And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been stricken with grief and have removed from your fellowship the man who did this?

Although I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit, and I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and I am with you in spirit, along with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the Day of the Lord Jesus.

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old leaven, that you may be a new unleavened batch, as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old bread, leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and of truth.

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. I was not including the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy or swindlers or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you not to associate with anyone who claims to be a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a verbal abuser, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

What business of mine is it to judge those outside the church ? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."

If any of you has a grievance against another, how dare he go to law before the unrighteous instead of before the saints! Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!

So if you need to settle everyday matters, do you appoint as judges those of no standing in the church? I say this to your shame. Is there really not even one

among you wise enough to arbitrate between his brothers? Instead, one brother goes to law against another, and this in front of unbelievers!

The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means that you are thoroughly defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, even against your own brothers!

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who submit to or perform homosexual acts, nor the covetous, nor thieves, nor drunkards, nor verbal abusers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

"Everything is permissible for me," but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me," but I will not be mastered by anything. "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food," but God will destroy them both. The body is not intended for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. By His power God raised the Lord from the dead, and He will raise us also.

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Don't you know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with Him in spirit.

Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a man can commit is outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God with your body and with your spirit, which belong to God.

Now for the matters about which you wrote me: It is good to abstain from sexual relations. But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband.

The husband should render the affection due to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife.

Do not deprive each other, except by mutual consent and for a time, so you may devote yourselves to fasting and to prayer. Then come together again, so that Satan will not tempt you through your lack of self-control. I say this as a concession, not as a command. For I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God, one in this way and another in that.

Now to the unmarried and widows I say this: It is good for them to remain unmarried, as I am. But if they cannot control themselves, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

To the rest I say this(I, not the Lord): If a brother has an unbelieving wife and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has an unbelieving husband and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his believing wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.

But if the unbeliever leaves, let him go. The believing brother or sister is not bound in such cases. God has called us to live in peace. How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

Regardless, each one should lead the life that God has assigned to him and to which the Lord has called him. This is what I prescribe in all the churches. Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man still uncircumcised when called? He should not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commandments is what counts.

Each one should remain in the situation he was in when he was called. Were you a slave when you were called? Do not let it concern you— but if you can gain your freedom, take the opportunity. For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman. Conversely, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave.

You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. Brothers, each one should remain in the situation he was in when God called him.

Now about virgins, I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. Because of the present crisis, I think it is good for a man to remain as he is. Are you committed to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you free of commitment? Do not look for a wife. But if you do marry, you have not sinned. And if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.

What I am saying, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; those who weep, as if they did not; those who are joyful, as if they were not; those who make a purchase, as if they had nothing; and those who use the things of this world, as if not dependent on them. For this world in its present form is passing away.

I want you to be free from concern. The unmarried man is concerned about the work of the Lord, how he will please the Lord. But the married man is concerned about the affairs of this world, how he will please his wife. And there is a difference between the wife and the virgin. The unmarried woman is concerned about the work of the Lord, how she can be holy in both body and spirit. But the married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world, how she will please her husband.

I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but in order to promote proper decorum and undivided devotion to the Lord.

However, if someone thinks he is acting inappropriately toward his betrothed, and if she is beyond her youth and they ought to marry, let him do as he wishes; he is not sinning; they should get married. But the man who is firmly established in his heart and under no constraint, with control over his will and resolve in his heart not to marry the virgin, he will do well.

So then, he who marries her does well, but he who does not marry her does even better.

A wife is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, as long as he belongs to the Lord. In my judgment, however, she is happier if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The one who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the one who loves God is known by God.

So about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world, and that there is no other God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many so-called gods and lords), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we exist. And there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we exist.

But not everyone has this knowledge. Some people with consciousness of the idol still eat such food as if it were sacrificed to an idol. And since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. But food does not bring us closer to God: We are no better if we do not eat, and no worse if we do.

Be careful, however, that your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if someone with a weak conscience sees you who are well informed eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged to eat food sacrificed to idols? Should this weak brother, for whom Christ died, be destroyed by your knowledge? By sinning against your brothers in this way and wounding their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.

Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to stumble.

Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you yourselves not my workmanship in the Lord? Even if I am not an apostle to others, surely I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

This is my defense to those who scrutinize me: Have we no right to food and to drink? Have we no right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? Or are Barnabas and I the only apostles who must work for a living?

Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of its milk?

Do I say this from a human perspective? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Isn't He actually speaking on our behalf? Indeed, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes , they should also expect to share in the harvest.

If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much for us to reap a material harvest from you? If others have this right to your support, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not exercise this right. Instead, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.

Do you not know that those who work in the temple eat of its food, and those who serve at the altar partake of its offerings? In the same way, the Lord has prescribed that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this to suggest that something be done for me. Indeed, I would rather die than let anyone nullify my boast.

Yet when I preach the gospel, I have no reason to boast, because I am obligated to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! If my preaching is voluntary, I have a reward. But if it is not voluntary, I am still entrusted with a responsibility. What then is my reward? That in preaching the gospel I may offer the gospel of Christ free of charge, and so not use up my rights in preaching it.

Though I am free of obligation to anyone, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law, to win those under the law. To those without the law I became like one without the law(though I am not outside the law of God but am under the law of Christ), to win those without the law. To the weak I became like one who is weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.

I do this for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way as to take the prize. Everyone who competes in the games trains with strict discipline. They do it for a crown that is perishable, but we do it for a crown that is imperishable. Therefore I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight like I am beating the air. No, I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

Now I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud, and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, for they were struck down in the wilderness.

These things took place as examples to keep us from craving evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were. As it is written: "The people sat down to eat and to drink, and got up to indulge in revelry." We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test Christ, as some

of them also did, and were killed by snakes. And do not complain, as also some of them did, and were killed by the destroying angel.

Now all these things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So the one who thinks he is standing firm should be careful not to fall. No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide an escape, so that you can stand up under it.

Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak to reasonable people; judge for yourselves what I say. Is not the cup of blessing that we bless a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one loaf.

Consider the people of Israel: Are not those who eat the sacrifices fellow partakers in the altar? Am I suggesting, then, that an idol is anything, or that food sacrificed to an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God. And I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot partake in the table of the Lord and the table of demons too. Are we trying to provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?

"Everything is permissible for me," but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me," but not everything is edifying. No one should seek his own good, but each one should seek the good of others.

Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, for, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof."

If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat anything set before you without raising questions of conscience. But if someone tells you, "This food was offered to idols," then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience — for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof — the other one's conscience , I mean, not your own. For why should my freedom be determined by someone else's conscience? If I partake in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God. Do not become a stumbling block, whether to Jews or Greeks or the church of God — as I also try to please everyone in all I do. For I am not seeking my own good, but the good of many, that they may be saved.

You are to imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.

Now I commend you, brothers, for remembering me in everything and for maintaining the traditions, just as I passed them on to you. But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for it is just as if her head were shaved. If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off. And if it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head.

A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. For this reason a woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head, because of the angels.

In the Lord, however, man is not independent of woman, nor is woman independent of man. For just as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.

Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Doesn't nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given as a covering. If anyone is inclined to dispute this, we have no other practice, nor do the churches of God.

In the following instructions I have no praise to offer, because your gatherings do more harm than good. First of all, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. And indeed, there must be differences among you to show which of you are approved.

Now then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat. For as you eat, each of you goes ahead without sharing his meal. While one remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have your own homes in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What can I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? No, I will not!

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take and eat. This is My body, which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

Therefore, whoever eats this bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in a manner unworthy of the Lord will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Each one must examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks unworthily, without recognizing the body of the Lord, eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.

Now if we judged ourselves properly, we would not come under judgment. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

So, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you come together it will not result in judgment. And when I come, I will give instructions about the remaining matters.

Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. Therefore I inform you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can call Jesus Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.

There are different gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different ministries, but the same Lord. There are different ways of working, but the same God works all things in all people.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in various tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, who apportions them to each one as He determines.

The body is a unit, though it is composed of many parts. And although its parts are many, they all form one body. So it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and we were all given into one Spirit to drink.

For the body does not consist of one part, but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?

But in fact, God has arranged the members of the body, every one of them, according to His design. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, “I do not need you.” Nor can the head say to the feet, “I do not need you.” On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts we consider less honorable, we treat with greater honor. And our unpresentable parts are treated with special modesty, whereas our presentable parts have no such need.

But God has composed the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no divisions in the body, but that its members should have mutual concern for one another. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each of you is a member of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, and those with gifts of healing, helping, administration, and various tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the better gifts.

And now I will show you the most excellent way.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a ringing gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have absolute faith so as to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no account of wrongs. Love takes no pleasure in evil, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be restrained; where there is knowledge, it will be dismissed. Now we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial passes away.

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I set aside childish ways. Now we see but a dim reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of these is love.

Earnestly pursue love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries in the Spirit. But he who prophesies speaks to men for their edification, encouragement, and comfort. The one who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but the one who prophesies edifies the church.

I wish that all of you could speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. For he who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets so that the church may be edified.

Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? Even in the case of lifeless instruments, such as the flute or harp, how will anyone recognize the tune they are playing unless the notes are distinct? Again, if the trumpet sounds a muffled call, who will prepare for battle? So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air.

Assuredly, there are many different languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. If, then, I do not know the meaning of someone’s language, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me.

It is the same with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, strive to excel in gifts that build up the church. Therefore, the one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.

What then shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind. I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind. Otherwise, if you speak a blessing in spirit, how can someone who is uninstructed say “Amen” to your thanksgiving, since he

does not know what you are saying? You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other one is not edified.

I thank my God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church, I would rather speak five coherent words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature. It is written in the Law:

> "By strange tongues and foreign lips I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to Me, says the Lord."

Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers, but for unbelievers. Prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers.

So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who are uninstructed or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your minds? But if an unbeliever or uninstructed person comes in while everyone is prophesying, he will be convicted and called to account by all, and so the secrets of his heart will be made known. So he will fall facedown and worship God, proclaiming, "God is truly among you!"

What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, each one of you has a psalm or a teaching, a tongue, a revelation, or an interpretation. All of these must be done to build up the church .

If anyone speaks in a tongue, two, or at most three, should speak in turn, and someone must interpret. But if there is no interpreter, he should remain silent in the church and speak only to himself and God.

Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is seated, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace— as in all the churches of the saints.

Your women are to be silent in the churches. They are not permitted to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they wish to inquire about something, they are to ask their own husbands at home; for it is dishonorable for a woman to speak in the church.

Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached? If anyone considers himself a prophet or spiritual person, let him acknowledge that what I am writing you is the Lord's command. But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.

So, brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But everything must be done in a proper and orderly manner.

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, and in which you stand firm. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas and then to the Twelve. After that, He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. And last of all He appeared to me also, as to one of untimely birth.

For I am the least of the apostles and am unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not in vain. No, I worked harder than all of them — yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Whether, then, it was I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is worthless, and so is your faith. In that case, we are also exposed as false witnesses about God. For we have testified about God that He raised Christ from the dead, but He did not raise Him if in fact the dead are not raised.

For if the dead are not raised, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If our hope in Christ is for this life alone, we are to be pitied more than all men.

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ the firstfruits; then at His coming, those who belong to Him.

Then the end will come, when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father after He has destroyed all dominion, authority, and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For "God has put everything under His feet." Now when it says that everything has been put under Him, this clearly does not include the One who put everything under Him. And when all things have been subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also be made subject to Him who put all things under Him, so that God may be all in all.

If these things are not so, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for the dead? And why do we endanger ourselves every hour? I face death every day, as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord. If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for human motives, what did I gain? If the dead are not raised,

> "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good character." Sober up as you ought, and stop sinning; for some of you are ignorant of God. I say this to your shame.

But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" You fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or something else. But God gives it a body as He has designed, and to each kind of seed He gives its own body.

Not all flesh is the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, fish another, and birds another. There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. But the splendor of the heavenly bodies is of one degree, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is of another. The sun has one degree of splendor, the moon another, and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead: What is sown is perishable; it is raised imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body; there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being;" the last Adam a life-giving spirit.

The spiritual, however, was not first, but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As was the earthly man, so also are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so also let us bear the likeness of the heavenly man.

Now I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed — in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must be clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come to pass: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

> "Where, O Death, is your sting? Where, O Hades, is your victory?"

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast and immovable. Always excel in the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Now about the collection for the saints, you are to do as I directed the churches of Galatia: On the first day of every week, each of you should set aside a portion of his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will be needed. Then, on my arrival, I will send letters with those you recommend to carry your gift to Jerusalem. And if it is advisable for me to go also, they can travel with me.

After I go through Macedonia, however, I will come to you; for I will be going through Macedonia. Perhaps I will stay with you awhile, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. For I do not want to see you now only in passing; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, because a great door for effective work has opened to me, even though many oppose me.

If Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, just as I am. No one, then, should treat him with contempt. Send him on his way in peace so that he can return to me, for I am expecting him along with the brothers.

Now about our brother Apollos: I strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers. He was not at all inclined to go now, but he will go when he has the opportunity.

Be on the alert. Stand firm in the faith. Be men of courage. Be strong. Do everything in love.

You know that Stephanas and his household were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. Now I urge you, brothers, to submit to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer.

I am glad that Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus have arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. For they refreshed my spirit and yours as well. Show your appreciation, therefore, to such men.

The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings.

Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.

All the brothers here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

This greeting is in my own hand — Paul.

If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be under a curse. Come, O Lord!

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

My love be with all of you in Christ Jesus.

Amen.

2 Corinthians

Second Epistle to the Corinthians

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

To the church of God in Corinth, together with all the saints throughout Achaia:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.

If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation, which accomplishes in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we experience. And our hope for you is sure; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort and salvation, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you will share in our comfort.

We do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the hardships we encountered in the province of Asia. We were under a burden far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, we felt we were under the sentence of death, in order that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God, who raises the dead.

He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and He continues to deliver us. In Him we have placed our hope that He will yet again deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on your behalf for the favor shown us in answer to their prayers .

For this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in relation to you, in the integrity and sincerity that are from God — not in worldly wisdom, but in the grace of God. For we do not write you anything that is beyond your ability to read and understand. And I hope that you will understand us completely, as you have already understood us in part, that you may boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Confident of this, I planned to visit you first, so that you might receive a double blessing. I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to return to you from Macedonia, and then to have you help me on my way to Judea.

When I planned this, did I do it carelessly? Or do I make my plans by human standards, so as to say “Yes, yes” and also “No, no”? But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you was not “Yes” and “No.” For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was proclaimed among you by me and Silvanus and Timothy, was not “Yes” and “No,” but in Him it has always been “Yes.” For all the promises of God are “Yes” in Christ. And so in Him, our “Amen” is spoken to the glory of God.

Now it is God who establishes both us and you in Christ. He anointed us, placed His seal on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a pledge of what is to come. I call God as my witness that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. Not that we lord it over your faith, but we are fellow workers with you for your joy, because it is by faith that you stand firm.

So I made up my mind not to make another painful visit to you. For if I grieve you, who is left to cheer me but those whom I have grieved? I wrote to you as I did so that on my arrival I would not be grieved by those who ought to make me rejoice. I had confidence in all of you, that you would share my joy. For through many tears I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart, not to grieve you but to let you know how much I love you.

Now if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me but all of you — to some degree, not to overstate it. The punishment imposed on him by the majority is sufficient for him. So instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him.

My purpose in writing you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And if I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven it in the presence of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan should not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and a door stood open for me in the Lord, I had no peace in my spirit, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said goodbye to them and went on to Macedonia.

But thanks be to God, who always leads us triumphantly as captives in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him. For we are to God the sweet aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are an odor that brings death, to the other a fragrance that brings life. And who is qualified for such a task?

For we are not like others, who peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as men sent from God.

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter, inscribed on our hearts, known and read by everyone. It is clear that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Such confidence before God is ours through Christ. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim that anything comes from us, but our competence comes from God. And He has qualified us as ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Now if the ministry of death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at the face of Moses because of its fleeting glory, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the

ministry of righteousness! Indeed, what was once glorious has no glory now in comparison to the glory that surpasses it. For if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which endures!

Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at the end of what was fading away.

But their minds were closed. For to this day the same veil remains at the reading of the old covenant. It has not been lifted, because only in Christ can it be removed. And even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into His image with intensifying glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Therefore, since God in His mercy has given us this ministry, we do not lose heart. Instead, we have renounced secret and shameful ways. We do not practice deceit, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by open proclamation of the truth, we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, might not dawn upon them. For we do not proclaim ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Now we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this surpassingly great power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on all sides, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.

We always carry around in our body the death of the Lord Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always consigned to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

And in keeping with what is written, "I believed, therefore I have spoken," we who have the same spirit of faith also believe and therefore speak, knowing that the One who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us through Jesus and present us with you in His presence . All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is extending to more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow, to the glory of God.

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, yet the inner self is being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory that is far beyond comparison. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is dismantled, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan under our burdens, because we do not wish to be unclothed but clothed, so that our mortality may be swallowed up by life. And it is God who has prepared us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a pledge of what is to come.

Therefore we are always confident, although we know that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, then, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we aspire to please Him, whether we are at home in this body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive his due for the things done in the body, whether good or bad.

Therefore, since we know what it means to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is clear to God, and I hope it is clear to your conscience as well. For we are not commending ourselves to you again. Instead, we are giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you can answer those who take pride in appearances rather than in the heart.

If we are out of our mind, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you. For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that if One died for all, therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and was raised again.

So from now on we regard no one according to the flesh. Although we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, all things have become new!

All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's trespasses against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ: Be reconciled to God. For God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

As God's fellow workers, then, we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For He says:

> "In the time of favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you."

Behold, now is the time of favor; now is the day of salvation!

We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no one can discredit our ministry.

Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships, and calamities; in beatings, imprisonments, and riots; in labor, sleepless nights, and hunger; in purity, knowledge, patience, and kindness; in the Holy Spirit

and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, slander and praise; viewed as imposters, yet genuine; unknown, yet well-known; dying, and yet we live on; punished, yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians. Our hearts are open wide. It is not our affection, but yours, that is restrained. As a fair exchange— I speak as to my children— open wide your hearts also.

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership can righteousness have with wickedness? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement can exist between the temple of God and idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

> "I will dwell with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people." "Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you."

And:

> "I will be a Father to you, and you will be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

Therefore, beloved, since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that defiles body and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Make room for us in your hearts. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have exploited no one. I do not say this to condemn you. I have said before that you so occupy our hearts that we live and die together with you. Great is my confidence in you; great is my pride in you; I am filled with encouragement; in all our troubles my joy overflows.

For when we arrived in Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were pressed from every direction — conflicts on the outside, fears within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the arrival of Titus, and not only by his arrival, but also by the comfort he had received from you. He told us about your longing, your mourning, and your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced all the more.

Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Although I did regret it— for I see that my letter caused you sorrow, but only for a short time— yet now I rejoice, not because you were made sorrowful, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you felt the sorrow that God had intended, and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation without regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

Consider what this godly sorrow of yours has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what zeal, what vindication! In every way you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter. So even though I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did wrong or the one who was harmed, but rather that your earnestness on our behalf would be made clear to you in the sight of God. On account of this, we are encouraged.

And in your encouragement, we were even more delighted by the joy of Titus. For his spirit has been refreshed by all of you. Indeed, I was not embarrassed by anything I had boasted to him about you. But just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting to Titus has proved to be true as well. And his affection for you is even greater when he remembers that you were all obedient as you welcomed him with fear and trembling. I rejoice that I can have complete confidence in you.

Now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the churches of Macedonia. In the terrible ordeal they suffered, their abundant joy and deep poverty overflowed into rich generosity. For I testify that they gave according to their ability and even beyond it. Of their own accord, they earnestly pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And not only did they do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us, through the will of God.

So we urged Titus to help complete your act of grace, just as he had started it. But just as you excel in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness, and in your love for us — see that you also excel in this grace of giving. I am not giving a command, but I am testing the sincerity of your love through the earnestness of others.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich. And this is my opinion about what is helpful for you in this matter: Last year you were the first not only to give, but even to have such a desire. Now finish the work, so that you may complete it with the same eager desire, according to your means. For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.

It is not our intention that others may be relieved while you are burdened, but that there may be equality. At the present time, your surplus will meet their need, so that in turn their surplus will meet your need. This way there will be equality. As it is written:

> "He who gathered much had no excess, and he who gathered little had no shortfall."

But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same devotion I have for you. For not only did he welcome our appeal, but he is eagerly coming to you of his own volition.

Along with Titus we are sending the brother who is praised by all the churches for his work in the gospel. More than that, this brother was chosen by the churches to accompany us with the gracious gift we administer to honor the Lord Himself and to show our eagerness to help.

We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this generous gift . We are taking great care to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord, but also in the eyes of men.

And we are sending along with them our brother who has proven his earnestness to us many times and in many ways, and now even more so by his great

confidence in you. As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you. As for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. In full view of the churches, then, show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our boasting about you.

Now about the service to the saints, there is no need for me to write to you. For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting to the Macedonians that since last year you in Achaia were prepared to give . And your zeal has stirred most of them to do likewise .

But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove empty, but that you will be prepared, just as I said. Otherwise, if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we — to say nothing of you — would be ashamed of having been so confident in our boasting. So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you beforehand and make arrangements for the generous gift that was announced. This way, your gift will be prepared generously and not begrudgingly.

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each one should give what he decides in his heart to give , not out of regret or compulsion. For God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written:

> "He has scattered abroad His gifts to the poor;
> His righteousness endures forever."

Now may He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food supply and multiply your store of seed and increase the harvest of your righteousness. May you be enriched in every way to be generous on every occasion, so that through us your generosity may produce thanksgiving to God. For this ministry of service is not only supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanksgiving to God.

Because of the proof this ministry provides, the saints will glorify God for your obedient confession of the gospel of Christ, and for the generosity of your contribution to them and to all the others. And their prayers for you will express their affection for you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

Now by the mildness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you — I, Paul, who am humble when face to face with you, but bold when away. I beg you that when I come I may not need to be as bold as I expect toward those who presume that we live according to the flesh.

For though we live in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh. The weapons of our warfare are not the weapons of the flesh. Instead, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every presumption set up against the knowledge of God; and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, as soon as your obedience is complete.

You are looking at outward appearances. If anyone is confident that he belongs to Christ, he should remind himself that we belong to Christ just as much as he belongs to Christ. For even if I boast somewhat excessively about the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than tearing you down, I will not be ashamed.

I do not want to seem to be trying to frighten you by my letters. For some say, "His letters are weighty and forceful, but his physical presence is unimpressive, and his speaking is of no account." Such people should consider that what we are in our letters when absent, we will be in our actions when present.

We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they show their ignorance. We, however, will not boast beyond our limits, but only within the field of influence that God has assigned to us — a field that reaches even to you. We are not overstepping our bounds, as if we had not come to you. Indeed, we were the first to reach you with the gospel of Christ.

Neither do we boast beyond our limits in the labors of others. But we hope that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you will greatly increase as well , so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you. Then we will not be boasting in the work already done in another man's territory.

Rather, "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

I hope you will put up with a little of my foolishness, but you are already doing that. I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. For I promised you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

I am afraid, however, that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may be led astray from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims a Jesus other than the One we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit than the One you received, or a different gospel than the one you accepted, you put up with it very easily.

I consider myself in no way inferior to those "super-apostles." Although I am not a polished speaker, I am certainly not lacking in knowledge. We have been made known to you in every way possible.

Was it a sin for me to humble myself in order to exalt you, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? I robbed other churches by accepting their support in order to serve you. And when I was with you and in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my needs. I have refrained from being a burden to you in any way, and I will continue to do so. As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!

But I will keep on doing what I am doing, in order to undercut those who want an opportunity to be regarded as our equals in the things of which they boast. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their actions.

I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then receive me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. In this confident boasting of mine, I am not speaking as the Lord would, but as a fool. Since many are boasting according to the flesh, I too will boast. For you gladly put up with fools, since you are so wise. In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or exalts himself or strikes you in the face. To my shame I concede that we were too weak for that!

Speaking as a fool, however, I can match what anyone else dares to boast about. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? (I am speaking as if I were out of my mind.) I am so much more: in harder labor, in worse beatings, in more imprisonments, in frequent danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked. I spent a night and a day in the open sea.

In my frequent journeys, I have been in danger from rivers and from bandits, in danger from my countrymen and from the Gentiles, in danger in the city and in the country, in danger on the sea and among false brothers, in labor and toil and often without sleep, in hunger and thirst and often without food, in cold and exposure.

Apart from these external trials, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not burn with grief?

If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is forever worthy of praise, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus, the governor under King Aretas secured the city of the Damascenes wishing to arrest me. But I was lowered in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped his grasp.

Surely it is not beneficial for me to boast, yet I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of it I do not know, but God knows. And I know that this man— whether in the body or out of it I do not know, but God knows— was caught up to Paradise. The things he heard were inexpressible, things that man is not permitted to tell.

I will boast about such a man, but I will not boast about myself, except in my weaknesses. Even if I wanted to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will credit me with more than he sees in me or hears from me, or because of these surpassingly great revelations.

So to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest on me. That is why, for the sake of Christ, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

I have become a fool in my boasting, but you drove me to it. In fact, you should have commended me, since I am in no way inferior to those "super-apostles," even though I am nothing. The marks of a true apostle — signs, wonders, and miracles — were performed among you with great perseverance. In what way were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was not a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!

See, I am ready to come to you a third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because I am not seeking your possessions, but you. For children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. And for the sake of your souls, I will most gladly spend my money and myself, even if the more I love you, the less you love me.

Be that as it may, I was not a burden to you; but crafty as I am, I caught you by trickery. Did I exploit you by anyone I sent you? I urged Titus to visit you, and I sent our brother with him. Did Titus exploit you in any way? Did we not walk in the same Spirit and follow in the same footsteps?

Do you still think that we are making a defense to you? We speak before God in Christ, and all of this, beloved, is to build you up. For I am afraid that when I come, I may not find you as I wish, and you may not find me as you wish. I fear that there may be quarrels, jealousies, rage, rivalry, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorder. I am afraid that when I come again, my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of their acts of impurity, sexual immorality, and debauchery.

This is the third time I am coming to you. "Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses."

I already warned you the second time I was with you. So now in my absence I write to warn those who sinned earlier and everyone else: If I return, I will not spare anyone, since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. For although He was indeed crucified in weakness, yet He lives by God's power. For we are also weak in Him, yet by God's power we will live with Him concerning you.

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you — unless you actually fail the test? And I hope you will realize that we have not failed the test.

Now I pray to God that you will not do anything wrong — not that we will appear to have stood the test, but that you will do what is right, even if we appear to have failed. For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. In fact, we rejoice when we are weak but you are strong, and our prayer is for your perfection.

This is why I write these things while absent, so that when I am present I will not need to be severe in my use of the authority that the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down.

Finally, brothers, rejoice! Aim for perfect harmony, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

Greet one another with a holy kiss.

All the saints send you greetings.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you. Amen.

Galatians

Epistle to the Galatians

Paul, an apostle — sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead — and all the brothers with me,

To the churches of Galatia:

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

I am amazed how quickly you are deserting the One who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel — which is not even a gospel. Evidently some people are troubling you and trying to distort the gospel of Christ.

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be under a curse! As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be under a curse!

Am I now seeking the approval of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? For if I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. But I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached was not devised by man. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

For you have heard of my former way of life in Judaism, how severely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not rush to consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to the apostles who came before me, but I went into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.

Only after three years did I go up to Jerusalem to confer with Peter, and I stayed with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. I assure you before God that what I am writing to you is no lie.

Later I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia. I was personally unknown, however, to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only heard the account: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." And they glorified God because of me.

Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, accompanied by Barnabas. I took Titus along also. I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I spoke privately to those recognized as leaders, for fear that I was running or had already run in vain. Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek.

This issue arose because some false brothers had come in under false pretenses to spy on our freedom in Christ Jesus, in order to enslave us. We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.

But as for the highly esteemed— whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism— those leaders added nothing to me. On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted to preach the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised. For the One who was at work in Peter's apostleship to the circumcised was also at work in my apostleship to the Gentiles.

And recognizing the grace that I had been given, James, Cephas, and John — those reputed to be pillars — gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. They only asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

When Peter came to Antioch, however, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself, for fear of those in the circumcision group . The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

When I saw that they were not walking in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "If you, who are a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

We who are Jews by birth and not Gentile "sinners" know that a man is not justified by works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

But if, while we seek to be justified in Christ, we ourselves are found to be sinners, does that make Christ a minister of sin? Certainly not! If I rebuild what I have already torn down, I prove myself to be a lawbreaker.

For through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. I do not set aside the grace of God. For if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you not to obey the truth? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?

Are you so foolish? After starting in the Spirit, are you now finishing in the flesh? Have you suffered so much for nothing, if it really was for nothing? Does God lavish His Spirit on you and work miracles among you because you practice the law, or because you hear and believe?

So also, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Understand, then, that those who have faith are sons of Abraham. The Scrip-

ture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and foretold the gospel to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

All who rely on works of the law are under a curse. For it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” Now it is clear that no one is justified before God by the law, because, “The righteous will live by faith.” The law, however, is not based on faith; on the contrary, “The man who does these things will live by them.”

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” He redeemed us in order that the blessing promised to Abraham would come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Brothers, let me put this in human terms. Even a human covenant, once it is ratified, cannot be canceled or amended. The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say, “and to seeds,” meaning many, but “and to your seed,” meaning One, who is Christ.

What I mean is this: The law that came 430 years later does not revoke the covenant previously established by God in Christ, so as to nullify the promise. For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God freely granted it to Abraham through a promise.

Why then was the law given ? It was added because of transgressions, until the arrival of the seed to whom the promise referred. It was administered through angels by a mediator. A mediator is unnecessary, however, for only one party ; but God is one.

Is the law, then, opposed to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come from the law. But the Scripture pronounces all things confined by sin, so that by faith in Jesus Christ the promise might be given to those who believe.

Before this faith came, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law became our guardian to lead us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise.

What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he is the owner of everything. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the date set by his father.

So also, when we were children, we were enslaved under the basic principles of the world. But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive our adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, you are also an heir of God through Christ.

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you are turning back to those weak and worthless principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that my efforts for you may have been in vain. I beg you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you. You have done me no wrong.

You know that it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. And although my illness was a trial to me, you did not despise or reject me. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus Himself. What then has become of your blessing? For I can testify that, if it were possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?

Those people are zealous for you, but not in a good way. Instead, they want to isolate you from us, so that you may be zealous for them. Nevertheless, it is good to be zealous if it serves a noble purpose — at any time, and not only when I am with you.

My little children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you.

Tell me, you who want to be under the law, do you not understand what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born through the promise.

These things serve as illustrations, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children into slavery: This is Hagar. For Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present-day Jerusalem, and she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is the mother of us all. For it is written:

> “Rejoice, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have never travailed; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.”

Now we, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time, however, the son born by the flesh persecuted the son born by the Spirit. It is the same now.

But what does the Scripture say? “Expel the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.” Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

In the freedom with which Christ has set us free, stand firm, then, and do not be encumbered once more by a yoke of slavery.

Take notice: I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I testify to every man who gets himself circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.

You who are trying to be justified by the law have been severed from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. All that matters is faith expressing itself through love.

You were running so well. Who has obstructed you from obeying the truth? Such persuasion does not come from the One who calls you. A little leaven works through the whole batch of dough. I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is troubling you will bear the judgment, whoever he may be.

Now, brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. As for those who are agitating you, I wish they would proceed to emasculate themselves!

For you, brothers, were called to freedom; but do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh. Rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is fulfilled in a single decree: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you keep on biting and devouring one another, watch out, or you will be consumed by one another.

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh craves what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are opposed to each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The acts of the flesh are obvious: adultery, sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and sorcery; hostilities, quarrels, jealousies, and rage; rivalries, divisions, factions, envy, and murders; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us walk in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying one another.

Brothers, if someone is caught in a trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him with a spirit of gentleness. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Each one should test his own work. Then he will have reason to boast in himself alone, and not in someone else. For each one should carry his own load. Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word must share in all good things with his instructor.

Do not be deceived: God is not to be mocked. Whatever a man sows, he will reap in return. The one who sows to please his flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; but the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to the family of faith.

See what large letters I am using to write to you with my own hand!

Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. They only do this to avoid persecution for the cross of Christ. For the circumcised do not even keep the law themselves, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.

But as for me, may I never boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything. What counts is a new creation.

Peace and mercy to all who walk by this rule, even to the Israel of God.

From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers.

Amen.

Ephesians

Epistle to the Ephesians

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,

To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms. For He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in His presence. In love He predestined us for adoption as His sons through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, by which He has bestowed favor upon us in the Beloved One.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And He has made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to bring all things in heaven and on earth together in Christ.

In Him we were also chosen as God's own, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything by the counsel of His will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, would be for the praise of His glory.

And in Him you also— having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation— believed and were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the pledge of our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession, to the praise of His glory.

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in your knowledge of Him.

I ask that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know the hope of His calling, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and the surpassing greatness of His power to us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of His mighty strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

And God put everything under His feet and made Him head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you used to walk when you conformed to the ways of this world and of the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit who is now at work in the sons of disobedience. All of us also lived among them at one time, fulfilling the cravings of our flesh and indulging its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature children of wrath.

But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our trespasses. It is by grace you have been saved! And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might display the surpassing riches of His grace, demonstrated by His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance as our way of life.

Therefore remember that formerly you who are Gentiles in the flesh and called uncircumcised by the so-called circumcision(that done in the body by human hands) — remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has torn down the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing in His flesh the law of commandments and decrees. He did this to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace and reconciling both of them to God in one body through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility.

He came and preached peace to you who were far away and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ Himself as the cornerstone. In Him the whole building is fitted together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together into a dwelling place for God in His Spirit.

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles...

Surely you have heard about the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of His promise in Christ.

I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace, given me through the working of His power. Though I am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given me: to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to illuminate for everyone the stewardship of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things through Jesus Christ. His purpose was that

now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to the eternal purpose that He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In Him and through faith in Him we may enter God's presence with boldness and confidence. So I ask you not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

... for this reason I bow my knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I ask that out of the riches of His glory He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. Then you, being rooted and grounded in love, will have power, together with all the saints, to comprehend the length and width and depth and height of the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be the glory in the church in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

As a prisoner in the Lord, then, I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling you have received: with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, and with diligence to preserve the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in us all.

Now to each one of us grace has been given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. This is why it says:

> "When He ascended on high, He led captives away, and gave gifts to men."

What does "He ascended" mean, except that He also descended first to the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the very One who ascended above all the heavens, in order to fill all things.

And it was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for works of ministry and to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, as we mature to the full measure of the stature of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed about by the waves and carried around by every wind of teaching and by the clever cunning of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Christ Himself, who is the head. From Him the whole body, fitted and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love through the work of each individual part.

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the other Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardness of their hearts. Having lost all sense of shame, they have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity, with a craving for more.

But this is not the way you came to know Christ. Surely you heard of Him and were taught in Him— in keeping with the truth that is in Jesus— to put off your former way of life, your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be renewed in the spirit of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one another. "Be angry, yet do not sin." Do not let the sun set upon your anger, and do not give the devil a foothold.

He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing good with his hands, that he may have something to share with the one in need.

Let no unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building up the one in need and bringing grace to those who listen.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, outcry and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and tenderhearted to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave us.

Be imitators of God, therefore, as beloved children, and walk in love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant sacrificial offering to God.

But among you, as is proper among the saints, there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk, or crude joking, which are out of character, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure, or greedy person (that is, an idolater) has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them.

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of the Spirit consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. Test and prove what pleases the Lord.

Have no fellowship with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that is illuminated becomes a light itself. So it is said:

> "Wake up, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to reckless indiscretion. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your hearts to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, and He is the Savior of the body. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to Himself as a glorious church, without stain or wrinkle or any such blemish, but holy and blameless.

In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. Indeed, no one ever hated his own body, but he nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body— of His flesh and of His bones.

"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This mystery is profound, but I am speaking about Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (which is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life on the earth."

Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath; instead, bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear and sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. And do this not only to please them while they are watching, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve with good will, as to the Lord and not to men, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

And masters, do the same for your slaves. Give up your use of threats, because you know that your Master is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with Him.

Finally, my brothers, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can make your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this world's darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Therefore take up the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you will be able to stand your ground, and having done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness arrayed, and with your feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Pray in the Spirit at all times, with every kind of prayer and petition. To this end, stay alert with all perseverance in your prayers for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will boldly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it fearlessly, as I should.

Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know about me and what I am doing. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about us, and that he may encourage your hearts.

Peace to the brothers and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love. Amen.

Philippians

Epistle to the Philippians

Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ,

To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God every time I remember you. In every prayer for all of you, I always pray with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart. For in my chains and in my defense and confirmation of the gospel, you are all partners in grace with me. God is my witness how I long for all of you with the affection of Jesus Christ.

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to test and prove what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruits of righteousness that come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Now I want you to know, brothers, that my circumstances have actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. And most of the brothers, confident in the Lord by my chains, now dare more greatly to speak the word without fear.

It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can add to the distress of my chains. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.

What then is the issue ? Just this: that in every way, whether by false motives or true, Christ is preached. And in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, because I know that through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, my distress will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have complete boldness so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. So what shall I choose? I do not know. I am torn between the two. I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. But it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my coming to you again your exultation in Christ Jesus will resound on account of me.

Nevertheless, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending side by side for the faith of the gospel, without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is indeed a clear sign of their destruction but of your salvation, and it is from God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him, since you are encountering the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

Therefore if you have any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being united in spirit and purpose.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or empty pride, but in humility consider others more important than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus:

> Who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross. Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name above all names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now even more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you to will and to act on behalf of His good purpose.

Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine as lights in the world as you hold forth the word of life, in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.

But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

Now I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I learn how you are doing. I have nobody else like him who will genuinely care for your needs. For all the others look after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know Timothy's proven worth, that as a child with his father he has served with me to advance the gospel. So I hope to send him as soon as I see what happens with me. And I trust in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

But I thought it necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my needs. For he has been longing for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. He was sick

indeed, nearly unto death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.

Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less anxious. Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him, because he nearly died for the work of Christ, disregarding his life to make up for your deficit of service to me.

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.

Watch out for those dogs, those workers of evil, those mutilators of the flesh! For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh — though I myself could have such confidence.

If anyone else thinks he has grounds for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin; a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, persecuting the church; as to righteousness in the law, faultless.

But whatever was gain to me I count as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things as loss compared to the surpassing excellence of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God on the basis of faith.

I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to Him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize of God's heavenly calling in Christ Jesus.

All of us who are mature should embrace this point of view. And if you think differently about some issue, God will reveal this to you as well. Nevertheless, we must live up to the standard we have already attained, being of the same mind.

Join one another in following my example, brothers, and carefully observe those who walk according to the pattern we set for you. For as I have often told you before, and now say again even with tears: Many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and their glory is in their shame. Their minds are set on earthly things.

But our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to subject all things to Himself, will transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body.

Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you must stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.

I urge Euodia and Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true yokefellow, to help these women who have contended side by side with me for the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be apparent to all. The Lord is near.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think on these things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me, put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Now I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this out of need, for I have learned to be content regardless of my circumstances. I know how to live humbly, and I know how to abound. In any and every situation I have learned the secret of being filled and being hungry, of having plenty and having need. I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.

Nevertheless, you have done well to share in my affliction. And as you Philippians know, in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church but you partnered with me in the matter of giving and receiving. For even while I was in Thessalonica, you provided for my needs again and again.

Not that I am seeking a gift, but I am looking for the fruit that may be credited to your account. I have all I need and more, now that I have received your gifts from Epaphroditus. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.

And my God will supply all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus.

The brothers who are with me send you greetings.

All the saints send you greetings, especially those from the household of Caesar.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Colossians

Epistle to the Colossians

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We always thank the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ when we pray for you, because we have heard about your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all the saints — the faith and love proceeding from the hope stored up for you in heaven, of which you have already heard in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you.

All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood the grace of God. You also learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, and who also informed us of your love in the Spirit.

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have full endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.

He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in Him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things were created through Him and for Him.

He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and firstborn from among the dead, so that in all things He may have preeminence. For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through the blood of His cross.

Once you were alienated from God and were hostile in your minds, engaging in evil deeds. But now He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy, unblemished, and blameless in His presence — if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope of the gospel you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body, which is the church. I became its servant by the commission God gave me to fully proclaim to you the word of God, the mystery that was hidden for ages and generations but is now revealed to His saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving with all His energy working powerfully within me.

For I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me face to face, that they may be encouraged in heart, knit together in love, and filled with the full riches of complete understanding, so that they may know the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

I say this so that no one will deceive you by smooth rhetoric. For although I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit, and I delight to see your orderly condition and firm faith in Christ.

Therefore, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him, established in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing in it with thankfulness.

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, which are based on human tradition and the spiritual forces of the world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity dwells in bodily form. And you have been made complete in Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

In Him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of your sinful nature, with the circumcision performed by Christ and not by human hands. And having been buried with Him in baptism, you were raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead.

When you were dead in your trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our trespasses, having canceled the debt ascribed to us in the decrees that stood against us. He took it away, nailing it to the cross! And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Therefore let no one judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a feast, a New Moon, or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the body that casts it belongs to Christ. Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you with speculation about what he has not seen. Such a person is puffed up without basis by his unspiritual mind. He has lost connection to the head, from whom the whole body, supported and knit together by its joints and ligaments, grows as God causes it to grow.

If you have died with Christ to the spiritual forces of the world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its regulations: “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!”? These will all perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such restrictions indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-prescribed worship, their false humility, and their harsh treatment of the body; but they are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

Therefore, since you have been raised with Christ, strive for the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, the components of your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience. When you lived among them, you also used to walk in these ways. But now you must put aside all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

Do not lie to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices, and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, or free, but Christ is all and is in all.

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with hearts of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with one another and forgive any complaint you may have against someone else. Forgive as Christ forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which is the bond of perfect unity. Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, for to this you were called as members of one body. And be thankful.

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing to the Lord.

Fathers, do not provoke your children, so they will not become discouraged.

Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not only to please them while they are watching, but with sincerity of heart and fear of God.

And whatever you do, work at it with your whole being, as for the Lord and not for men, because you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as your reward. For it is the Lord Christ you are serving. But whoever does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.

Masters, supply your slaves with what is right and fair, since you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful, as you pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may declare it clearly, as I should.

Act wisely toward outsiders, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow servant in the Lord. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that he may know about you, and that he may encourage your hearts. With him I am sending Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you about everything here.

My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you greetings, as does Mark the cousin of Barnabas. You have already received instructions about him: If he comes to you, welcome him. Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.

Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ, sends you greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, so that you may stand mature and complete in the full will of God. For I testify about him that he has great zeal for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.

Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas send you greetings.

Greet the brothers in Laodicea, as well as Nymphas and the church that meets at his house.

After this letter has been read among you, make sure that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.

Tell Archippus: “See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord.”

This greeting is in my own hand — Paul.

Remember my chains.

Grace be with you. Amen.

1 Thessalonians

First Epistle to the Thessalonians

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We always thank God for all of you, remembering you in our prayers and continually recalling before our God and Father your work of faith, your labor of love, and your enduring hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Brothers who are beloved by God, we know that He has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with great conviction — just as you know we lived among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord when you welcomed the message with the joy of the Holy Spirit, in spite of your great suffering.

As a result, you have become examples to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. For not only did the message of the Lord ring out from you to Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone out to every place, so that we have no need to say anything more. For they themselves report what kind of welcome you gave us, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to await His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead — Jesus our deliverer from the coming wrath.

You yourselves know, brothers, that our visit to you was not in vain. As you are aware, we had already endured suffering and shameful treatment in Philippi. But in the face of strong opposition, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God.

For our appeal does not arise from deceit or ulterior motives or trickery. Instead, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, not in order to please men but God, who examines our hearts. As you know, we never used words of flattery or any pretext for greed. God is our witness! Nor did we seek praise from you or from anyone else, although as apostles of Christ we had authority to demand it.

On the contrary, we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother caring for her children. We cared so deeply that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our own lives as well. That is how beloved you have become to us.

Surely you recall, brothers, our labor and toil. We worked night and day so that we would not be a burden to anyone while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous, and blameless our conduct was among you who believed. For you know that we treated each of you as a father treats his own children— encouraging you, comforting you, and urging you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

And we continually thank God because, when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as the true word of God — the word which is now at work in you who believe.

For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Judea that are in Christ Jesus. You suffered from your own countrymen the very things they suffered from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and drove us out as well. They are displeasing to God and hostile to all men, hindering us from telling the Gentiles how they may be saved. As a result, they continue to heap up their sins to full capacity; the utmost wrath has come upon them.

Brothers, although we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in heart), our desire to see you face to face was even more intense. Therefore we wanted to come to you — indeed I, Paul, tried again and again — but Satan obstructed us. After all, who is our hope, our joy, our crown of boasting, if it is not you yourselves in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? You are indeed our glory and our joy.

So when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left on our own in Athens. We sent Timothy, our brother and minister for God, and our fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that none of you would be shaken by these trials. For you know that we are destined for this. Indeed, when we were with you, we kept warning you that we would suffer persecution; and as you know, it has come to pass. For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter had somehow tempted you and caused our labor to be in vain.

But just now, Timothy has returned from his visit with the good news about your faith, your love, and the fond memories you have preserved, longing to see us just as we long to see you. For this reason, brothers, in all our persecution and distress, we have been reassured about you, because of your faith. For now we can go on living, as long as you are standing firm in the Lord.

How can we adequately thank God for you in return for our great joy over you in His presence? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking from your faith.

Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. And may the Lord cause you to increase and overflow with love for one another and for everyone else, just as our love for you overflows, so that He may establish your hearts in blamelessness and holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

Finally, brothers, we ask and encourage you in the Lord Jesus to live in a way that is pleasing to God, just as you have received from us. So you should do so all the more. For you know the instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

For it is God's will that you should be holy: You must abstain from sexual immorality; each of you must know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in lustful passion like the Gentiles who do not know God; and no one should ever violate or exploit

his brother in this regard, because the Lord will avenge all such acts, as we have already told you and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us to impurity, but to holiness. Anyone, then, who rejects this command does not reject man but God, the very One who has given you His Holy Spirit.

Now about brotherly love, you do not need anyone to write to you, because you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another. And you are indeed showing this love to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to excel more and more and to aspire to live quietly, to attend to your own matters, and to work with your own hands, as we instructed you. Then you will behave properly toward outsiders, without being dependent on anyone.

Brothers, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death , so that you will not grieve like the rest, who are without hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, we also believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him.

By the word of the Lord, we declare to you that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will be the first to rise. After that, we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord.

Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Now about the times and seasons, brothers, we do not need to write to you. For you are fully aware that the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. For while people are saying, “Peace and security,” destruction will come upon them suddenly, like labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

But you, brothers, are not in the darkness so that this day should overtake you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day; we do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not sleep as the others do, but let us remain awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night; and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of our hope of salvation.

For God has not appointed us to suffer wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him. Therefore encourage and build one another up, just as you are already doing.

But we ask you, brothers, to acknowledge those who work diligently among you, who preside over you in the Lord and give you instruction. In love, hold them in highest regard because of their work. Live in peace with one another.

And we urge you, brothers, to admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, and be patient with everyone.

Make sure that no one repays evil for evil. Always pursue what is good for one another and for all people.

Rejoice at all times. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in every circumstance, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

Do not extinguish the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt, but test all things. Hold fast to what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your entire spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.

Brothers, pray for us.

Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.

I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the holy brothers.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

2 Thessalonians

Second Epistle to the Thessalonians

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are obligated to thank God for you all the time, brothers, as is fitting, because your faith is growing more and more, and your love for one another is increasing. That is why we boast among God's churches about your perseverance and faith in the face of all the persecution and affliction you are enduring.

All this is clear evidence of God's righteous judgment. And so you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. After all, it is only right for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are oppressed and to us as well. This will take place when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in blazing fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the penalty of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His might, on the day He comes to be glorified in His saints and regarded with wonder by all who have believed, including you who have believed our testimony.

To this end, we always pray for you, that our God will count you worthy of His calling, and that He will powerfully fulfill your every good desire and work of faith, so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to Him, we ask you, brothers, not to be easily disconcerted or alarmed by any spirit or message or letter seeming to be from us, alleging that the Day of Christ has already come. Let no one deceive you in any way, for it will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of sin — the son of destruction — is revealed. He will oppose and exalt himself above every so-called god or object of worship. So he will seat himself as God in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

Do you not remember that I told you these things while I was still with you? And you know what is now restraining him, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but the one who now restrains it will continue until he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and annihilate by the majesty of His arrival.

The coming of the lawless one will be accompanied by the working of Satan, with every kind of power, sign, and false wonder, and with every wicked deception directed against those who are perishing, because they refused the love of the truth that would have saved them. For this reason God will send them a powerful delusion so that they believe the lie, in order that judgment may come upon all who have disbelieved the truth and delighted in wickedness.

But we should always thank God for you, brothers who are loved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning to be saved by the sanctification of the Spirit and by faith in the truth. To this He called you through our gospel, so that you may share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brothers, stand firm and cling to the traditions we taught you, whether by speech or by letter.

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and our God and Father, who by grace has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good word and deed.

Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may spread quickly and be held in honor, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men; for not everyone holds to the faith. But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do what we command you. May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from any brother who leads an undisciplined life that is not in keeping with the tradition you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not undisciplined among you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. Instead, in labor and toil, we worked night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you. Not that we lack this right, but we wanted to offer ourselves as an example for you to imitate. For even while we were with you, we gave you this command: "If anyone is unwilling to work, he shall not eat."

Yet we hear that some of you are leading undisciplined lives and accomplishing nothing but being busybodies. We command and urge such people by our Lord Jesus Christ to begin working quietly to earn their own living. But as for you, brothers, do not grow weary in well-doing.

Take note of anyone who does not obey the instructions we have given in this letter. Do not associate with him, so that he may be ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.

This greeting is in my own hand — Paul. This is my mark in every letter; it is the way I write.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you. Amen.

1 Timothy

First Epistle to Timothy

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the command of God our Savior and of the Lord Jesus Christ our hope,

To Timothy, my true child in the faith:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

As I urged you on my departure to Macedonia, you should stay on at Ephesus to instruct certain men not to teach false doctrines or devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculation rather than the stewardship of God's work, which is by faith.

The goal of our instruction is the love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and a sincere faith. Some have strayed from these ways and turned aside to empty talk. They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not understand what they are saying or that which they so confidently assert.

Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it legitimately. We realize that law is not enacted for the righteous, but for the lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for killers of father or mother, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for homosexuals, for slave traders and liars and perjurers, and for anyone else who is averse to sound teaching that agrees with the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, that He considered me faithful and appointed me to service. I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a violent man; yet because I had acted in ignorance and unbelief, I was shown mercy. And the grace of our Lord overflowed to me, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

This is a trustworthy saying, worthy of full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst. But for this very reason I was shown mercy, so that in me, the worst of sinners , Jesus Christ might display all His patience as an example to those who would believe in Him for eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Timothy, my child, I entrust you with this command in keeping with the previous prophecies about you, so that by them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and thereby shipwrecked their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be offered for everyone — for kings and all those in authority— so that we may lead tranquil and quiet lives in all godliness and dignity. For this is good and pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all — the testimony that was given at just the right time.

For this reason I was appointed as a preacher, an apostle, and a faithful and true teacher of the Gentiles. I am telling the truth in Christ; I am not lying about anything . Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands, without anger or dissension.

Likewise, I want the women to adorn themselves with respectable apparel, with modesty, and with self-control, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, as is proper for women who profess to worship God.

A woman must learn in quietness and full submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman who was deceived and fell into transgression. Women, however, will be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.

This is a trustworthy saying: If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble task. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not dependent on wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, peaceable, and free of the love of money.

An overseer must manage his own household well and keep his children under control, with complete dignity. For if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for the church of God? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same condemnation as the devil. Furthermore, he must have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the snare of the devil.

Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued or given to much wine or greedy for money. They must hold to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. Additionally, they must first be tested. Then, if they are above reproach, let them serve as deacons.

In the same way, the women must be dignified, not slanderers, but temperate and faithful in all things.

A deacon must be the husband of but one wife, a good manager of his children and of his own household. For those who have served well as deacons acquire for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these things in case I am delayed, so that you will know how each one must conduct himself in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

By common confession, the mystery of godliness is great:

> God appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was proclaimed among the nations, was believed in throughout the world, was taken up in glory.

Now the Spirit expressly states that in later times some will abandon the faith to follow deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons, influenced by the

hypocrisy of liars, whose consciences are seared with a hot iron.

They will prohibit marriage and require abstinence from certain foods that God has created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creation of God is good, and nothing that is received with thanksgiving should be rejected, because it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

By pointing out these things to the brothers, you will be a good servant of Jesus Christ, nourished by the words of faith and sound instruction that you have followed.

But reject irreverent, silly myths. Instead, train yourself for godliness. For physical exercise is of limited value, but godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for the present life and for the one to come. This is a trustworthy saying, worthy of full acceptance.

To this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we have set our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of everyone, and especially of those who believe. Command and teach these things.

Let no one despise your youth, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, and to teaching.

Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given you through the prophecy spoken over you at the laying on of the hands of the elders. Be diligent in these matters and absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. Pay close attention to your life and to your teaching. Persevere in these things, for by so doing you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

Do not rebuke an older man, but appeal to him as to a father.

Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

Honor the widows who are truly widows. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to show godliness to their own family and repay their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God.

The widow who is truly in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day in her petitions and prayers. But she who lives for pleasure is dead even while she is still alive.

Give these instructions to the believers, so that they will be above reproach. If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

A widow should be enrolled if she is at least sixty years old, faithful to her husband, and well known for good deeds such as bringing up children, entertaining strangers, washing the feet of the saints, imparting relief to the afflicted, and devoting herself to every good work.

But refuse to enroll younger widows. For when their passions draw them away from Christ, they will want to marry, and thus will incur judgment because they are setting aside their first faith. At the same time they will also learn to be idle, going from house to house and being not only idle, but also gossips and busybodies, discussing things they should not mention .

So I advise the younger widows to marry, have children, and manage their households, denying the adversary occasion for slander. For some have already turned aside to follow Satan.

If any believing man or believing woman has dependent widows, they must assist them and not allow the church to be burdened, so that it can help the widows who are truly in need .

Elders who lead effectively are worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,” and, “The worker is worthy of his wages.”

Do not entertain an accusation against an elder, except on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Those who persist in sin should be rebuked in front of everyone, so that the others will stand in fear of sin.

I solemnly charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels to maintain these principles without bias, and to do nothing out of partiality.

Do not be too quick in the laying on of hands and thereby share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

Stop drinking only water and use a little wine instead, because of your stomach and your frequent ailments.

The sins of some men are obvious, going ahead of them to judgment; but the sins of others do not surface until later. In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even the ones that are inconspicuous cannot remain hidden.

All who are under the yoke of slavery should regard their masters as fully worthy of honor, so that God’s name and our teaching will not be discredited. Those who have believing masters should not show disrespect because they are brothers, but should serve them all the more, since those receiving their good service are beloved believers. Teach and encourage these principles.

If anyone teaches another doctrine and disagrees with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and with godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. Instead, he has an unhealthy interest in controversies and disputes about words, out of which come envy, strife, abusive talk, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind who are devoid of the truth. These men regard godliness as a means of gain. Withdraw yourself from such.

Of course, godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, so certainly we cannot carry anything out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these.

Those who want to be rich, however, fall into temptation and become ensnared by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. By craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.

But you, O man of God, flee from these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called

when you made the good confession before many witnesses.

I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who made the good confession in His testimony before Pontius Pilate: Keep this commandment without stain or reproach until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, which the blessed and only Sovereign One— the King of kings and Lord of lords— will bring about in His own time. He alone is immortal and dwells in unapproachable light. No one has ever seen Him, nor can anyone see Him. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.

Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be conceited and not to put their hope in the uncertainty of wealth, but in the living God, who richly provides all things for us to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, and to be generous and ready to share, treasuring up for themselves a firm foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of eternal life.

O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid irreverent, empty chatter and the opposing arguments of so-called “knowledge,” which some have professed and thus swerved away from the faith.

Grace be with you all. Amen.

2 Timothy

Second Epistle to Timothy

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus,

To Timothy, my beloved child:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience as did my forefathers, as I constantly remember you night and day in my prayers. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy.

I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am convinced is in you as well.

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-control.

So do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me, His prisoner. Instead, join me in suffering for the gospel by the power of God. He has saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works, but by His own purpose and by the grace He granted us in Christ Jesus before time began. And now He has revealed this grace through the appearing of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the gospel, to which I was appointed as a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

For this reason, even though I suffer as I do, I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him for that day.

Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching you have heard from me, with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.

May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he has often refreshed me and was unashamed of my chains. Indeed, when he arrived in Rome, he searched very diligently until he found me.

May the Lord grant Onesiphorus His mercy on that day. You know very well how much he ministered to me in Ephesus.

You therefore, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard me say among many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be qualified to teach others as well.

Endure hardship, therefore, like a good soldier of Jesus Christ. A soldier refrains from entangling himself in civilian affairs, in order to please the one who enlisted him. Likewise, a competitor does not receive the crown unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer should be the first to partake of the crops. Consider what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all things.

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David, as proclaimed by my gospel, for which I suffer to the extent of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God cannot be chained! For this reason I endure all things for the sake of the elect, so that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

This is a trustworthy saying:

> If we died with Him, we will also live with Him;
> if we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He will also deny us;
> if we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

Remind the believers of these things, charging them before the Lord to avoid quarreling over words, which succeeds only in leading the listeners to ruin.

Make every effort to present yourself approved to God, an unashamed workman who accurately handles the word of truth.

But avoid irreverent, empty chatter, which will only lead to more ungodliness, and the talk of such men will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have deviated from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already occurred, and they undermine the faith of some.

Nevertheless, God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord must turn away from iniquity."

A large house contains not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay. Some indeed are for honorable use, but others are for common use. So if anyone cleanses himself of what is unfit, he will be a vessel for honor: sanctified, useful to the Master, and prepared for every good work.

Flee from youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, together with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

But reject foolish and ignorant speculation, for you know that it breeds quarreling. And a servant of the Lord must not be quarrelsome, but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, and forbearing. He must gently reprove those who oppose him, in the hope that God may grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth. Then they will come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, who has taken them captive to his will.

But understand this: In the last days terrible times will come. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, without love of good, traitorous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. Turn away from such as these!

They are the kind who worm their way into households and captivate vulnerable women who are weighed down with sins and led astray by various passions, who are always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth. They are depraved in mind and disqualified from the faith. But they will not

advance much further. For just like Jannes and Jambres, their folly will be plain to everyone.

You, however, have observed my teaching, my conduct, my purpose, my faith, my patience, my love, my perseverance, my persecutions, and the sufferings that came upon me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. Indeed, all who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and imposters go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

But as for you, continue in the things you have learned and firmly believed, since you know from whom you have learned them. From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for instruction, for conviction, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.

I charge you, therefore, in the presence of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and encourage with every form of patient instruction.

For the time will come when men will not tolerate sound doctrine, but with itching ears they will gather around themselves teachers to suit their own desires. So they will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but to all who crave His appearing.

Make every effort to come to me quickly, because Demas, in his love of this world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is useful to me in the ministry. Tychicus, however, I have sent to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

Alexander the coppersmith did great harm to me. May the Lord repay him according to his deeds. You too should beware of him, for he has vigorously opposed our message.

At my first defense, no one stood with me, but everyone deserted me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message would be fully proclaimed, and all the Gentiles would hear it. So I was delivered from the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will rescue me from every evil action and bring me safely into His heavenly kingdom. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Greet Prisca and Aquila, as well as the household of Onesiphorus.

Erastus has remained at Corinth, and Trophimus I left sick in Miletus.

Make every effort to come to me before winter.

Eubulus sends you greetings, as do Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brothers.

The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you all. Amen.

Titus

Epistle to Titus

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness, in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began. In His own time He has made His word evident in the proclamation entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior.

To Titus, my true child in our common faith:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.

The reason I left you in Crete was that you would set in order what was unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, having children who are believers and who are not open to accusation of indiscretion or insubordination.

As God's steward, an overseer must be above reproach — not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not greedy for money. Instead, he must be hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the faithful word as it was taught, so that he can encourage others by sound teaching and refute those who contradict it.

For many are rebellious and full of empty talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced. For the sake of dishonorable gain, they undermine entire households and teach things they should not. As one of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."

This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sternly, so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of men who have rejected the truth.

To the pure, all things are pure; but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure. Indeed, both their minds and their consciences are defiled. They profess to know God, but by their actions they deny Him. They are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for any good deed.

But as for you, speak the things that are consistent with sound doctrine.

Older men are to be temperate, dignified, self-controlled, and sound in faith, love, and perseverance.

Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in their behavior, not slanderers or addicted to much wine, but teachers of good. In this way they can train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, managers of their households, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be discredited.

In the same way, urge the younger men to be self-controlled.

In everything, show yourself to be an example by doing good works. In your teaching show integrity, dignity, incorruptibility, and wholesome speech that is above reproach, so that anyone who opposes us will be ashamed, having nothing bad to say about us.

Slaves are to submit to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not stealing from them, but showing all good faith, so that in every respect they will adorn the teaching about God our Savior.

For the saving grace of God has appeared to everyone. It instructs us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live sensible, upright, and godly lives in the present age, as we await the blessed hope and glorious appearance of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. He gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

Speak these things as you encourage and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.

Remind the believers to submit to rulers and authorities, to be obedient and ready for every good work, to malign no one, and to be peaceable and gentle, showing full consideration to everyone.

For at one time we too were foolish, disobedient, misled, and enslaved to all sorts of desires and pleasures — living in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not by the righteous deeds we had done, but according to His mercy, through the washing of new birth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This is the Spirit He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we would become heirs with the hope of eternal life. This saying is trustworthy. And I want you to emphasize these things, so that those who have believed God will take care to devote themselves to good deeds. These things are excellent and profitable for the people.

But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, arguments, and quarrels about the law, because these things are pointless and worthless.

Reject a divisive man after a first and second admonition, knowing that such a man is corrupt and sinful; he is self-condemned.

As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to winter there. Do your best to equip Zenas the lawyer and Apollos, so that they will have everything they need. And our people must also learn to devote themselves to good works in order to meet the pressing needs of others, so that they will not be unfruitful.

All who are with me send you greetings.

Greet those who love us in the faith.

Grace be with all of you. Amen.

Philemon

Epistle to Philemon

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To Philemon our beloved fellow worker, to Apphia our beloved, to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church that meets at your house:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I always thank my God, remembering you in my prayers, because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints. I pray that your partnership in the faith may become effective as you fully acknowledge every good thing that is ours in Christ Jesus. We take great joy and encouragement in your love, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints.

So although in Christ I am bold enough to order you to do what is proper, I prefer to appeal on the basis of love. For I, Paul, am now aged, and a prisoner of Jesus Christ as well.

I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whose father I became while I was in my chains. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me. I am sending back for you to receive him who is my very heart.

I would have liked to keep him with me, so that on your behalf he could minister to me in my chains for the gospel. But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that your goodness will not be out of compulsion, but by your own free will. For perhaps this is why he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back for good — no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a beloved brother. He is especially beloved to me, but even more so to you, both in person and in the Lord.

So if you consider me a partner, receive him as you would receive me. But if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge it to my account. I, Paul, write this with my own hand. I will repay it— not to mention that you owe me your very self.

Yes, brother, let me have some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in the Lord.

Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

In the meantime, prepare a guest room for me, because I hope that through your prayers I will be restored to you.

Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Hebrews

Epistle to the Hebrews

On many past occasions and in many different ways, God spoke to our fathers through the prophets. But in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe.

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His nature, upholding all things by His powerful word. After He had provided purification for our sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. So He became as far superior to the angels as the name He has inherited is excellent beyond theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say:

> "You are My Son; today I have become Your Father"?

Or again:

> "I will be His Father, and He will be My Son"?

And again, when God brings His firstborn into the world, He says:

> "Let all God's angels worship Him."

Now about the angels He says:

> "He makes His angels winds, His servants flames of fire."

But about the Son He says:

> "Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever, and justice is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You above Your companions with the oil of joy."

And:

> "In the beginning, O Lord, You laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; they will be changed; but You remain the same, and Your years will never end."

Yet to which of the angels did God ever say:

> "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet"?

Are not the angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

We must pay closer attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every transgression and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

This salvation was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, and was affirmed by God through signs, wonders, various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will.

For it is not to angels that He has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. But somewhere it is testified in these words:

> "What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor, and placed everything under his feet."

When God subjected all things to him, He left nothing outside of his control. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because He suffered death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting for God, for whom and through whom all things exist, to make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. For both the One who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says:

> "I will proclaim Your name to My brothers; I will sing Your praises in the assembly."

And again:

> "I will put My trust in Him."

And once again:

> "Here am I, and the children God has given Me."

Now since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity, so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

For surely it is not the angels He helps, but the descendants of Abraham. For this reason He had to be made like His brothers in every way, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, in order to make atonement for the sins of the people. Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.

Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, set your focus on Jesus Christ, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. He was faithful to the One who appointed Him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house.

For Jesus has been counted worthy of greater glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. And every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.

Now Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be spoken later. But Christ is faithful as the Son over God's house. And we are His house, if we hold firmly to the end our confidence and the hope of which we boast.

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:

> "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as you did in the rebellion, in the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers tested and tried Me, and for forty years saw My works. Therefore I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known My ways.' So I swore on oath in My anger, 'They shall never enter My rest.'"

See to it, brothers, that none of you has a wicked heart of unbelief that turns away from the living God.

But exhort one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly to the end the assurance we had at first. As it has been said:

> "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as you did in the rebellion."

For some heard and rebelled, but not all those Moses led out of Egypt. And with whom was God angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would never enter His rest? Was it not to those who disobeyed? So we see that it was because of their unbelief that they were unable to enter.

Therefore, while the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be deemed to have fallen short of it. For we also received the good news just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, since they did not share the faith of those who comprehended it.

Now we who have believed enter that rest. As for the others, it is just as God has said:

> "So I swore on oath in My anger, 'They shall never enter My rest.'"

And yet His works have been finished since the foundation of the world. For somewhere He has spoken about the seventh day in this manner: "And on the seventh day God rested from all His works." And again, as He says in the passage above: "They shall never enter My rest."

Since, then, it remains for some to enter His rest, and since those who formerly heard the good news did not enter because of their disobedience, God again designated a certain day as "Today," when a long time later He spoke through David as was just stated: "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."

For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For whoever enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from His. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following the same pattern of disobedience.

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it pierces even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight; everything is uncovered and exposed before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who was tempted in every way that we are, yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Every high priest is appointed from among men to represent them in matters relating to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and misguided, since he himself is beset by weakness. That is why he is obligated to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.

No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not take upon Himself the glory of becoming a high priest, but He was called by the One who said to Him:

> "You are My Son; today I have become Your Father."

And in another passage God says:

> "You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek."

During the days of Jesus' earthly life, He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the One who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverence. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from what He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him and was designated by God as high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain, because you are dull of hearing. Although by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to reteach you the basic principles of God's word. You need milk, not solid food!

For everyone who lives on milk is still an infant, inexperienced in the message of righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained their senses to distinguish good from evil.

Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And this we will do, if God permits.

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age — and then have fallen away — to be restored to repentance, because they themselves are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting Him to open shame.

For land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is tended receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless, and its curse is imminent. In the end it will be burned.

Even though we speak like this, beloved, we are convinced of better things in your case— things that accompany salvation. For God is not unjust. He will not forget your work and the labor of love you have shown for His name as you have ministered to the saints and continue to do so.

We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. Then you will not be sluggish, but will imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

When God made His promise to Abraham, since He had no one greater to swear by, He swore by Himself, saying, "I will surely bless you and multiply your descendants." And so Abraham, after waiting patiently, obtained the promise.

Men indeed swear by someone greater than themselves, and their oath serves as a confirmation to end all argument. So when God wanted to make the unchanging nature of His purpose very clear to the heirs of the promise, He guaranteed it with an oath. Thus by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be strongly encouraged.

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus our forerunner has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.

This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham apportioned to him a tenth of everything. First, his name means "king of righteousness." Then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace." Without father or mother or genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God, he remains a priest for all time.

Consider how great Melchizedek was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder. Now the law commands the sons of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people — that is, from their brothers — though they too are descended from Abraham. But Melchizedek, who did not trace his descent from Levi, collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. And indisputably, the lesser is blessed by the greater.

In the case of the Levites, mortal men collect the tenth; but in the case of Melchizedek, it is affirmed that he lives on. And so to speak, Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham. For when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the loin of his ancestor.

Now if perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on this basis the people received the law), why was there still need for another priest to appear — one in the order of Melchizedek and not in the order of Aaron? For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed as well.

He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, a tribe as to which Moses said nothing about priesthood.

And this point is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, one who has become a priest not by a law of succession, but by the power of an indestructible life. For it is testified:

> "You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek."

So the former commandment is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.

And none of this happened without an oath. For others became priests without an oath, but Jesus became a priest with an oath by the One who said to Him:

> "The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind: 'You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.'"

Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

Now there have been many other priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office. But because Jesus lives forever, He has a permanent priesthood. Therefore He is able to save completely those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to intercede for them.

Such a high priest truly befits us — One who is holy, innocent, undefiled, set apart from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, He does not need to offer daily sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people; He sacrificed for sin once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who ministers in the sanctuary and true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man. And since every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, it was necessary for this One also to have something to offer.

For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are already priests who offer gifts according to the law. The place where they serve is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

Now, however, Jesus has received a much more excellent ministry, just as the covenant He mediates is better and is founded on better promises. For if that first covenant had been without fault, no place would have been sought for a second. But God found fault with the people and said:

> "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, because they did not abide by My covenant, and I disregarded them, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord. I will put My laws in their minds and inscribe them on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they will be My people. No longer will each one teach his neighbor or his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their iniquities and will remember their sins and lawless acts no more."

By speaking of a new covenant, He has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. A tabernacle

was prepared. In its first room were the lampstand, the table, and the consecrated bread. This was called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, containing the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. Inside the ark were the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. Above the ark were the cherubim of glory, overshadowing the mercy seat. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.

When everything had been prepared in this way, the priests entered regularly into the first room to perform their sacred duties. But only the high priest entered the second room, and then only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance.

By this arrangement the Holy Spirit was showing that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. It is an illustration for the present time, because the gifts and sacrifices being offered were unable to cleanse the conscience of the worshiper. They consist only in food and drink and special washings and external regulations imposed until the time of reform.

But when Christ came as high priest of the good things to come, He went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made by hands and is not a part of this creation. He did not enter by the blood of goats and calves, but He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood, thus securing eternal redemption.

For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that their bodies are clean, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, purify your consciences from works of death, so that we may serve the living God!

Therefore Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, now that He has died to redeem them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

In the case of a will, it is necessary to establish the death of the one who made it, because a will does not take effect until the one who made it has died; it cannot be executed while he is still alive.

That is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. For when Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, along with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep."

In the same way, he sprinkled with blood the tabernacle and all the vessels used in worship. According to the law, in fact, nearly everything must be purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

So it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a man-made copy of the true sanctuary, but He entered heaven itself, now to appear on our behalf in the presence of God.

Nor did He enter heaven to offer Himself again and again, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise, Christ would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But now He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Just as man is appointed to die once, and after that to face judgment, so also Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many; and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who eagerly await Him.

For the law is only a shadow of the good things to come, not the realities themselves. The same sacrifices offered year after year can never make perfect those who draw near to worship . If it could, would not the offerings have ceased? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt the guilt of their sins.

Instead, those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, He said:

> "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sin offerings You took no delight. Then I said, 'Here I am, it is written about Me in the scroll: I have come to do Your will, O God.'"

In the passage above He says, "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings and sin offerings You did not desire, nor did You delight in them" (although they are offered according to the law). Then He adds, "Here I am, I have come to do Your will, O God. " He takes away the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been sanctified through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Day after day every priest stands to minister and to offer again and again the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this Priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time, He waits for His enemies to be made a footstool for His feet, because by a single offering He has made perfect for all time those who are being sanctified.

The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First He says:

> "This is the covenant I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord. I will put My laws in their hearts and inscribe them on their minds."

Then He adds:

> "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."

And where these have been forgiven, an offering for sin is no longer needed .

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way opened for us through the curtain of His body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled

to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us hold resolutely to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to spur one another on to love and good deeds. Let us not neglect meeting together, as some have made a habit, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

If we deliberately go on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no further sacrifice for sins remains, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume all adversaries. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think one deserves to be punished who has trampled on the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord," and again, "The Lord will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Remember the early days that you were in the light. In those days, you endured a great conflict in the face of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to ridicule and persecution; at other times you were partners with those who were so treated. You sympathized with me in my chains and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, knowing that you yourselves had a better and permanent possession in heaven.

So do not throw away your confidence; it holds a great reward. You need to persevere, so that after you have done the will of God, you will receive what He has promised. For,

> "In just a little while, He who is coming will come and will not delay. But the righteous will live by faith; and if he shrinks back, I will take no pleasure in him."

But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

Now faith is the assurance of what we hope for and the certainty of what we do not see. This is why the ancients were commended.

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous when God gave approval to his gifts. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.

By faith Enoch was taken up so that he did not see death: "He could not be found, because God had taken him away." For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God.

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who approaches Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in godly fear built an ark to save his family. By faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

By faith Abraham, when called to go to the place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, without knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the promised land as a stranger in a foreign country. He lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

By faith Sarah, even though she was beyond the proper age, received power and was enabled to conceive a child, because she considered Him faithful who had promised. And so from one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

All these people died in faith, without having received the things they were promised. However, they saw them and welcomed them from afar. And they acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

Now those who say such things show that they are seeking a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac on the altar . He who had received the promises was ready to offer his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "Through Isaac your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and in a sense, he did receive Isaac back from death.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning the future.

By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites and gave instructions about his bones.

By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after his birth, because they saw that he was a beautiful child, and they were unafraid of the king's edict.

By faith Moses, when he was grown, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to suffer oppression with God's people rather than to experience the fleeting enjoyment of sin. He valued disgrace for Christ above the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his reward.

By faith Moses left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw Him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch Israel's own firstborn .

By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to follow, they were drowned.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days.

By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies in peace, did not perish with those who were disobedient.

And what more shall I say? Time will not allow me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the raging fire, and escaped the edge of the sword; who gained strength from weakness, became mighty in battle, and put foreign armies to flight.

Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused their release, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Still others endured mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.

They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they were put to the test, they were put to death by the sword. They went around in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, oppressed, and mistreated. The world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and hid in caves and holes in the ground.

These were all commended for their faith, yet they did not receive what was promised. God had planned something better for us, so that together with us they would be made perfect.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off every encumbrance and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with endurance the race set out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons:

> "My son, do not take lightly the discipline of the Lord, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you. For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastises every son He receives."

Endure suffering as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you do not experience discipline like everyone else, then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Furthermore, we have all had earthly fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them. Should we not much more submit to the Father of our spirits and live?

Our fathers disciplined us for a short time as they thought best, but God disciplines us for our good, so that we may share in His holiness. No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields a harvest of righteousness and peace to those who have been trained by it.

Therefore strengthen your limp hands and weak knees. Make straight paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

Pursue peace with everyone, as well as holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God, and that no root of bitterness springs up to cause trouble and defile many. See to it that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected. He could find no ground for repentance, though he sought the blessing with tears.

For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to blackness, darkness, and storm; to a trumpet blast or to a voice that made its hearers beg that no further word be spoken. For they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." The sight was so terrifying that even Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."

Instead, you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to myriads of angels in joyful assembly, to the congregation of the firstborn, enrolled in heaven. You have come to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

See to it that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if the people did not escape when they refused Him who warned them on earth, how much less will we escape if we reject Him who warns us from heaven? At that time His voice shook the earth, but now He has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth, but heaven as well." The words "Once more" signify the removal of what can be shaken — that is, created things — so that the unshakable may remain.

Therefore, since we are receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us be filled with gratitude, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. "For our God is a consuming fire."

Continue in brotherly love. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were bound with them, and those who are mistreated as if you were suffering with them.

Marriage should be honored by all and the marriage bed kept undefiled; but God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers.

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, for God has said:

> "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you."

So we say with confidence:

> "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace and not by foods of no value to those devoted to them. We have an altar from which those who serve at the tabernacle have no right to eat.

Although the high priest brings the blood of animals into the Holy Place as a sacrifice for sin, the bodies are burned outside the camp. And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate, to sanctify the people by His own blood. Therefore let us go to Him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace He bore. For here we do not have a permanent city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that confess His name. And do not neglect to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they watch over your souls as those who must give an account. To this end, allow them to lead with joy and not with grief, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Pray for us; we are convinced that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way. And I especially urge you to pray that I may be restored to you soon.

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with every good work to do His will. And may He accomplish in you what is pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

I urge you, brothers, to bear with my word of exhortation, for I have only written to you briefly.

Be aware that our brother Timothy has been released. If he arrives soon, I will come with him to see you.

Greet all your leaders and all the saints.

Those from Italy send you greetings.

Grace be with all of you. Amen.

James

Epistle of James

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes of the Dispersion:
Greetings.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you encounter trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Allow perseverance to finish its work, so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith, without doubting, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

The brother in humble circumstances should exult in his high position. But the one who is rich should exult in his low position, because he will pass away like a flower of the field. For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its flower falls and its beauty is lost. So too, the rich man will fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when by his own evil desires he is lured away and enticed. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, with whom there is no change or shifting shadow. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we would be a kind of firstfruits of His creation.

So then, my beloved brothers, everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger, for man's anger does not bring about the righteousness that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and every expression of evil, and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save your souls.

Be doers of the word, and not hearers only. Otherwise, you are deceiving yourselves. For anyone who hears the word but does not carry it out is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror, and after observing himself goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom, and continues to do so — not being a forgetful hearer, but an effective doer — he will be blessed in what he does.

If anyone among you considers himself religious and yet does not bridle his tongue, he deceives his heart and his religion is worthless. Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

My brothers, as you hold out your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, do not show favoritism.

Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you lavish attention on the man in fine clothes and say, "Here is a seat of honor," but say to the poor man, "You must stand" or "Sit here under my footstool," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Listen, my beloved brothers: Has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom He promised those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you and drag you into court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the noble name by which you have been called?

If you really fulfill the royal law stated in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

Whoever keeps the whole law but stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom. For judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

What good is it, my brothers, if someone claims to have faith, but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you tells him, "Go in peace; stay warm and well fed," but does not provide for his physical needs, what good is that ? So too, faith by itself, if it does not result in action, is dead.

But someone will say, "You have faith and I have deeds." Show me your faith apart from your deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that God is one. Good for you! Even the demons believe that — and shudder.

O foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is dead? Was not our father Abraham justified by what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith was working with his actions, and his faith was perfected by what he did. And the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called a friend of God. As you can see, then, a man is justified by his deeds and not by faith alone.

In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute justified by her actions when she welcomed the spies and sent them off on another route? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to control his whole body.

Indeed, when we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can guide the whole animal. Consider ships as well. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot is inclined.

In the same way, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it boasts of great things. Consider how small a spark sets a great forest ablaze. The tongue also is a fire, a world of wickedness among the parts of the body. It pollutes the whole person, sets the course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

With the tongue we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, this should not be! Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree grow olives, or a grapevine bear figs? In the same way, no spring can produce both salt water and fresh water.

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good conduct, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast in it or deny the truth. Such wisdom does not come from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every evil practice.

But the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peace-loving, gentle, accommodating, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap the fruit of righteousness.

What causes conflicts and quarrels among you? Don't they come from the passions at war within you? You crave what you do not have; you kill and covet, but are unable to obtain it. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask. And when you do ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may squander it on your pleasures.

You adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever chooses to be a friend of the world renders himself an enemy of God. Or do you think the Scripture says without reason that the Spirit who dwells in us yearns with envy? But He gives us more grace. This is why it says:

> "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn, and weep. Turn your laughter to mourning, and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.

Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother and judges him speaks against the law and judges it. And if you judge the law, you are not a practitioner of the law, but a judge of it. There is only one Lawgiver, the One who is able to save and destroy. But who are you to judge the other?

Come now, you who say, "Today and tomorrow let us go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business, and make a profit." You do not even know what will happen tomorrow! What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord is willing, let us live and do this or that." As it is, you boast in your proud intentions. All such boasting is evil. Anyone, then, who knows the right thing to do, yet fails to do it, is guilty of sin.

Come now, you who are rich, weep and wail over the misery to come upon you. Your riches have rotted and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and consume your flesh like fire.

You have hoarded treasure in the last days. Look, the wages you withheld from the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts.

You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts as in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous, who did not resist you.

Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer awaits the precious fruit of the soil — how patient he is for the fall and spring rains. You, too, be patient and strengthen your hearts, because the Lord's coming is near. Do not complain about one another, brothers, so that you will not be judged. Look, the Judge is standing at the door!

My brothers, as an example of patience in affliction, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. See how blessed we consider those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen the outcome from the Lord. He is full of compassion and mercy.

Above all, my brothers, do not swear, not by heaven or earth or by any other oath. Simply let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, so that you will not fall into hypocrisy.

Is any one of you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone cheerful? He should sing praises. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick. The Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.

Confess your trespasses to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power to prevail. Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth yielded its crops.

Brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, consider this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

1 Peter

First Epistle of Peter

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To the elect who are exiles of the Dispersion throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by His blood:

Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, reserved in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power for the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in various trials so that the proven character of your faith — more precious than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may result in praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Though you have not known Him, you love Him; and though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and rejoice with an inexpressible and glorious joy, now that you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who foretold the grace to come to you searched and investigated carefully, trying to determine the time and setting to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.

It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, when they foretold the things now announced by those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

Therefore prepare your minds for action. Be sober-minded. Set your hope fully on the grace to be given you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not conform to the passions of your former ignorance. But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do, for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

Since you call on a Father who judges each one's work impartially, conduct yourselves in reverent fear during your stay as foreigners. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life you inherited from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or spot. He was known before the foundation of the world, but was revealed in the last times for your sake.

Through Him you believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and glorified Him; and so your faith and hope are in God.

Since you have purified your souls by obedience to the truth through the Spirit so that you have a genuine love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from a pure heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and forever enduring word of God. For,

> "All flesh is like grass, and all the glory of man like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever."

And this is the word that was proclaimed to you.

Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

As you come to Him, the living stone, rejected by men but chosen and precious in God's sight, you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture:

> "See, I lay in Zion a stone, a chosen and precious cornerstone; and the one who believes in Him will never be put to shame."

To you who believe, then, this stone is precious. But to those who are disobedient,

> "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,"

and,

> "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense."

They stumble because they disobey the word— and to this they were appointed.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, to proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Beloved, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from the desires of the flesh, which war against your soul. Conduct yourselves with such honor among the Gentiles that, though they slander you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us.

Therefore submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to the king as the supreme authority, or to governors as those sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Live in freedom, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Treat everyone with high regard: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

Servants, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but even to those who are unreasonable. For if anyone endures the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God, this is to be commended. How is it to your credit if you are beaten for doing wrong and you endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.

For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His footsteps:

> "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth." When they heaped abuse on Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats, but entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. "By His stripes you are healed."

For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Wives, in the same way, submit yourselves to your husbands, so that even if they refuse to believe the word, they will be won over without words by the behavior of their wives when they see your pure and reverent demeanor.

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair or gold jewelry or fine clothes, but from the inner disposition of your heart, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in God's sight. For this is how the holy women of the past adorned themselves. They put their hope in God and were submissive to their husbands, just as Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord. And you are her children if you do what is right and refuse to give way to fear.

Husbands, in the same way, dwell with your wives in an understanding manner. Treat them with honor as a delicate vessel and as fellow heirs of the gracious gift of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

Finally, all of you, be like-minded and sympathetic, love as brothers, be tenderhearted and courteous. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, knowing that to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For,

> "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are inclined to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

Who can harm you if you are imitators of what is good?

But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be shaken." But in your hearts sanctify the Lord God. Always be prepared to give a defense to everyone who asks you the reason for the hope that is in you. But respond with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who slander you as evildoers may be put to shame by your good behavior in Christ. For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit, in whom He also went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.

In the ark a few people, only eight souls, were saved through water. And this water symbolizes the baptism that now saves us also — not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God — through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to Him.

Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in His body, arm yourselves with the same resolve, because anyone who has suffered in his body is done with sin. Consequently, he does not live out his remaining time on earth for human passions, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime carrying out the same desires as the Gentiles: living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and detestable idolatry.

Because of this, they consider it strange of you not to plunge with them into the same flood of reckless indiscretion, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. That is why the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged as men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear-minded and sober, so that you can pray. Above all, love one another deeply, because love will cover over a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without complaining.

As good stewards of the manifold grace of God, each of you should use whatever gift he has received to serve one another. If anyone speaks, he should speak as one conveying the words of God. If anyone serves, he should serve with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial that has come upon you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed at the revelation of His glory.

If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. Indeed, on their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. Indeed, none of you should suffer as a murderer or thief or wrongdoer, or even as a meddler. But if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but glorify God in this matter. For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who disobey the gospel of God? And,

> "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

So then, those who suffer according to God's will should entrust their souls to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

As a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings, and a partaker of the glory to be revealed, I appeal to the elders among you: Be shepherds of God's flock that is among you, watching over them not out of

compulsion, but willingly; not out of greed, but out of eagerness; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

Young men, in the same way, submit yourselves to your elders. And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility, being subject to one another, because,

> "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, so that in due time He may exalt you. Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

Be sober-minded and alert. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in your faith and in the knowledge that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering.

And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will Himself restore you, secure you, strengthen you, and establish you. To Him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Through Silvanus, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.

The church in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, as does my son Mark.

Greet one another with a kiss of love.

Peace to all of you who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

2 Peter

Second Epistle of Peter

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:

Grace and peace be multiplied to you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. Through these He has given us His precious and magnificent promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, now that you have escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities and continue to grow in them, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever lacks these traits is nearsighted to the point of blindness, having forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

Therefore, brothers, strive to make your calling and election sure. For if you practice these things you will never stumble, and you will receive a lavish reception into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Therefore I will not neglect to remind you of these things, even though you know them and are established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of my body , because I know that this tent will soon be laid aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to ensure that after my departure, you will be able to recall these things at all times.

For we did not follow cleverly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to Him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” And we ourselves heard this voice from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

We also have the word of the prophets as confirmed beyond doubt. And you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture comes from one’s own interpretation. For no such prophecy was ever brought forth by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Now there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow in their depravity, and because of them the way of truth will be defamed. In their greed, these false teachers will exploit you with deceptive words. The longstanding verdict against them remains in force, and their destruction will not sleep.

For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them deep into hell, placing them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment; if He did not spare the ancient world when He brought the flood on its ungodly people, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, among the eight; if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction, reducing them to ashes as an example of what is coming on the ungodly; and if He rescued Lot, a righteous man distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)— if all this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment.

Such punishment is specially reserved for those who indulge the corrupt desires of the flesh and despise authority. Bold and self-willed, they are unafraid to slander glorious beings. Yet not even angels, though greater in strength and power, dare to bring such slanderous charges against them before the Lord.

These men are like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be captured and destroyed. They blaspheme in matters they do not understand, and like such creatures, they will be destroyed. They will receive the wages of their wickedness.

They consider it a pleasure to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deception as they feast with you. Their eyes are full of adultery; their desire for sin is never satisfied; they seduce the unstable. They are accursed children with hearts trained in greed.

They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Bosor, who loved the wages of wickedness. But he was rebuked for his transgression by a donkey, otherwise without speech, that spoke with a man’s voice and restrained the prophet’s madness.

These men are springs without water and clouds driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is forever reserved for them. With lofty but empty words, they appeal to the sensual passions of the flesh and entice those who have truly escaped from others who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves to depravity. For a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

If indeed they have escaped the corruption of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, only to be entangled and overcome by it again, their final condition is worse than it was at first. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than to have known it and then to turn away from the holy commandment passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true: “A dog

returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud."

Beloved, this is now my second letter to you. Both of them are reminders to stir you to wholesome thinking by recalling what was foretold by the holy prophets and commanded by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

Most importantly, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, following their own evil desires. "Where is the promise of His coming?" they will ask. "Ever since our fathers fell asleep, everything continues as it has from the beginning of creation."

But they deliberately overlook the fact that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world of that time perished in the flood. And by His word, the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

Beloved, do not let this one thing escape your notice: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise as some understand slowness, but is patient with us, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance.

But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. The heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

Since everything will be destroyed, then, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to conduct yourselves in holiness and godliness as you anticipate and hasten the coming of the day of God, when the heavens will be destroyed by fire and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with God's promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

Therefore, beloved, as you anticipate these things, make every effort to be found at peace— spotless and blameless in His sight.

Consider also that our Lord's patience brings salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom God gave him. He writes this way in all his letters, speaking in them about such matters. Some parts of his letters are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Therefore, beloved, since you already know these things, be on your guard so that you will not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure standing. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity.

Amen.

1 John

First Epistle of John

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have gazed upon and touched with our own hands — this is the Word of life. And this is the life that was revealed; we have seen it and testified to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us.

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And this fellowship of ours is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. We write these things to you so that our joy may be complete.

And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you: God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar, and His word is not in us.

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate before the Father — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He Himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

By this we can be sure that we have come to know Him: if we keep His commandments. If anyone says, "I know Him," but does not keep His commandments, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone keeps His word, the love of God has been truly perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him: Whoever claims to abide in Him must walk as Jesus walked.

Brothers, I am not writing to you a new commandment, but an old one, which you have had from the beginning. This commandment is the message you have heard from the beginning. Then again, I am also writing to you a new commandment, which is true in Him and also in you. For the darkness is fading and the true light is already shining.

If anyone claims to be in the light but hates his brother, he is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother remains in the light, and there is no cause of stumbling in him. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness. He does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven through His name.

I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning.

I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.

I am writing to you, children, because you know the Father.

I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning.

I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world — the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not from the Father but from the world. The world is passing away, along with its desires; but whoever does the will of God remains forever.

Children, it is the last hour; and just as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have appeared. This is how we know it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they did not belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. But their departure made it clear that none of them belonged to us.

You, however, have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you lack knowledge of the truth, but because you have it, and because no lie comes from the truth. Who is the liar, if it is not the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father.

As for you, then, let what you have heard from the beginning remain in you. If it does, you will also remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He Himself made to us: eternal life.

I have written these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. And as for you, the anointing you received from Him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But just as the same true and genuine anointing teaches you about all things, so you must remain in Him as you have been taught.

And now, little children, remain in Christ, so that when He appears, we may be confident and unashamed before Him at His coming.

If you know that He is righteous, you also know that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of Him.

Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God. The reason the world does not know you is that it did not know Him. Beloved, we are now children of God, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when Christ appears, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as Christ is pure.

Everyone who practices sin practices lawlessness as well. Indeed, sin is lawlessness. But you know that Christ appeared to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. No one who remains in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has seen Him or known Him.

Little children, let no one deceive you: The one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as Christ is righteous. The one who practices sin is of the devil,

because the devil has been sinning from the very start. This is why the Son of God was revealed, to destroy the works of the devil.

Anyone born of God refuses to practice sin, because God's seed abides in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. By this the children of God are distinguished from the children of the devil: Anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

This is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another. Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did Cain slay him? Because his own deeds were evil, while those of his brother were righteous. So do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you.

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. The one who does not love his brother remains in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that eternal life does not reside in a murderer.

By this we know what love is: Jesus laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone with earthly possessions sees his brother in need, but withholds his compassion from him, how can the love of God abide in him?

My little children, let us love not in word and speech, but in action and truth. And by this we know that we belong to the truth, and assure our hearts in His presence: Even if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and He knows all things.

Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God, and we will receive from Him whatever we ask, because we keep His commandments and do what is pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment: that we should believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and we should love one another just as He commanded. Whoever keeps His commandments remains in God, and God in him. And by this we know that He remains in us: by the Spirit He has given us.

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. For many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you will know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and which is already in the world at this time.

You, little children, are from God and have overcome them, because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. They are of the world. That is why they speak from the world's perspective, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. That is how we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of deception.

Beloved, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

This is how God's love was revealed among us: God sent His one and only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. And love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God remains in us, and His love is perfected in us. By this we know that we remain in Him, and He in us: He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.

If anyone confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have come to know and believe the love that God has for us. God is love; whoever abides in love abides in God, and God in him. In this way, love has been perfected among us, so that we may have confidence on the day of judgment; for in this world we are just like Him.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. The one who fears has not been perfected in love. We love Him because He first loved us.

If anyone says, "I love God," but hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, how can he love God, whom he has not seen? And we have this commandment from Him: Whoever loves God must love his brother as well.

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father also loves those born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome, because everyone born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith.

Who then overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ — not by water alone, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies to this, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water, and the blood — and these three are in agreement.

Even if we accept human testimony, the testimony of God is greater. For this is the testimony that God has given about His Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God has this testimony within him; whoever does not believe God has made Him out to be a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given about His Son.

And this is that testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life and that you may believe in the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have before Him: If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we already possess what we have asked of Him.

If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he should ask God, who will give life

to those who commit this kind of sin. There is a sin that leads to death; I am not saying he should ask regarding that sin. All unrighteousness is sin, yet there is sin that does not lead to death.

We know that anyone born of God does not keep on sinning; the one who was born of God protects himself, and the evil one cannot touch him. We know that we are of God, and that the whole world is under the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true — in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

2 John

Second Epistle of John

The elder,

To the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in the truth — and not I alone, but also all who know the truth — because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, will be with us in truth and love.

I was overjoyed to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father has commanded us. And now I urge you, dear lady — not as a new commandment to you, but one we have had from the beginning — that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the very commandment you have heard from the beginning, that you must walk in love.

For many deceivers have entered into the world, refusing to confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves, so that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may be fully rewarded. Anyone who transgresses without remaining in the teaching of Christ does not have God. Whoever remains in the teaching of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

If anyone comes to you but does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your home or even greet him. Whoever greets such a person shares in his evil deeds.

I have many things to write to you, but I would prefer not to do so with paper and ink. Instead, I hope to come and speak with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.

The children of your elect sister send you greetings. Amen.

3 John

Third Epistle of John

The elder,

To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth:

Beloved, I pray that in every way you may prosper and enjoy good health, as your soul also prospers. For I was overjoyed when the brothers came and testified about your devotion to the truth, in which you continue to walk. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in truth.

Beloved, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers and for those who are strangers to you. They have testified to the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. For they went out on behalf of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to receive such men, so that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

I have written to the church about this, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will not accept our instruction. So if I come, I will call attention to his malicious slander against us. And unsatisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers and forbids those who want to do so, even putting them out of the church.

Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.

Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. We also testify for him, and you know that our testimony is true.

I have many things to write, but I would prefer not to do so with pen and ink. Instead, I hope to see you soon and speak with you face to face.

Peace to you.

The friends here send you greetings.

Greet each of our friends there by name.

Jude

Epistle of Jude

Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James,

To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and kept in Jesus Christ:

Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

Beloved, although I made every effort to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt it necessary to write and urge you to contend earnestly for the faith entrusted once for all to the saints. For certain men have crept in among you unnoticed — ungodly ones who were designated long ago for condemnation. They turn the grace of our God into a license for immorality, and they deny God our only Master and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Although you are fully aware of this, I want to remind you that after the Lord had delivered His people out of the land of Egypt, He destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not stay within their own domain but abandoned their proper dwelling— these He has kept in eternal chains under darkness, bound for judgment on that great day. In like manner, Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, who indulged in sexual immorality and pursued strange flesh, are on display as an example of those who sustain the punishment of eternal fire.

Yet in the same way these dreamers defile their bodies, reject authority, and slander glorious beings. But even the archangel Michael, when he disputed with the devil over the body of Moses, did not presume to bring a slanderous charge against him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” These men, however, slander what they do not understand, and like irrational animals, they will be destroyed by the things they do instinctively. Woe to them! They have traveled the path of Cain; they have rushed for profit into the error of Balaam; they have perished in Korah’s rebellion.

These men are hidden reefs in your love feasts, shamelessly feasting with you but shepherding only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried along by the wind; fruitless trees in autumn, twice dead after being uprooted. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, also prophesied about them:

> “Behold, the Lord is coming with myriads of His holy ones to execute judgment on everyone, and to convict all the ungodly among them of every ungodly act of wickedness and every harsh word spoken against Him by ungodly sinners.”

These men are discontented grumblers, following after their own lusts; their mouths spew arrogance; they flatter others for their own advantage.

But you, beloved, remember what was foretold by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ when they said to you, “In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow after their own ungodly desires.” These are the ones who cause divisions, who are worldly and devoid of the Spirit.

But you, beloved, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God as you await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you eternal life.

And indeed, have mercy on some, making a distinction; save others with fear by snatching them from the fire, hating even the clothing stained by the flesh.

Now to Him who is able to keep them from stumbling and to present them unblemished in His glorious presence, with great joy — to the only wise God our Savior be glory, majesty, dominion and authority both now and for all eternity.

Amen.

Revelation

Revelation of Jesus Christ

This is the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants what must soon come to pass. He made it known by sending His angel to His servant John, who testifies to everything he saw. This is the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and obey what is written in it, because the time is near.

John,

To the seven churches in the province of Asia:

Grace and peace to you from God who is and was and is to come, and from the seven spirits before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To Him who loves us and has washed us from our sins by His blood, who has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father — to Him be the glory and power forever and ever! Amen.

Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him — even those who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. So shall it be! Amen.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and was and is to come — the Almighty.

I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance that are in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and my testimony about Jesus Christ. On the Lord's day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, saying,"Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea."

And there I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned, I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the seven lampstands was One like the Son of Man, dressed in a long robe, with a golden sash around His chest. The hair of His head was white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes were like a blazing fire. His feet were like polished bronze refined in a furnace, and His voice was like the roar of many waters. He held in His right hand seven stars, and a sharp double-edged sword came from His mouth. His face was like the sun shining at its brightest.

When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. But He placed His right hand on me and said,"Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last, the Living One. I was dead, and behold, now I am alive forever and ever. Amen. And I hold the keys of Death and of Hades.

Therefore write down the things you have seen, the things that are, and the things that will happen after this. This is the mystery of the seven stars you saw in My right hand and of the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches."

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:
These are the words of Him who holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands.
I know your deeds, your labor, and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate those who are evil, and you have tested and exposed as liars those who falsely claim to be apostles. Without growing weary, you have persevered and endured many things for the sake of My name.
But I have this against you: You have abandoned your first love. Therefore, keep in mind how far you have fallen. Repent and perform the deeds you did at first. But if you do not repent, I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place.
But you have this to your credit: You hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.
He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes, I will grant the right to eat from the tree of life in the Paradise of God.

To the angel of the church in Smyrna write:
These are the words of the First and the Last, who died and returned to life.
I know your works and your affliction and your poverty — though you are rich! And I am aware of the slander of those who falsely claim to be Jews, but are in fact a synagogue of Satan.
Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison to test you, and you will suffer tribulation for ten days. Be faithful even unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.
He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who overcomes will not be harmed by the second death.

To the angel of the church in Pergamum write:
These are the words of the One who holds the sharp, double-edged sword.
I know your works and where you live, where the throne of Satan sits. Yet you hold to My name and did not deny your faith in Me in the days of My faithful witness Antipas, who was killed among you where Satan dwells.
But I have a few things against you, because some of you hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to place a stumbling block before the Israelites so they would eat food sacrificed to idols and commit sexual immorality. In the same way, some of you also hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent! Otherwise I will come to you shortly and wage war against them with the sword of My mouth.
He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes, I will give the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone inscribed with a new name, known only to the one who receives it.

To the angel of the church in Thyatira write:
These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like a blazing fire and whose feet are like polished bronze.
I know your deeds — your love, your faith, your service, your perseverance — and your latest deeds are greater than your first.

But I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads My servants to be sexually immoral and to eat food sacrificed to idols. Even though I have given her time to repent of her immorality, she is unwilling.
Behold, I will cast her onto a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her will suffer great tribulation unless they repent of her deeds. Then I will strike her children dead, and all the churches will know that I am the One who searches minds and hearts, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.
But I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned the so-called deep things of Satan: I will place no further burden upon you than to hold fast to what you have until I come. And to the one who overcomes and continues in My work until the end, I will give authority over the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter and shatter them like pottery — just as I have received authority from My Father. And I will give him the morning star.
He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

"To the angel of the church in Sardis write:
These are the words of the One who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.
I know your deeds; you have a reputation for being alive, yet you are dead. Wake up and strengthen what remains, which is about to die; for I have found your deeds incomplete in the sight of My God. Remember, then, what you have received and heard. Keep it and repent. If you do not wake up, I will come upon you like a thief, and you will not know the hour when I will come upon you.
But you do have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments, and because they are worthy, they will walk with Me in white. Like them, he who overcomes will be dressed in white. And I will never blot out his name from the Book of Life, but I will confess his name before My Father and His angels.
He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:
These are the words of the One who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What He opens no one can shut (except Him who opens) and no one can open.
I know your deeds. Behold, I have placed before you an open door, which no one can shut. I know that you have only a little strength, yet you have kept My word and have not denied My name. As for those who belong to the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews but are liars instead, I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and they will know that I love you.
Because you have kept My command to persevere, I will also keep you from the hour of testing that is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold fast to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. The one who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will never again leave it. Upon him I will write the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God (the new Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven from My God), and My new name.
He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:
These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Originator of God's creation.
I know your deeds; you are neither cold nor hot. How I wish you were one or the other! So because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to vomit you out of My mouth!
You say, 'I am rich; I have grown wealthy and need nothing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, white garments so that you may be clothed and your shameful nakedness not exposed, and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those I love, I rebuke and discipline. Therefore be earnest and repent.
Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and dine with him, and he with Me. To the one who overcomes, I will grant the right to sit with Me on My throne, just as I overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.
He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

After this I looked and saw a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had previously heard speak to me like a trumpet was saying, "Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after these things."

And at once I was in the Spirit, and I saw a throne standing in heaven, with someone seated on it. He looked like jasper and carnelian, and a rainbow that gleamed like an emerald encircled the throne. Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and on these thrones sat twenty-four elders dressed in white, with golden crowns on their heads.

From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder. Before the throne burned seven torches of fire. These are the seven spirits of God. And before the throne was something like a sea of glass, as clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, covered with eyes in front and back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second like a calf, the third had the face of a man, and the fourth was like an eagle in flight. And each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around and within. Day and night they never stop saying:

> "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"

And whenever the living creatures give glory, honor, and thanks to the One seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before the One seated on the throne, and they worship Him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

> "Worthy are You, our Lord and God, the Holy One, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things; by Your will they exist and were created."

Then I saw a scroll in the right hand of the One seated on the throne. It had writing on both sides and was sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?"

But no one in heaven above or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or look inside it.

And I began to weep bitterly, because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or look inside it.

Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed to open the scroll and its seven seals.”

Then I saw a Lamb who appeared to have been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which represent the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And He came and took the scroll from the right hand of the One seated on the throne.

When He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp, and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song:

> “Worthy are You to take the scroll and open its seals, because You were slain, and by Your blood You purchased us for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be kings and priests to serve our God, and they will reign upon the earth.”

Then I looked, and I heard the voices of many angels encircling the throne and the living creatures and the elders, and their number was myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands. In a loud voice they were saying:

> “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying:

> “To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power forever and ever. Amen!”

And the four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Then I watched as the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, “Come and see!”

So I saw a white horse, and its rider held a bow. And he was given a crown, and he rode out to overcome and conquer.

And when the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!”

Then another horse went forth. It was bright red, and its rider was granted permission to take away peace from the earth and to make men slay one another. And he was given a great sword.

And when the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come and see!”

And I saw a black horse, and its rider held in his hand a pair of scales. And I heard a voice from among the four living creatures, saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine.”

And when the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the fourth living creature say, “Come and see!”

Then I saw a pale green horse. Its rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed close behind. And he was given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill by sword, by famine, by plague, and by the beasts of the earth.

And when the Lamb opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony of the Lamb that they had upheld. And they cried out in a loud voice, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge those who dwell upon the earth and avenge our blood?”

Then each of them was given a white robe and told to rest a little while longer until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers, were killed, just as they had been killed.

And I watched as the Lamb opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black like sackcloth of goat hair, and the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth like unripe figs dropping from a tree shaken by a great wind. The sky receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved from its place.

Then the kings of the earth, the nobles, the commanders, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and free man hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. And they said to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to withstand it?”

And after this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back its four winds so that no wind would blow on land or sea or on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, with the seal of the living God. And he called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: “Do not harm the land or sea or trees until we have placed a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.”

And I heard the number of those who were sealed, 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel:

> From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben 12,000, from the tribe of Gad 12,000, from the tribe of Asher 12,000, from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000, from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000, from the tribe of Simeon 12,000, from the tribe of Levi 12,000, from the tribe of Issachar 12,000, from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000, from the tribe of Joseph 12,000, and from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000 .

After this I looked and saw a multitude too large to count, from every nation and tribe and people and tongue, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

> “Salvation to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. And they fell facedown before the throne and worshiped God, saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

Then one of the elders addressed me: “These in white robes,” he asked, “who are they, and where have they come from?”

“Sir,” I answered, “you know.”

So he replied, “These are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason,

> they are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple; and the One seated on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. ‘Never again will they hunger, and never will they thirst; nor will the sun beat down upon them, nor any scorching heat.’ For the Lamb in the center of the throne shepherds them. ‘He will lead them to springs of living water,’ and ‘God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.’”

When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and they were given seven trumpets.

Then another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, along with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, rose up before God from the hand of the angel.

Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it to the earth; and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

And the seven angels with the seven trumpets prepared to sound them.

Then the first angel sounded his trumpet, and hail and fire mixed with blood were hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, along with a third of the trees and all the green grass.

Then the second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a great burning mountain was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned to blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

Then the third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star burning like a torch fell from heaven and landed on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter like wormwood oil, and many people died from the bitter waters.

Then the fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun and moon and stars were struck. A third of the stars were darkened, a third of the day was without light, and a third of the night as well.

And as I observed, I heard an eagle flying overhead, calling in a loud voice, “Woe! Woe! Woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the remaining three angels!”

Then the fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from heaven to earth, and it was given the key to the pit of the Abyss. The star opened the pit of the Abyss, and smoke rose out of it like the smoke of a burning furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke from the pit.

And out of the smoke, locusts descended on the earth, and they were given power like that of the scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. The locusts were not given power to kill them, but only to torment them for five months, and their torment was like the stinging of a scorpion. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, but death will escape them.

And the locusts looked like horses prepared for battle, with something like crowns of gold on their heads; and their faces were like the faces of men. They had hair like that of women, and teeth like those of lions. They also had thoraxes like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the roar of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. They had tails with stingers like scorpions, which had the power to injure people for five months. They were ruled by a king, the angel of the Abyss. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek it is Apollyon.

The first woe has passed. Behold, two woes are still to follow.

Then the sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God saying to the sixth angel with the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.”

So the four angels who had been prepared for this hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. And the number of mounted troops was myriads of myriads; I heard their number.

Now the horses and riders in my vision looked like this: The riders had breastplates the colors of fire, sapphire, and sulfur. The heads of the horses were like the heads of lions, and out of their mouths proceeded fire, smoke, and sulfur. A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke, and sulfur that proceeded from their mouths. For the power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; indeed, their tails were like snakes, having heads with which to inflict harm.

Now the rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the works of their hands. They did not stop worshiping demons and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk. Furthermore, they did not repent of their murder, sorcery, sexual immorality, and theft.

Then I saw a mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head. His face was like the sun, and his legs were like pillars of fire. He held in his hand a scroll, which lay open. He placed his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land. Then he cried out in a loud voice like the roar of a lion. And when he cried out, the seven thunders sounded their voices.

When the seven thunders had spoken, I was about to put it in writing. But I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down.”

Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven. And he swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and everything in it, the earth and everything

in it, and the sea and everything in it: "There will be no more delay! But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he begins to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be fulfilled, just as He proclaimed to His servants the prophets."

Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the small scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel standing on the sea and on the land."

And I went to the angel and said, "Give me the small scroll."

"Take it and eat it," he said. "It will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey."

So I took the scroll from the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach turned bitter.

And they told me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."

Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the number of worshipers there. But exclude the courtyard outside the temple. Do not measure it, because it has been given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for 42 months. And I will empower my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."

These witnesses are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouths and devours their enemies. In this way, anyone who wants to harm them must be killed. These witnesses have power to shut the sky so that no rain will fall during the days of their prophecy, and power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they wish.

When the two witnesses have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will wage war with them, and will overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city — figuratively called Sodom and Egypt — where their Lord was also crucified. For three and a half days all peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will view their bodies and will not permit them to be laid in a tomb. And those who dwell on the earth will gloat over them, and will celebrate and give one another gifts, because these two prophets had tormented them.

But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered the two witnesses, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell upon those who saw them. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud as their enemies watched them.

And in that day there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand were killed in the quake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

The second woe has passed. Behold, the third woe is coming shortly.

Then the seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and loud voices called out in heaven:

> "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever."

And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying:

> "We give thanks to You, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were enraged, and Your wrath has come. The time has come to judge the dead and to reward Your servants the prophets, as well as the saints and those who fear Your name, both small and great— and to destroy those who destroy the earth."

Then the temple of God in heaven was opened, and the ark of the covenant of the Lord appeared in His temple. And there were flashes of lightning, and rumblings, and peals of thunder, and a great hailstorm.

And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed in the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and crying out in the pain and agony of giving birth.

Then another sign appeared in heaven: a huge red dragon with seven heads, ten horns, and seven royal crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars from the sky, hurling them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, ready to devour her child as soon as she gave birth.

And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was caught up to God and to His throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where God had prepared a place for her to be nourished for 1,260 days.

Then a war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But the dragon was not strong enough, and no longer was any place found in heaven for him and his angels. And the great dragon was hurled down — that ancient serpent called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying:

> "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ. For the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down — he who accuses them day and night before our God. They have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. And they did not love their lives so as to shy away from death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea; with great fury the devil has come down to you, knowing he has only a short time."

And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle to fly from the presence of the serpent to her place in the wilderness, where she was nourished for a time, and times, and half a time.

Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river to overtake the woman and sweep her away in the torrent. But the earth helped the woman and opened its mouth to swallow up the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. And the dragon

was enraged at the woman and went to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

And I stood on the shore of the sea.

Then I saw a beast with ten horns and seven heads rising out of the sea. There were ten royal crowns on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. The beast I saw was like a leopard, with the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.

One of the heads of the beast appeared to have been mortally wounded. But the mortal wound was healed, and the whole world marveled and followed the beast. They worshiped the dragon who had given authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can wage war against it?"

The beast was given a mouth to speak arrogant and blasphemous words, and authority to make war for 42 months. And the beast opened its mouth to speak blasphemy against God and to slander His name and His tabernacle — those who dwell in heaven.

Then the beast was permitted to wage war against the saints and to conquer them, and it was given authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And all who dwell on the earth will worship the beast — all whose names have not been written from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life belonging to the Lamb who was slain.

He who has an ear, let him hear:

> "If anyone is destined for captivity, there he will go; if anyone kills by the sword, by the sword he must be killed."

Here is a call for the perseverance and faith of the saints.

Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. This beast had two horns like a lamb, but spoke like a dragon. And this beast exercised all the authority of the first beast and caused the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose mortal wound had been healed.

And the second beast performed great signs, even causing fire from heaven to come down upon the earth in the presence of the people. Because of the signs it was given to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived my own people who dwell on the earth, telling them to make an image to the beast that had been wounded by the sword and yet had lived. The second beast was permitted to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship it to be killed.

And the second beast required all people, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark — the name of the beast or the number of its name.

Here is a call for wisdom: Let the one who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and that number is 666 .

Then I looked and saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him 144,000 who had His name and His Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of many waters and the loud rumbling of thunder. And the sound I heard was like harpists strumming their harps.

And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. And no one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they are virgins. They follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They have been redeemed by Jesus from among men as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And no lie was found in their mouths, for they are blameless.

Then I saw an angel flying overhead, with the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on the earth — to every nation and tribe and tongue and people. And he said in a loud voice, "Fear the Lord and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come. Worship the One who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and the springs of waters."

Then a second angel followed, saying, "Fallen is Babylon the great, who has made all the nations drink the wine of the passion of her immorality."

And a third angel followed them, calling out in a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on his forehead or on his hand, he too will drink the wine of God's anger, poured undiluted into the cup of His wrath. And he will be tormented in fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises forever and ever. Day and night there is no rest for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name."

Here is a call for the perseverance of the saints, who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

And I heard a voice from heaven telling me to write, "Blessed are the dead — those who die in the Lord from this moment on."

"Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labors, and their deeds will follow them."

And I looked and saw a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was One like the Son of Man, with a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.

Then another angel came out of the temple, crying out in a loud voice to the One seated on the cloud, "Swing Your sickle and reap, because the time has come to harvest, for the crop of the earth is ripe." So the One seated on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. Still another angel, with authority over the fire, came from the altar and called out with a loud cry to the angel with the sharp sickle, "Swing your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the vine of the earth, because its grapes are ripe."

So the angel swung his sickle over the earth and gathered the grapes of the earth, and he threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath. And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and the blood that flowed from it rose as high as the bridles of the horses for a distance of 1,600 stadia.

Then I saw another great and marvelous sign in heaven: seven angels with the seven final plagues, with which the wrath of God is completed.

And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, beside which stood those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name. They were holding harps from God, and they sang the song of God's servant Moses and of the Lamb:

> "Great and wonderful are Your works, O Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before You, for Your righteous acts have been revealed."

After this I looked, and the temple — the tabernacle of the Testimony — was opened in heaven. And out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues, dressed in clean and bright linen and girded with golden sashes around their chests.

Then one of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go, pour out on the earth the seven bowls of God's wrath."

So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and loathsome, malignant sores broke out on those who had the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.

And the second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it turned to blood like that of the dead, and every living thing in the sea died.

And the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and springs of water, and they turned to blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say:

> "Righteous are You, O Holy One, who is and was, because You have brought these judgments. For they have spilled the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink, as they deserve."

And I heard the altar reply:

> "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are Your judgments."

Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was given power to scorch the people with fire. And the people were scorched by intense heat, and men cursed the name of God, who had authority over these plagues. Yet they did not repent and give Him glory.

And the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness, and men began to gnaw their tongues in anguish and curse the God of heaven for their pains and sores. Yet they did not repent of their deeds.

And the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings of the East.

And I saw three unclean spirits that looked like frogs coming out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. These are demonic spirits that perform signs and go out to all the kings of the earth, to assemble them for battle on that great day of God the Almighty.

"Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who remains awake and clothed, so that he will not go naked and let his shame be exposed."

And they assembled the kings in the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came from the throne in the temple of heaven, saying, "It is done!"

And there were flashes of lightning, and peals of thunder, and rumblings, and a great earthquake the likes of which had not occurred since men were upon the earth — so mighty was the great quake. The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. And God remembered Babylon the great and gave her the cup of the wine of the fury of His wrath.

Then every island fled, and no mountain could be found. And great hailstones weighing almost a hundred pounds each rained down on them from above. And men cursed God for the plague of hail, because it was so horrendous.

Then one of the seven angels with the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. The kings of the earth were immoral with her, and those who dwell on the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her immorality."

And the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, where I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls. She held in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. And on her forehead a mysterious name was written:

BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES
AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

I could see that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints and witnesses for Jesus. And I was utterly amazed at the sight of her.

"Why are you so amazed?" said the angel. "I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and ten horns.

The beast that you saw — it was, and now is no more, but is about to come up out of the Abyss and go to its destruction. And those who dwell on the earth whose names were not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world will marvel when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet will be.

This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. But when he does come, he must remain for only a little while.

The beast that was, and now is not, is an eighth king, who belongs to the other seven and is going into destruction. The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but will receive one hour of authority as kings, along with the beast. These

kings have one purpose: to yield their power and authority to the beast.

They will make war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will triumph over them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and He will be accompanied by His called and chosen and faithful ones."

Then the angel said to me, "The waters you saw, where the prostitute was seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. And the ten horns and the beast that you saw will hate the prostitute. They will leave her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to carry out His purpose by uniting to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. And the woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth."

After this I saw another angel descending from heaven with great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his glory. And he cried out in a mighty voice:

> "Fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a lair for demons and a haunt for every unclean spirit and every unclean and detestable bird. All the nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her immorality. The kings of the earth were immoral with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown wealthy from the extravagance of her luxury."

Then I heard another voice from heaven say:

> "Come out of her, My people, so that you will not share in her sins or contract any of her plagues. For her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Give back to her as she has done to others; pay her back double for what she has done; mix her a double portion in her own cup. As much as she has glorified herself and lived in luxury, give her the same measure of torment and grief. In her heart she says, 'I sit as queen; I am not a widow and will never see grief.' Therefore her plagues will come in one day — death and grief and famine — and she will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her."

Then the kings of the earth who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her will weep and wail at the sight of the smoke rising from the fire that consumes her. In fear of her torment, they will stand at a distance and cry out:

> "Woe, woe to the great city, the mighty city of Babylon! For in a single hour your judgment has come."

And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, because there is no one left to buy their cargo — cargo of gold, silver, precious stones, and pearls; of fine linen, purple, silk, and scarlet; of all kinds of citron wood and every article of ivory, precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; of cinnamon, incense, myrrh, and frankincense; of wine, olive oil, fine flour, and wheat; of cattle, sheep, horses, and carriages; of bodies and souls of slaves. And they will say:

> "The fruit of your soul's desire has departed from you; all your luxury and splendor have vanished, never to be seen again."

The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand at a distance, in fear of her torment. They will weep and mourn, saying:

> "Woe, woe to the great city, clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! For in a single hour such fabulous wealth has been destroyed!"

Every shipmaster, passenger, and sailor, and all who make their living from the sea, will stand at a distance and cry out at the sight of the smoke rising from the fire that consumes her. "What city was ever like this great city?" they will exclaim.

Then they will throw dust on their heads as they weep and mourn and cry out:

> "Woe, woe to the great city, where all who had ships on the sea were enriched by her wealth! For in a single hour she has been destroyed." Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced for you His judgment against her.

Then a mighty angel picked up a stone the size of a great millstone and cast it into the sea, saying:

> "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be cast down, never to be seen again. And the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters, will never ring out in you again. Nor will any craftsmen of any trade be found in you again, nor the sound of a millstone be heard in you again. The light of a lamp will never shine in you again, and the voices of a bride and bridegroom will never call out in you again. For your merchants were the great ones of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery."

And there was found in her the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who had been slain on the earth.

After this I heard a sound like the roar of a great multitude in heaven, shouting:

> "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God! For His judgments are true and just. He has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality. He has avenged the blood of His servants that was poured out by her hand."

And a second time they called out:

> "Hallelujah! Her smoke rises forever and ever."

And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne, saying:

> "Amen, Hallelujah!"

Then a voice came from the throne, saying:

> "Praise our God, all you who serve Him, and those who fear Him, small and great alike!"

And I heard a sound like the roar of a great multitude, like the rushing of many waters, and like a mighty rumbling of thunder, crying out:

> "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him the glory. For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. She was given clothing of fine linen, bright and pure."

For the fine linen she wears is the righteous acts of the saints.

Then the angel told me to write, “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”

So I fell at his feet to worship him. But he told me, “Do not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who rely on the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

Then I saw heaven standing open, and there before me was a white horse. And its rider is called Faithful and True. With righteousness He judges and wages war. He has eyes like blazing fire, and many royal crowns on His head. He has names written on Him, and a name written that only He Himself knows. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and His name is The Word of God.

The armies of heaven, dressed in fine linen, white and pure, follow Him on white horses. And from His mouth proceeds a sharp double-edged sword with which to strike down the nations, and He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. And He has a name written on His robe and on His thigh:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out in a loud voice to all the birds flying overhead, “Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings and commanders and mighty men, of horses and riders, of everyone both slave and free, both small and great.”

Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies assembled to wage war against the One seated on the horse, and against His army. But the beast was captured along with the false prophet, who on its behalf had performed signs deceiving those who had the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. Both the beast and the false prophet were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. And the rest were killed with the sword that proceeded from the mouth of the One seated on the horse.

And all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven with the key to the Abyss, holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan, he who deceives the whole world, and bound him for a thousand years. And he threw him into the Abyss, shut it, and sealed it over him, so that he could not deceive the nations until the thousand years were complete. And after that, he must be released for a brief period of time.

Then I saw the thrones, and those seated on them had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image, and had not received its mark on their foreheads or hands. And they came to life and reigned with Christ for the thousand years.

The rest of the dead did not come back to life until the thousand years were complete. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection! The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

When the thousand years are complete, Satan will be released from his prison, and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth — Gog and Magog — to assemble them for battle. Their number is like the sand of the seashore.

And they marched across the broad expanse of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. But fire came down from God out of heaven and consumed them. And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, into which the beast and the false prophet had already been thrown. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Then I saw a great white throne and the One seated on it. Earth and heaven fled from His presence, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne.

And books were opened, and one of them was the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their deeds, as recorded in the books. The sea gave up its dead, and Death and Hades gave up their dead, and each one was judged according to his deeds.

Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death — the lake of fire. And if anyone was found whose name was not written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying:

> “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them. ‘He will wipe away every tear from their eyes,’ and there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the former things have passed away.”

And the One seated on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” Then He said to me, “Write this down, for these words are true and faithful.” And He told me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give freely from the spring of the water of life. The one who overcomes will inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he will be My son.

But to the cowardly and unbelieving and sinful and abominable and murderers and sexually immoral and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur. This is the second death.”

Then one of the seven angels with the seven bowls full of the seven final plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the great holy city of Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, shining with the glory of God. Its radiance was like a most precious jewel, like a jasper, as clear as crystal. The city had a great and high wall with twelve gates inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, and twelve angels at the gates. There were three gates on the east,

three on the north, three on the south, and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations bearing the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The angel who spoke with me had a golden measuring rod to measure the city and its gates and walls. The city lies foursquare, with its width the same as its length. And he measured the city with the rod, and all its dimensions were equal — 12,000 stadia in length and width and height. And he measured its wall to be 144 cubits, by the human measure the angel was using.

The wall was made of jasper, and the city itself of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were adorned with every kind of precious stone:

The first foundation was jasper,
the second sapphire,
the third chalcedony,
the fourth emerald,
the fifth sardonyx,
the sixth carnelian,
the seventh chrysolite,
the eighth beryl,
the ninth topaz,
the tenth chrysoprase,
the eleventh jacinth,
and the twelfth amethyst.

And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, with each gate consisting of a single pearl. The main street of the city was pure gold, as clear as glass.

But I saw no temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, because the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its lamp. By its light the nations will walk, and into it the kings of the earth will bring their glory and the honor of the nations. Its gates will never be shut at the end of the day, because there will be no night there.

And into the city will be brought the glory and honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who practices an abomination or a lie, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Then the angel showed me a pure river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the main street of the city. On either side of the river stood a tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit and yielding a fresh crop for each month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be within the city, and His servants will worship Him. They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night in the city, and they will have no need for the light of a lamp or of the sun. For the Lord God will shine on them, and they will reign forever and ever.

Then the angel said to me, "These words are faithful and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent His angel to show His servants what must soon take place."

"Behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of prophecy in this book. "

And I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had shown me these things. But he said to me, "Do not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"

Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of prophecy in this book, because the time is near. Let the unrighteous continue to be unrighteous, and the vile continue to be vile; let the righteous continue to practice righteousness, and the holy continue to be holy."

"Behold, I am coming soon, and My reward is with Me, to give to each one according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. "

Blessed are those who do His commandments, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by its gates. But outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright Morning Star."

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" Let the one who hears say, "Come!" And let the one who is thirsty come, and the one who desires the water of life drink freely.

I testify to everyone who hears the words of prophecy in this book: If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes away from the words of this book of prophecy, may God take away his share in the tree of life and the holy city, which are described in this book.

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Yes, come, Lord Jesus!

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints.

Amen.