

# 1 Samuel

<sup>1</sup> Once there was a man from Ramathaim-zophim in the hill country of Ephraim. His name was Elkanah, son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, from the tribe of Ephraim.

<sup>2</sup> He had two wives. The name of the first wife was Hannah, and the name of the second, Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

<sup>3</sup> Every year Elkanah would leave his town and go to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty at Shiloh, where Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were the Lord's priests.

<sup>4</sup> Whenever Elkanah offered a sacrifice, he would give portions of it to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters.

<sup>5</sup> He would give an extra portion\* to Hannah, to show his love for her even though the Lord hadn't given her any children.

<sup>6</sup> Her rival—the other wife—would taunt her badly to upset her because the Lord hadn't given her any children.

<sup>7</sup> This went on for years. Whenever Hannah went to the Lord's Temple, Peninnah would taunt her until she cried and couldn't eat.

<sup>8</sup> “Hannah, what are you crying for?” her husband Elkanah would ask. “Why don't you

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\* **1:5** By giving an extra portion, Elkanah was showing everyone that he treated Hannah as if she did have one child.

eat? Why are you so upset? Aren't I better to you than ten sons?"

<sup>9</sup> One time when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah got up and went to the Temple.† Eli the priest was sitting on his seat by the entrance to the Lord's Temple.

<sup>10</sup> She was terribly upset, and prayed to the Lord as she cried and cried.

<sup>11</sup> She made a vow, asking, "Lord Almighty, if only you would pay attention to the suffering of your servant and remember me, and not forget me but give me a son, then I will dedicate him to the Lord for his whole life, and no razor shall ever touch his head."

<sup>12</sup> As Hannah went on praying before the Lord, Eli watched her mouth.

<sup>13</sup> Hannah was praying in her head, and though her lips were moving, her voice made no sound. Eli thought she must be drunk.

<sup>14</sup> "Do you have to come here drunk?" he asked. "Get rid of your wine!"

<sup>15</sup> "It's not that, my lord," Hannah replied. "I'm a very miserable woman. I haven't been drinking wine or beer; I'm just pouring my heart out to the Lord.

<sup>16</sup> Please don't think I'm a bad woman! I have been praying because of all my troubles and grief."

<sup>17</sup> "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel give you what you have asked him for," Eli replied.

<sup>18</sup> "Thank you for your kindness to your servant," she said. Then she went on her way,

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† **1:9** "And went to the Temple": supplied for clarity.

had something to eat, and she didn't look sad any more.

<sup>19</sup> Elkanah and Hannah got up early the next morning to worship the Lord and then they went home to Ramah. Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the Lord honored her request.

<sup>20</sup> In due course she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the Lord for him."

<sup>21</sup> Elkanah and all his family went to make the yearly sacrifice to the Lord and to fulfill his vow.

<sup>22</sup> But Hannah did not go. She told her husband, "Once the boy is weaned I will take him to be presented to the Lord and to remain there forever."

<sup>23</sup> "Do as you see fit," her husband Elkanah replied. "Stay here until you have weaned him. May the Lord fulfill what he has said."<sup>‡</sup> So Hannah stayed behind and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

<sup>24</sup> When she had weaned him, Hannah took the boy with her, along with a three-year-old bull,<sup>§</sup> an ephah of flour, and a wineskin containing wine. Even though the boy was young, she brought him to the Lord's Temple at Shiloh.

<sup>25</sup> After they had slaughtered the bull, they presented the boy to Eli.

<sup>26</sup> "Please, my lord," said Hannah, "as surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here with you praying to the Lord.

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<sup>‡</sup> **1:23** "What he has said" L referring to the Lord. The Septuagint and a scroll from Qumran read "what you have said," referring to Hannah. <sup>§</sup> **1:24** "A three-year-old bull": Septuagint reading.

<sup>27</sup> I prayed for this boy, and since the Lord has given me what I asked him for,

<sup>28</sup> now I'm giving him to the Lord. As long as he lives he will be dedicated to the Lord." And he\* worshiped the Lord there.

## 2

<sup>1</sup> Hannah prayed, "I'm so happy in the Lord! He has empowered me! Now I have plenty to say in answer to those who hate me. I celebrate your salvation!

<sup>2</sup> There's no one holy like the Lord—no one apart from you, no Rock like our God!

<sup>3</sup> Don't speak so conceitedly! Don't talk so arrogantly! For the Lord is a God who knows everything—doesn't he judge what you do?

<sup>4</sup> The weapons\* of the powerful are shattered, while those who stumble along are made strong.

<sup>5</sup> Those who used to have plenty of food now have to work to earn a crust, while those who used to be hungry now have become fat. The woman who was childless now has seven children, while the woman with many children fades away.

<sup>6</sup> The Lord kills and he revives; he sends some down to the grave, but he raises others up.

<sup>7</sup> The Lord makes some poor, but others rich; he brings some down, but he lifts others up.

<sup>8</sup> He helps the poor up from the dust; he raises the lowborn from the trash pile and seats them

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\* **1:28** "He": presumably referring to Elkhanah. Some versions change this to "they." \* **2:4** "Weapons": literally, "bow."

with the upper class in places of honor. For the foundations of the earth belong to the Lord, and he has placed the world on them.

<sup>9</sup> He will take care of those who trust him, but the wicked vanish into the darkness, for people don't succeed through their own strength.

<sup>10</sup> The Lord crushes his enemies, he thunders against them from heaven. He rules<sup>†</sup> the whole earth; he strengthens his king, and gives power to the one he has anointed.”

<sup>11</sup> Then Elkanah went home to Ramah while the boy stayed with Eli the priest serving the Lord.

<sup>12</sup> Eli's sons were worthless men who didn't have any time for the Lord

<sup>13</sup> or their role as priests to the people. They would send one of their servants over with a fork when anyone came to offer a sacrifice.

<sup>14</sup> The servant would stick the fork into the pot while the meat from the sacrifice was being boiled, and would take whatever meat came up on the fork to Eli's sons. This is how they treated all the Israelites who came to Shiloh.

<sup>15</sup> In fact even before the fat of the sacrifice was burned up the servant would come and would demand from the man sacrificing, “Give me meat to roast for the priest. He doesn't want boiled meat from you—he wants it raw.”

<sup>16</sup> The man might answer, “Let me first burn up all the fat, and then you can have as much as you want.”

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<sup>†</sup> **2:10** “Rules”: or “judges.”

But the priest's servant would reply, “No, you must give it to me now. If you don't, I'll take it by force.”

<sup>17</sup> The sins of these young men were extremely serious from the Lord's perspective because they were treating with contempt the Lord's offerings.

<sup>18</sup> But Samuel served before the Lord—a boy dressed as a priest,<sup>‡</sup> wearing a linen ephod.

<sup>19</sup> Every year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice.

<sup>20</sup> Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, saying, “May the Lord give you children by this woman to replace the one she prayed for and dedicated to the Lord.” Then they would return home.

<sup>21</sup> The Lord blessed<sup>§</sup> Hannah with three sons and two daughters. The boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the Lord.

<sup>22</sup> Eli was very old, however he had heard about all the things his sons were doing to the people of Israel, and how they were seducing the women who were serving at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

<sup>23</sup> He asked them, “Why are you doing all this? I keep on hearing from everyone about your evil actions.

<sup>24</sup> No, my sons, the report I hear about you from the Lord's people isn't good.

<sup>25</sup> If a man sins against someone, God can intercede for him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who is going to intercede for him?” But

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<sup>‡</sup> **2:18** “Dressed as a priest”: added for clarity    **§ 2:21** “Blessed”: literally, “Paid attention to.”

they didn't pay attention to what their father said, for the Lord was planning to put them to death.

<sup>26</sup> The boy Samuel grew physically, and also grew in the approval of both the Lord and the people.

<sup>27</sup> A man of God came to Eli and told him, "This is what the Lord says: Didn't I very clearly reveal myself to your forefather's family when they were ruled by Pharaoh in Egypt?"

<sup>28</sup> I chose him\* out of all the tribes of Israel as my priest, to offer sacrifices on my altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod in my presence. I also gave to your forefather's family all the Israelites' offerings made with fire.

<sup>29</sup> So why have you treated with contempt my sacrifices and offerings that I have ordered for my place of worship? You honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves with the best parts of all the offerings from my people Israel.

<sup>30</sup> Consequently, this is the declaration of the Lord: I made a definite promise that your family and your father's family would always serve me as priests. But now the Lord declares: Not anymore! Instead I will honor those who honor me, but those who despise me I will treat with contempt.

<sup>31</sup> The time is coming when I will bring your family and your father's family to an end.† No one will live to an old age.

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\* **2:28** Referring to Aaron. † **2:31** "Bring your family... to an end": literally, "cut off your strength."

<sup>32</sup> You will see tragedy in the place of worship.‡ While Israel will prosper, no one in your family will ever again reach old age.

<sup>33</sup> Anyone of your family not cut off from serving at my altar will make your eyes weep and cause you grief. All your descendants will die when full of life.

<sup>34</sup> Here is a sign for you that this will happen regarding your two sons Hophni and Phinehas: both will die on the same day.

<sup>35</sup> I will choose for myself a trustworthy priest who will do what I really want, what I have in mind. I will make sure he and his descendants are trustworthy and they will always serve my anointed one.

<sup>36</sup> Every one of your descendants who is left will come and bow down to him, asking for money and food, saying, 'Please give me work as a priest so that I can have food to eat.' "

### 3

<sup>1</sup> The boy Samuel served before the Lord under Eli's supervision. At that time messages from the Lord were rare—visions were not common.

<sup>2</sup> One evening, Eli had gone to bed in his room. His eyes were now so weak that he couldn't see.

<sup>3</sup> The lamp of God hadn't yet gone out, and Samuel was sleeping in the Lord's Temple where the Ark of God was.

<sup>4</sup> Then the Lord called, "Samuel!"  
He answered, "I'm here."

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‡ **2:32** Perhaps referring to the loss of the Ark to the Philistines.



<sup>5</sup> He ran to Eli, and said, "I'm here—you called me."

"I didn't call you," Eli replied. "Go back to bed." So Samuel went back to bed.

<sup>6</sup> Then the Lord called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up, went to Eli and said, "I'm here—you called me."

"I didn't call you, my son," Eli replied. "Go back to bed."

<sup>7</sup> (Samuel hadn't yet come to know the Lord and had not received any message from him.)

<sup>8</sup> The Lord called again for the third time, "Samuel!" He got up went to Eli and said, "I'm here—you called me." Then Eli realized that it was the Lord calling the boy.

<sup>9</sup> Eli told Samuel, "Go back to bed, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, because your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went back to his bed.

<sup>10</sup> The Lord came and stood there, calling just as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" Samuel answered, "Speak, because your servant is listening."

<sup>11</sup> The Lord told Samuel: "Pay attention, because I'm going to do something in Israel that will surprise everyone who hears it.\*"

<sup>12</sup> That's when I will carry out against Eli and his family everything I have said, from beginning to end.

<sup>13</sup> I told him that I will judge his family forever because of the sins he knows about, because his sons blasphemed God and he did not try and stop them.

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\* **3:11** "Surprise everyone who hears it": literally, "will make the ears of all who hear it tingle."

14 That's why I swore to Eli and his family, 'The guilt of Eli and his descendants will never be removed by sacrifice or offering.' "

15 Samuel remained in bed until the morning. Then he got up and opened the doors of the Lord's Temple as usual. He was afraid to tell Eli about the vision.

16 But Eli called him and said, "Samuel, my son."

"I'm here," Samuel answered.

17 "What did he tell you?" Eli asked. "Don't hide it from me. May God punish you very severely if you hide anything he told you from me!"

18 So Samuel told him everything and didn't hide anything from him.

"It's the Lord," Eli replied. "May he do what he thinks is good."

19 Samuel continued to grow up. The Lord was with him and made sure all he said was trustworthy.

20 Everyone in the whole of Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the Lord.

21 The Lord went on appearing at Shiloh, because there he revealed himself to Samuel and delivered his messages,

## 4

<sup>1</sup> and Samuel's words were communicated to all the Israelites.

The Israelites marched out to confront the Philistines in battle. They set up camp at

Ebenezer, while the Philistines set up camp at Aphek.

<sup>2</sup> The Philistines attacked the Israelites in formation, and when the battle spread, the Philistines defeated the Israelites, killing 4,000 of them on the battlefield.

<sup>3</sup> When the Israelite army returned to camp, the elders of Israel asked, “Why did the Lord defeat us before Philistines today? Let’s go and get the Ark of the Lord’s Agreement from Shiloh, so that he can accompany us and save us from our enemies.”

<sup>4</sup> So the army sent men to Shiloh, and they brought back the Ark of the Lord Almighty’s Agreement, he who sits on his throne between the cherubim. Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were there with the Ark of the God’s Agreement.

<sup>5</sup> When the Ark of the Lord’s Agreement arrived in the camp, all the Israelites gave such a loud shout it made the ground shake.

<sup>6</sup> When the Philistines heard all the shouting, they asked, “What’s the meaning of this shouting in the Israelite camp?” When they found out that the Ark of the Lord had arrived in the camp,

<sup>7</sup> the Philistines were afraid. “A god has arrived in the camp,” they said. “We’re in trouble, for nothing like this has happened before.

<sup>8</sup> This is disaster for us! Who will save us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who attacked the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness.

<sup>9</sup> Be brave, and fight like real men, Philistines!

Otherwise you'll end up as slaves to the Israelites, just as they were your slaves. Now be real men and fight!"

<sup>10</sup> So the Philistines fought, and the Israelites were defeated—every man ran away home. The death toll was very large: thirty thousand of the Israelite infantry were killed.

<sup>11</sup> The Ark of God was captured, and Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's two sons, died.

<sup>12</sup> A man from the tribe of Benjamin ran from the battle that day all the way to Shiloh. His clothes were torn and he had dirt on his head.\*

<sup>13</sup> When he arrived, Eli was sitting there on his chair by the road, watching out for news because he was worried about the Ark of God. When the man came into town and gave his report, the whole town cried out loud.

<sup>14</sup> Eli heard the crying and asked, "What's all this noise?" The man rushed over to Eli and told him what had happened.

<sup>15</sup> Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were fixed because he couldn't see.

<sup>16</sup> "I've just come from the battle," the man said. "I ran away from it today."

"What happened, my son?" Eli asked.

<sup>17</sup> "Israel ran away from the Philistines—we were badly defeated," the messenger replied. "Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were killed, and the Ark of God has been captured."

<sup>18</sup> As soon as the Ark of God was mentioned, Eli fell backward from his chair by the town gate.

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\* **4:12** "His clothes were torn and he had dirt on his head." This was symbolic of great distress.

Since he was old and heavy, he broke his neck and died. Eli had been Israel's leader for forty years.

<sup>19</sup> His daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was pregnant and about to give birth. When she heard the news that the Ark of God had been captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she went into labor and gave birth, but her labor pains were too strong.

<sup>20</sup> Just before she died, the women caring for her said, "Don't give up—you have given birth to a son!" But she didn't answer or give any response.

<sup>21</sup> She named the boy Ichabod, saying, "The glory has left Israel," because Ark of God had been captured, and her father-in-law and her husband had died.

<sup>22</sup> She said, "The glory has left Israel, for the Ark of God has been captured."

## 5

<sup>1</sup> After the Philistines captured the Ark of God, they took it from Ebenezer to Ashdod.

<sup>2</sup> They brought the Ark of God into the Temple of Dagon and placed it next to Dagon.

<sup>3</sup> When the people of Ashdod got up early the next day, they saw Dagon had fallen on his face in front of the Ark of the Lord. So they took Dagon and set him back up.

<sup>4</sup> When they got up early the next morning, they saw Dagon had fallen on his face in front of the Ark of the Lord, with his head and hands

broken off lying on the doorstep. Only his body remained intact.

<sup>5</sup> (That's why the priests of Dagon, and all who enter the temple of Dagon in Ashdod, don't tread on the doorstep, even up to now.)

<sup>6</sup> The Lord punished\* the people of Ashdod and its surrounding area, devastating them and plaguing them with swellings.†

<sup>7</sup> When the people of Ashdod saw what was going on, they said, "We can't let the Ark of the God of Israel remain here with us, because he is punishing us and Dagon our god."

<sup>8</sup> So they sent for all the Philistine rulers and asked them, "What should we do with the Ark of the God of Israel?"

"Take the Ark of the God of Israel to Gath," they replied. So they moved it to Gath.

<sup>9</sup> But once they'd moved the Ark to Gath, the Lord also took action against that town, throwing it into great confusion and attacking the people of the town, young and old, with a plague of swellings.

<sup>10</sup> So they sent the Ark of God to Ekron, but as soon as it arrived, the leaders of Ekron shouted, "They've moved the Ark of the God of Israel here to kill us and our people!"

<sup>11</sup> So they sent for all the Philistine rulers and said, "Send the Ark of the God of Israel away,

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\* **5:6** "The Lord punished": literally, "The hand of the Lord was heavy." † **5:6** Some think these "swellings" or "tumors" were related to bubonic plague. The Septuagint adds at the end of this verse, "and rats swarmed throughout the land, and there was death and destruction in the town."

back to where it came from, otherwise it's going to kill us and our people.” People were dying throughout the town, creating terrible panic, for God's punishment was very hard.

<sup>12</sup> Those who didn't die were plagued with swellings, and the cry for help from the town reached up to heaven.

## 6

<sup>1</sup> After the Ark of the Lord had been in the country of the Philistines for seven months,

<sup>2</sup> the Philistines summoned the priests and fortune-tellers, and asked, “What should we do with the Ark of the Lord? Explain to us how to send it back to where it came from.”

<sup>3</sup> “If you're going to send back the Ark of the God of Israel, do not send it back empty-handedly, but make sure to send along with it a gift of a guilt offering to him,” they replied. “Then you will be healed, and you will understand why he has treated you like this.”

<sup>4</sup> “What kind of guilt offering should we send back to him?” asked the Philistines. “Five gold objects in the shape of the swellings, and five gold rats representing the number of rulers of the Philistines,” they replied. “The same plague attacked both you and your rulers.

<sup>5</sup> Make models to represent your swellings and the rats destroying the country, and honor the God of Israel. Perhaps he will stop punishing you, your gods, and your land.

<sup>6</sup> Why be stubborn like the Egyptians and Pharaoh? When he punished them, didn't they send the Israelites on their way as they left?

<sup>7</sup> So get a new cart ready, pulled by two milk cows that have never been yoked. Tie the cows to the cart, but take their calves away and put them in a stall.\*

<sup>8</sup> Pick up the Ark of the Lord, put it on the cart, and place the gold objects you are sending him as a guilt offering in a chest beside it. Then send the Ark away. Let it go whichever way it wants,

<sup>9</sup> but keep watching it. If it goes up the road to its home country, to Beth-shemesh, then it is the Lord who caused all this terrible trouble for us. But if it doesn't, then we'll know that it wasn't him who punished us—it just happened to us by chance.”

<sup>10</sup> So that's what the people did. They took two milk cows and tied them to the cart, and kept their calves in a stall.

<sup>11</sup> They put the Ark of the Lord on the cart, together with the chest containing the gold rats and models of their swellings.

<sup>12</sup> The cows went straight up the road to Beth-shemesh, lowing as they went, going directly on the main road and not turning either left or right. The Philistine rulers followed them all the way to the border of Beth-shemesh.

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\* **6:7** The purpose of this was to force the cows to do something unusual by voluntarily leaving their calves behind. In this way the people would be sure that this course of action had God's approval if he made it happen.



13 The people of Beth-shemesh were reaping wheat in the valley. When they looked up and saw the Ark, they were so happy to see it.

14 The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh, and stopped there beside a large rock. The people cut up the cart for wood and sacrificed the cows as a burnt offering to the Lord.

15 The Levites took down the Ark of the Lord and the chest containing the gold objects, and put them on the large rock. The people of Beth-shemesh presented burnt offerings and made sacrifices to the Lord that day.

16 The five Philistine rulers saw all that happened this and then went back to Ekron the same day.

17 The five gold models of swellings sent by the Philistines as a guilt offering to the Lord were from the rulers of Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron.

18 The gold rats represented the number of Philistine towns of the five rulers—the fortified towns and their surrounding villages. The large rock on which they placed the Ark of the Lord still stands to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh as a witness to what happened there.

19 But God killed some of the people of Beth-shemesh because they looked inside the Ark of the Lord. He killed seventy,<sup>†</sup> and the people

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<sup>†</sup> 6:19 Some manuscripts appear to read 50,070, but this is an improbably large figure for a small settlement.

mourned deeply because the Lord had killed so many.

<sup>20</sup> The people of Beth-shemesh asked, “Who can stand before the Lord, this holy God? Where should the Ark go from here?”

<sup>21</sup> They sent messengers to the people of Kiriath-jearim to say, “The Philistines have returned the Ark of the Lord. Come down and take it home with you.”

## 7

<sup>1</sup> So the people of Kiriath-jearim came and took the Ark of the Lord. They put it in Abinadab's house on the hill. They dedicated his son Eleazar to take care of the Ark of the Lord.

<sup>2</sup> The Ark remained there in Kiriath-jearim from that day for a long time, in fact for twenty years. Everyone in Israel mourned and in repentance came back to the Lord.

<sup>3</sup> Then Samuel said to all of Israel, “If you sincerely wish to come back to the Lord, then get rid of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreth images you have, and commit yourselves to the Lord and only worship him, and he will save you from the Philistines.”

<sup>4</sup> The people of Israel got rid of their Baals and Ashtoreth images and worshiped only the Lord.

<sup>5</sup> Then Samuel said, “Have all the people of Israel gather at Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you.”

<sup>6</sup> Once they had gathered at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the Lord. They fasted that day, and admitted, “We have sinned

against the Lord.” Samuel became the leader\* of the Israelites at Mizpah.

<sup>7</sup> When the Philistines found out that the Israelites had gathered at Mizpah, their rulers led an attack on Israel. When the Israelites heard about this, they were terrified at what the Philistines might do.

<sup>8</sup> They told Samuel, “Don’t stop pleading with the Lord our God for us so he can save us from the Philistines.”

<sup>9</sup> Samuel took a young lamb and presented it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord. He cried out for help to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord responded.

<sup>10</sup> While Samuel was presenting the burnt offering, the Philistines approached to attack Israel. But the Lord thundered extremely loudly against the Philistines that day, which totally confused them, and they were defeated as Israel watched.

<sup>11</sup> Then the men of Israel ran out from Mizpah and chased them, killing them all the way to a place near Beth-car.

<sup>12</sup> After this Samuel took a stone and placed it between Mizpah and Shen. He called it Ebenezer, saying, “The Lord helped us right up to here!”

<sup>13</sup> In this way the Philistines were kept under control and did not invade Israel again. During Samuel’s lifetime the Lord used his power against the Philistines.

<sup>14</sup> The towns the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, all the way from

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\* **7:6** Literally “judge,” which was equivalent to “leader.” Also verse 15.

Ekron to Gath, and Israel also liberated the neighboring territory from the hands of the Philistines. There was also peace between Israel and the Amorites.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel was Israel's leader for the rest of his life.

<sup>16</sup> Every year he went around, going to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah. At all these places he ruled Israel.

<sup>17</sup> Then he would return to Ramah because that was where he lived. He ruled Israel from there, and also built an altar to the Lord.

## 8

<sup>1</sup> When Samuel grew old, he made his sons leaders\* over Israel.

<sup>2</sup> His first son was named Joel, and his second son was named Abijah. They were rulers in Beersheba.

<sup>3</sup> However, his sons did not follow his ways. They were corrupt, making money by accepting bribes and perverting justice.

<sup>4</sup> So the elders of Israel all joined together and came to meet Samuel at Ramah.

<sup>5</sup> "Look here," they told him, "you are old, and your sons do not follow your ways. Choose a king to rule over us like all the other nations."

<sup>6</sup> Samuel thought this was a bad idea when they said, "Give us a king to rule over us," so he prayed to the Lord about it.

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\* **8:1** Again the word used is "judges," but in this period of Israel's history before they had kings the judges did not only settle legal cases but acted as rulers.

<sup>7</sup> “Do what the people tell you,” the Lord said to Samuel, “because it’s not you they’re rejecting, but me as their king.

<sup>8</sup> They’re doing just as they have always done since I led them out of Egypt right up to now. They have abandoned me and worshiped other gods, and they’re doing just the same to you.

<sup>9</sup> So do what they want, but give them a solemn warning—explain to them what a king will do when he rules over them.”

<sup>10</sup> Samuel repeated all that the Lord had said to the people asking him to give them a king.

<sup>11</sup> “This is what a king will do when he rules over you,” he told them. “He will take your sons and make them serve as charioteers and horsemen, and to run as a guard in front of his chariot.

<sup>12</sup> Some of them he will make commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some will have to plow his fields and reap his harvest. Some will be assigned to making weapons of war and chariot equipment.

<sup>13</sup> He will take your daughters and have them work as perfume-makers, cooks, and bakers.

<sup>14</sup> He will take your best fields, vineyards, and olive groves and give them to his officials.

<sup>15</sup> He will take a tenth of your grain harvest and the produce of your vineyards and allocate it to his chief officers and officials.

<sup>16</sup> He will take your male servants and your female servants, and your best young men and your donkeys, and make them work for him.

<sup>17</sup> He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you

yourselves will be his slaves.

<sup>18</sup> On that day you will plead to be rescued from the king you have chosen, but the Lord won't answer you then."

<sup>19</sup> But the people refused to listen to what Samuel said. "No!" they insisted. "We want our own king!

<sup>20</sup> That way we can be like all the other nations. Our king will rule us, and will lead us when we go out to fight our battles."

<sup>21</sup> Samuel listened to everything the people said and repeated it to the Lord.

<sup>22</sup> The Lord told Samuel, "Do what they say and give them a king." Then Samuel told the Israelites, "Go back to your homes."

## 9

<sup>1</sup> There was a wealthy and influential man from the tribe of Benjamin, whose name was Kish son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Bekorath, son of Aphiah, a descendant of Benjamin.

<sup>2</sup> Kish had a son called Saul, the most handsome young man in all of Israel. He was head and shoulders taller than anyone else.

<sup>3</sup> One time the donkeys of Saul's father Kish went astray. Kish told to his son Saul, "Please go and look for the donkeys. You can take one of the servants with you."

<sup>4</sup> Saul searched the hill country of Ephraim and then the land of Shalishah, but didn't find the donkeys. He and the servant searched the region of Shaalim, but they weren't there. Then

they searched the land of Benjamin, and they still couldn't find them.

<sup>5</sup> When they got to the land of Zuph, Saul told his servant, "Come on, let's go back, otherwise my father won't be worrying about the donkeys, but about us."

<sup>6</sup> But the servant replied, "Hold on! There's a man of God here in this town. He's very well thought of, and everything he says comes true. Let's go and see him. Maybe he can tell us which way we should take."

<sup>7</sup> "But if we do go, what can we give him?" Saul replied. "All the bread in our bags is gone. We don't have anything to take to the man of God. What do we have with us?"

<sup>8</sup> "Look, I've got a quarter shekel of silver with me. I'll give it to the man of God so he can tell us the way we should take," the servant told Saul.

<sup>9</sup> (In the old days in Israel, someone who went to inquire of God would say, "Come on, let's go to the seer," because prophets used to be known as seers.)

<sup>10</sup> "That's good," Saul told his servant. "So let's go." They went to the town where the man of God was.

<sup>11</sup> As they were going up the hill to the town, they met some young women coming out to draw water and asked them, "Is the seer here?"

<sup>12</sup> "He is," they replied, "up ahead of you. But you'll have to hurry. He's come to town today because the people are having a sacrifice at the high place.

13 When you enter the town you can find him before he goes up to eat at the high place. The people won't eat before he comes, because he has to bless the sacrifice. After that, those who've been invited will eat. If you leave now you'll catch him."

14 So they carried on their way up to the town. As they arrived there was Samuel going in the opposite direction. They met him on his way up to the high place.

15 The day before Saul arrived, the Lord had told Samuel,

16 "Around this time tomorrow I'm going to send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him as ruler over my people Israel, and he will rescue them from the Philistines. I have seen what's happening to my people and I have heard their cry for help."

17 When Samuel saw Saul, the Lord said to him, "This is the man I told you about. He is the one who is going to rule my people."

18 Saul went up to Samuel in the gateway and asked him, "Could you please tell me where the house of the seer is?"

19 "I am the seer," Samuel told Saul. "Go up ahead of me and we will eat together. Then in the morning I will answer all your questions and then send you on your way.

20 About the donkeys you lost three days ago—don't worry about them because they've been found. But now—doesn't the hope of all of Israel rest on you and your family line?"



21 “But I'm from the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest tribe in Israel, and my family is the least significant of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin!” Saul replied. “Why are you telling me this?”

22 Then Samuel brought Saul and his servant into the hall, and sat them at the head of the thirty people who'd been invited.

23 Samuel told the cook, “Bring the special piece of meat I gave you and told you to keep to one side.”

24 So the cook took the upper thigh\* of meat and what was with it and placed it before Saul. Then Samuel said, “See, this is what was kept to one side. It was reserved for you. Eat it, for it was kept for you for this particular time, right from when I said, ‘I have invited the people.’” So Saul ate with Samuel that day.

25 Once they had returned from the high place to the town, Samuel spoke with Saul on the roof of his house.†

26 At dawn the next day Samuel called out to Saul on the roof, “Get up! I need to send you on your way!” So Saul got up, and he went outside with Samuel.

27 As they approached the edge of town, Samuel said to Saul, “Tell your servant to go on ahead of us. Once he's gone stay here for a while, because I have a message from God to give you.” So the servant went on ahead.

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\* **9:24** Saul was given the meat that only priests were meant to eat. See Leviticus 10:14-15. † **9:25** In the absence of other rooms, the flat roof of the house was used as temporary accommodation.

# 10

<sup>1</sup> Then Samuel took a flask of olive oil and poured it over Saul's head, and kissed him, saying, "The Lord has anointed you as ruler of his chosen people.\*"

<sup>2</sup> When you leave me today, you will meet two men near Rachel's tomb in Zelzah, on the border of Benjamin. They will tell you that the donkeys you went to look for have been found.

Now your father isn't concerned about them but is worried about you. He's wondering, 'What about my son?'

<sup>3</sup> You will leave there and go on to the oak at Tabor where you will meet three men on their way to worship God at Bethel. One will be carrying three young goats, one will be carrying three loaves of bread, and one will be carrying a skin of wine.

<sup>4</sup> They will greet you<sup>†</sup> and give you two loaves of bread which you should take.

<sup>5</sup> Next you will come to Gibeah of God, where the Philistines have a garrison. As you come into town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place led by harps, tambourines, flutes, and lyres, and they will be prophesying.

<sup>6</sup> The Spirit of the Lord will come on you with power. You will prophesy with them, and you will become a different man.

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\* **10:1** This line is given in the form of a question, but is better translated as a statement, since a question can imply uncertainty.

† **10:4** Literally, "shalom," the usual greeting of the time.

<sup>7</sup> After these signs have happened, do what you need to do, for God is with you.

<sup>8</sup> Then go ahead of me to Gilgal. I assure you I will come and join you to present burnt offerings and friendship offerings. Wait there seven days until I come to you, and let you know what you should do.”

<sup>9</sup> The moment Saul turned to leave Samuel, God gave Saul a different way of thinking,<sup>‡</sup> and all the signs were fulfilled that day.

<sup>10</sup> When Saul and his servant arrived in Gibeah, there was a procession of prophets coming out to meet them, the Spirit of God came on Saul with power, and he also started to prophesy with them.

<sup>11</sup> Everyone who had used to know Saul and saw him prophesying with the prophets said to each other, “What’s going on with the son of Kish? Is Saul one of the prophets too?”

<sup>12</sup> A man living there responded, “But who is their father?”<sup>§</sup> So it became a saying: “Is Saul one of the prophets too?”

<sup>13</sup> After Saul had finished prophesying, he went to the high place.

<sup>14</sup> Saul’s uncle asked Saul and his servant, “Where have you been?”

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<sup>‡</sup> **10:9** “Different way of thinking”: literally “turned another heart to him.” Since in Hebrew the heart was where thinking occurred, this relates to the mind. In many ways this corresponds to the Greek concept of a “mind change,” which is the real meaning of conversion. So in a sense Saul could be said to have been “converted” at that point. <sup>§</sup> **10:12** In other words, the prophetic gift is not dependent on genealogy.

“We were looking for the donkeys,” Saul replied. “When we couldn’t find them we went to Samuel.”

<sup>15</sup> “Please tell me what he said to you,” Saul’s uncle asked.

<sup>16</sup> “He promised us the donkeys had been found,” Saul replied. But Saul didn’t tell his uncle what Samuel had said about him becoming king.

<sup>17</sup> Samuel called the people of Israel to come before the Lord at Mizpah.

<sup>18</sup> He told the Israelites, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I led Israel out of Egypt, and I saved you from the Egyptians and from all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.

<sup>19</sup> But now you have rejected your God, the one who saves you from all your troubles and disasters. You told him, ‘You must appoint a king to rule us.’ So now present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and family groups.”

<sup>20</sup> Samuel had all Israel come forward by tribes, and the tribe of Benjamin was chosen by lot.

<sup>21</sup> Then he had the tribe of Benjamin come forward by its family groups, and the family group of Matri was chosen. Lastly, Saul, son of Kish, was chosen. But when they looked for him, he couldn’t be found.

<sup>22</sup> So they asked the Lord, “Has he arrived here yet?”

The Lord replied, “Go and look—he’s hiding among the baggage.”

23 They ran and brought Saul over. When he stood among the people, he was head and shoulders taller than anyone else.

24 Samuel said to everyone, "Can you see the one the Lord has chosen? There's no one like him anywhere!"

All the people shouted, "Long live the king!"

25 Then Samuel explained to the people all that a king would do. He wrote it down on a scroll and placed it before the Lord. Then Samuel sent everyone home.

26 Saul also returned to his home in Gibeah, accompanied by warriors who God had encouraged to help him.

27 But some obnoxious men asked, "How could this man save us?" They hated him and didn't bring him any gifts; but Saul did not retaliate.\*

## 11

1 Nahash the Ammonite came with his army\* and besieged Jabesh-gilead. All the people of

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\* **10:27** In the traditional Hebrew text the chapter finishes here. However, in one scroll found at Qumran there is the following additional information which relates to the following chapter and is included here for interest. "Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had been severely oppressing the people of Gad and Reuben. He would gouge out their right eyes and would not let anyone help them. There wasn't anyone left of the Israelites across the Jordan whose right eye Nahash, king of the Ammonites, hadn't gouged out. However, there were seven thousand men who had escaped from the Ammonites and had gone to live in Jabesh-gilead."

\* **11:1** "With his army": added for clarity.

Jabesh said to him, “Make a peace treaty with us, and we will be your subjects.”

<sup>2</sup> But Nahash the Ammonite responded, “I’ll make a peace treaty with you on one condition: that I gouge out everyone’s right eye to bring shame on all Israelites.”

<sup>3</sup> “Let us have seven days so we can send messengers all over Israel,” replied the town elders of Jabesh. “If no one comes to help us, we will surrender to you.”

<sup>4</sup> When the messengers arrived in Gibeah of Saul and gave the message as the people listened, they all wept out loud.

<sup>5</sup> Right then Saul was coming back from ploughing a field with his oxen. “Why is everyone so upset?” he asked. They told him what the men from Jabesh had said.

<sup>6</sup> The Spirit of God came on Saul in power when he heard about this, and he grew very angry.

<sup>7</sup> He took a pair of oxen and cut them into pieces. Then he sent them by messenger to every part of Israel with the message, “This is what will happen to the oxen of anyone who does not follow Saul and Samuel.” The Lord made the people anxious<sup>†</sup> to do so, and they came out as one.

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<sup>†</sup> **11:7** “The Lord made the people anxious”: literally “The fear of the Lord fell on the people.” This could be interpreted either as the Lord being the source of the fear, or the object of fear. In any case the result is that the people support Saul.

<sup>8</sup> When Saul counted them at Bezek, there were 300,000 men from Israel and 30,000 men from Judah.

<sup>9</sup> They said to the messengers who came, “Tell the men of Jabesh Gilead, ‘Tomorrow you’ll be rescued, by the time the sun is hot.’ ” The people of Jabesh were so happy when the messengers arrived and told them this.

<sup>10</sup> They told the Ammonites, “We will surrender to you tomorrow, and then you can do to us whatever you want.”

<sup>11</sup> The next day Saul organized the army into three divisions. They attacked the Ammonite camp before dawn and went on killing them until the day grew hot. The survivors were so scattered that not even two of them were left together.

<sup>12</sup> Then the people asked Samuel, “Who was saying, ‘Why should we have Saul as our king?’ Hand these men over so we can execute them.”

<sup>13</sup> But Saul replied, “No one’s going to be executed today, for this is the day that the Lord saved Israel.”

<sup>14</sup> Then Samuel said to the people, “Come with me—let’s go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom.”

<sup>15</sup> Everyone went to Gilgal and confirmed Saul as king before the Lord. They sacrificed friendship offerings to the Lord, and Saul together with all the Israelites had a great celebration.

## 12

<sup>1</sup> Then Samuel said to all of Israel, “I have paid attention to everything you asked from me, and I have given you a king to rule over you.

<sup>2</sup> Now your king is your leader. I am old and gray, and my sons are here with you. I have led you from the time I was a boy up to today.

<sup>3</sup> I stand here before you. Bring any charges you have against me in the presence of the Lord and of his anointed one.\* Have I taken anyone's ox or donkey? Have I wronged anyone? Have I oppressed anyone? Have I accepted a bribe from anyone to turn a blind eye? Tell me, and I will repay you."

<sup>4</sup> "No, you have never cheated or oppressed us," they replied, "and you have never taken anything from anyone."

<sup>5</sup> Samuel told them, "The Lord is a witness, and his anointed is a witness today, in this case involving you, that you have not found me guilty of anything."†

"He is a witness," they replied.

<sup>6</sup> "The Lord is a witness,‡ he who appointed Moses and Aaron," Samuel went on. "He led your forefathers out of the land of Egypt.

<sup>7</sup> So stand here as I present to you in the presence of the Lord the evidence of all the good things the Lord has done for you and your forefathers.

<sup>8</sup> After Jacob had gone to Egypt, your fathers cried out to the Lord for help, and he sent Moses and Aaron to lead your forefathers out of Egypt and settle them here.

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\* **12:3** "Anointed one": referring to the king. † **12:5** "Not found me guilty of anything": literally, "you have not found anything in my hand." ‡ **12:6** Septuagint reading.



<sup>9</sup> But they forgot about the Lord their God, so he abandoned them to Sisera, the commander of the army of Hazor, to the Philistines, and to the king of Moab, who attacked them.

<sup>10</sup> They cried out to the Lord for help and said, ‘We have sinned, for we have rejected the Lord and worshiped the Baals and Ashtoreths. Please save us from the hands of our enemies, and we will worship you.’

<sup>11</sup> Then the Lord sent Gideon,<sup>§</sup> Barak,<sup>\*</sup> Jephthah and Samuel, and he saved you from your enemies who surrounded you so you could live in safety.

<sup>12</sup> But when you saw that Nahash, king of the Ammonites, was coming to attack you, you told me, ‘No, we want our own king,’ even though the Lord your God was your king.

<sup>13</sup> So here's the king you have chosen, the one you asked for. Look—the Lord now gives him to you as your king!

<sup>14</sup> If you honor the Lord, worship him, do what he tells you, and don't rebel against the Lord's instructions, and if both you and your king follow the Lord your God, then good!

<sup>15</sup> However, if you refuse to do what he tells you, and rebel against the Lord's instructions, then the Lord will be against you as he was against your forefathers.

<sup>16</sup> Now stand still and watch what the Lord is going to do, right before your very eyes.

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<sup>§</sup> 12:11 “Gideon”: Here called “Jerub-Baal.” \* 12:11 Septuagint and Syriac reading. The Hebrew has “Bedan.”

17 Isn't it the time of wheat harvest?† Well, I will ask the Lord to send thunder and rain. Then you will realize how very evil you were in the Lord's sight when you demanded your own king."

18 Then Samuel prayed to the Lord, and that very day the Lord sent thunder and rain. Everyone was in absolute awe of the Lord and of Samuel.

19 "Please pray to the Lord your God for us your servants, so we will not die!" they begged Samuel. "For we have added to all our sins the evil of asking for our own king."

20 "Don't be afraid," Samuel replied. "Even though you have indeed done all these evil things, don't give up following the Lord, but dedicate yourselves completely to worshipping him.

21 Don't worship worthless idols that can't help you or save you, for they are nothing.

22 The fact is because of the kind of person the Lord is, he won't give up on his people, because he was happy to claim you as his own.

23 As for me, how could I sin against the Lord by no longer praying for you. I will also continue to teach you the way of goodness and right.

24 Make sure you honor God and worship him faithfully, with complete dedication. Think of all the tremendous things he has done for you.

25 But if you continue to do what is evil, you and your king will be wiped out."

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† 12:17 Rain did not usually occur at this time.

## 13

<sup>1</sup> Saul was thirty when he became king, and he reigned over Israel for forty-two years.

<sup>2</sup> Saul had chosen three thousand men of Israel. Two thousand of them were with Saul in Michmash and the hill country of Bethel, and another thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. He sent the rest of the army home.

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan attacked the Philistine garrison at Geba. The Philistines soon heard about it, so Saul had the trumpet call to arms sounded throughout the land, saying, “Hebrews,\* pay attention!”

<sup>4</sup> All of Israel heard the news, “Saul has attacked the Philistine garrison, and now Israel is like a bad smell to the Philistines!” So the whole army was called up to join Saul at Gilgal.

<sup>5</sup> The Philistines gathered to fight against Israel. They had three thousand<sup>†</sup> chariots, six thousand horsemen, and soldiers as numerous as sand on the seashore. They advanced and camped at Michmash, east of Beth-aven.

<sup>6</sup> When the Israelite men realized the tough situation they were in, and that the army was taking a beating, they hid themselves in caves, holes, rocks, pits, and cisterns.

<sup>7</sup> Some of the Hebrews even crossed the Jordan into the territory of Gad and Gilead, but Saul

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\* **13:3** “Hebrews”: the term is the name given by others to the Israelites, and so used here reminds the Israelites they are dominated by other nations. Some have even suggested that the term was used for Israelites who were slaves to foreigners.

† **13:5** The Hebrew text reads “30,000” which seems excessive. The Lucian version of the Septuagint and the Syriac read 3,000.

stayed at Gilgal, and all the men with him were trembling with fear.

<sup>8</sup> Saul waited there seven days for the time that Samuel had said, but Samuel did not arrive at Gilgal, and the army started to desert him.

<sup>9</sup> So Saul ordered, "Bring the burnt offering and the friendship offerings to me," and he presented the burnt offering.

<sup>10</sup> Just as he finished presenting the burnt offering, he saw Samuel arrive. Saul went over to meet him and say hello.

<sup>11</sup> "What have you done?" Samuel asked.

Saul replied, "Well I saw my men were deserting me, and you hadn't arrived when you said you would, and the Philistines were gathering at Michmash to attack.

<sup>12</sup> I said to myself, 'The Philistines are about to attack me at Gilgal, and I haven't asked the Lord for his help.' So I felt I had to present the burnt offering myself."

<sup>13</sup> "You've been really stupid," Samuel told him. "You haven't kept the commands of the Lord your God. If you had, the Lord would have made your kingdom over Israel secure forever.

<sup>14</sup> But now your kingdom won't last. The Lord has found for himself a man who thinks like him, and has chosen him as ruler over his people, because you haven't kept the commands of the Lord."

<sup>15</sup> Then Samuel left Gilgal. The rest of the soldiers followed Saul to meet the army, going

from Gilgal to Geba in Benjamin.‡ Saul counted the number of soldiers who were with him and there were about six hundred.

<sup>16</sup> Saul, his son Jonathan, and the soldiers with them were staying in Geba of Benjamin, while the Philistines were camped at Michmash.

<sup>17</sup> Three groups of raiders left the Philistine camp to go and attack. One group went towards Ophrah in the land of Shual,

<sup>18</sup> one towards Beth-horon, and one towards the border that looks down on the Valley of Zeboim by the wilderness.

<sup>19</sup> There wasn't a blacksmith to be found anywhere in Israel, because the Philistines had said, "So that the Hebrews don't make swords and spears."

<sup>20</sup> All the Israelites had to go to the Philistines to sharpen their iron plowshares, pickaxes, axes, and sickles.

<sup>21</sup> The fee was two-thirds of a shekel§ for plowshares and pickaxes, and a third of a shekel for sharpening the axes and cattle prods.

<sup>22</sup> So when it came to the day of battle none of the soldiers with Saul and Jonathan had swords or spears—only Saul and his son Jonathan had such weapons.

<sup>23</sup> A Philistine garrison had taken control of the pass at Michmash.\*

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‡ **13:15** One section of this verse is missing in the Hebrew text, probably due to a copyist's mistake, and the Septuagint is followed here. § **13:21** "Two-thirds of a shekel": literally "one pim." \* **13:23** This verse is better taken with the following chapter.

## 14

<sup>1</sup> One day Jonathan, son of Saul, said to the young armor-bearer, "Come on, let's cross over to the Philistine garrison on the other side." But he didn't let his father know his plans.

<sup>2</sup> Saul was staying near Gibeah under a pomegranate tree\* in Migron. He had about six hundred men with him,

<sup>3</sup> including Ahijah, who was wearing an ephod.† He was a son of Ichabod's brother Ahitub, son of Phinehas, son of Eli, priest of the Lord in Shiloh. No one realized Jonathan had left.

<sup>4</sup> Cliffs stood on both sides of the pass that Jonathan planned to cross to reach the Philistine garrison, one called Bozez and the other Seneh.

<sup>5</sup> The cliff to the north was on the Michmash side, the one to the south on the Geba side.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan said to the young armor-bearer, "Come on, let's cross over to the garrison of these heathen‡ men. Maybe the Lord will help us out. It's not a problem for the Lord to win, whether by many or by few."

<sup>7</sup> "You choose what you want to do," the armor-bearer replied. "I'm with you whatever you decide!"

<sup>8</sup> "Let's go then!" Jonathan said. "We'll cross over in their direction so they can see us."

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\* **14:2** "A pomegranate tree": or "the Rock of Rimmon." † **14:3** "Ephod": a priestly garment. ‡ **14:6** "Heathen": literally, "uncircumcised."

<sup>9</sup> If they tell us, ‘Wait there until we come down to you,’ we will wait where we are and we won’t go up to them.

<sup>10</sup> But if they say, ‘Come on up to us,’ we’ll climb up, for that will be the sign that the Lord has handed them over to us.”

<sup>11</sup> So both of them let themselves be seen by Philistine garrison. “Hey, look!” shouted the Philistines. “The Hebrews are coming out of the holes<sup>§</sup> they were hiding in.”

<sup>12</sup> The men from the garrison called down to Jonathan and his armor-bearer, “Come up here, and we’ll teach you a thing or two!”

“Follow me up,” Jonathan told his armor-bearer, “for the Lord has handed them over to Israel.”

<sup>13</sup> So Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet, with his armor-bearer right behind him. Jonathan attacked and killed them,\* and his armor-bearer followed doing the same.

<sup>14</sup> In this first attack, Jonathan and his armor-bearer killed about twenty men over an area of half an acre.

<sup>15</sup> Then Philistines went into a panic, in the camp, in the field, and throughout their army. Even those in the outposts and the groups of raiders became terrified. The earth shook—this was a panic from God.

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<sup>§</sup> **14:11** “Holes”: the word is often used to describe burrows where animals live. \* **14:13** “Jonathan attacked and killed them”: literally, “they fell before Jonathan.”

<sup>16</sup> Saul's lookouts at Gibeah in Benjamin saw the Philistine army melting away, scattering in all directions.

<sup>17</sup> Saul told the soldiers with him, "Do a roll-call and find out who isn't here with us." When they did the roll-call, they discovered that Jonathan and his armor-bearer weren't there.

<sup>18</sup> Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the Ark of God here." (At the time the Ark of God traveled with the Israelites.)

<sup>19</sup> But as Saul was speaking to the priest, the commotion coming from the Philistine camp grew louder and louder. So Saul told the priest, "Forget it!"<sup>†</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Then Saul and all his army assembled and went into battle. They discovered the Philistines were in total disarray, attacking each other with swords.

<sup>21</sup> The Hebrews who had previously sided with the Philistines, and who were with them in their camp, switched sides and joined the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan.

<sup>22</sup> When all the Israelites who had been hiding in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines were running away, they also joined in chasing after the Philistines to attack them.

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<sup>†</sup> **14:19** "Forget it!": literally, "Take away your hand." The priest was about to try and determine the Lord's will regarding an attack on the Philistines, perhaps by consulting the Urim and the Thummin on the ephod or through the use of the Ark of God in some way. Whatever the case, Saul countermanded his previous order for divine guidance by telling the priest to stop whatever he was about to do.



23 On that day the Lord saved Israel, and the battle extended past Beth-aven.‡

24 It was difficult for the men of Israel that day because Saul had ordered the army to take an oath, saying, “Cursed is anyone who eats anything before evening, before I have avenged myself on my enemies.” So no one in the army had eaten anything.

25 When they all entered the forest they found honeycomb on the ground.

26 While they were in the forest they saw the honey running out, but no one picked it up to eat it because they were all afraid of the oath they had taken.

27 But Jonathan hadn't heard that his father had ordered the army to take this oath. So he stuck the end of his stick into the honeycomb, picked up a piece to eat, and he felt much better.§

28 But one of the soldiers told him, “Your father made the army take a solemn oath, saying, ‘Cursed is anyone who eats anything today!’ That is why the men are exhausted.”

29 “My father has caused a whole lot of trouble for everyone,”\* Jonathan replied. “See how well I am because I've eaten a little of this honey.

30 It would have been so much better if only the army had eaten plenty today from the plunder

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‡ **14:23** The Septuagint adds the following at this point: “and the army with Saul numbered around ten thousand men. The battle extended across the hill country of Ephraim.” § **14:27** “He felt much better”: literally, “his eyes brightened.” Also in verse 29.

\* **14:29** “Everyone”: literally, “the land.”

taken from their enemies! How many more Philistines would have been killed?"

<sup>31</sup> After defeating the Philistines that day, killing them from Michmash to Aijalon, the Israelites were totally exhausted.

<sup>32</sup> They grabbed the plunder, taking sheep, cattle, and calves, and slaughtered them right there on the ground. But they ate them with the blood.

<sup>33</sup> Saul was told, "Look, the men are sinning against the Lord by eating meat with the blood."

"Law-breakers!" said Saul. "Roll a large stone over here right now!"

<sup>34</sup> Then he said, "Go around the soldiers and tell them, 'Every man must bring me his cattle or his sheep and slaughter them here, and then eat. Don't sin against the Lord by eating meat with the blood.'" Everyone in the army brought what he had<sup>†</sup> and slaughtered it there that night.

<sup>35</sup> So Saul built an altar to the Lord. This was the first altar he had built to the Lord.

<sup>36</sup> Saul said, "Let's go and chase down the Philistines during night and plunder them till dawn, leaving no survivors."

"Do what you think best," they replied. But the priest said, "Let's ask God first."

<sup>37</sup> Saul asked God, "Shall I go down and chase down the Philistines? Will you hand them over to Israel?" But that day God didn't answer him.

<sup>38</sup> So Saul gave the order, "All you army commanders, come here so we can investigate what sin has happened today.

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<sup>†</sup> **14:34** "What he had": Septuagint reading.

<sup>39</sup> I swear on the life of the Lord who saves Israel, that even if it's my son Jonathan, he will have to die!" But no one of the whole army said anything.

<sup>40</sup> Saul told them all, "You stand over to one side, and I and my son Jonathan will stand on the opposite side."

"Do what you think best," the army replied.

<sup>41</sup> Saul prayed to the Lord, the God of Israel, "Let the Thummin show."<sup>‡</sup> Jonathan and Saul were identified, while everyone else was cleared.

<sup>42</sup> Then Saul said, "Cast lots between me and my son Jonathan." Jonathan was selected.

<sup>43</sup> "Tell me what you have done," Saul asked Jonathan.

"I just tasted a little honey with the end of my stick," Jonathan told him. "Here I am, and I have to die."

<sup>44</sup> Saul said, "May God punish me very severely if you do not die, Jonathan!"

<sup>45</sup> But the people told Saul, "Does Jonathan have to die, the one who achieved this great victory in Israel? Absolutely not! We swear on the life of the Lord, not a single hair of his head will fall to the ground, for it was with God's help that he achieved this today." The people saved Jonathan, and he didn't die.

<sup>46</sup> Saul stopped chasing down the Philistines, and the Philistines went to their own country.

<sup>47</sup> After Saul had made his hold over Israel secure, he fought against all his enemies all

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<sup>‡</sup> **14:41** In other words, let the Thummin show who is the guilty party.

around: Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines. Whatever direction he went he defeated them all.

<sup>48</sup> He fought bravely, conquering the Amalekites, saving Israel from those who plundered them.

<sup>49</sup> Saul's sons were Jonathan, Ishvi,<sup>§</sup> and Malchishua. The names of his two daughters were Merab, (the firstborn), and Michal, (the younger one).

<sup>50</sup> The name of his wife was Ahinoam, daughter of Ahimaaz. The name of Saul's army commander was Abner, son of Ner, and Ner was Saul's uncle.

<sup>51</sup> Saul's father Kish and Abner's father Ner were sons of Abiel.

<sup>52</sup> Throughout Saul's lifetime there was constant war with the Philistines. Saul recruited into his army every strong warrior and every brave fighter that he met.

## 15

<sup>1</sup> Samuel told Saul, "The Lord sent me to anoint you king of his people Israel. So now pay attention to what the Lord has to say.

<sup>2</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty says: I observed what the Amalekites did to Israel when they ambushed them on their way from Egypt.

<sup>3</sup> Go and attack the Amalekites and exterminate all of them. Don't spare anyone, but kill every man, woman, child, and baby; every ox, sheep, camel, and donkey."

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§ 14:49 Also called Ishbosheth.

<sup>4</sup> Saul called up his army at Telem.\* There were 200,000 Israelite infantry and 10,000 men from Judah.

<sup>5</sup> Saul advanced on the town of Amalek and set up an ambush in the valley.

<sup>6</sup> Saul sent a message to warn the Kenites, "Move out of the area and leave the Amalekites so that I don't destroy you with them, because you showed kindness to all the people of Israel on their way from Egypt." So the Kenites moved away and left the Amalekites.

<sup>7</sup> Saul defeated the Amalekites from Havilah as far as Shur, to the east of Egypt.

<sup>8</sup> He captured Agag, king of Amalek, alive, but exterminated all the people by the sword.

<sup>9</sup> Saul and his army spared Agag, together with the best sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs, and everything else that was any good. They didn't want to destroy those, but they completely destroyed all that was unwanted and worthless.

<sup>10</sup> The Lord sent a message to Samuel, saying,

<sup>11</sup> "I'm sorry I made Saul king, for he has given up following me and hasn't done as I ordered." Samuel was upset, and he cried out to the Lord all through the night.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel got up early in the morning and went to meet Saul, but he was told, "Saul's gone to Carmel. There he's even erected a monument to honor himself, and now he's left and gone down to Gilgal."

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\* **15:4** Here spelled Telaim, but thought to be the same town called Telem in Joshua 15:24.

13 When Samuel caught up with him, Saul said, "The Lord bless you! I have done what the Lord ordered."

14 "So what's this bleating of sheep my ears are picking up? What's this lowing of cattle that I'm hearing?" Samuel asked.

15 "The army brought them from the Amalekites," Saul replied. "They spared the best sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the Lord your God, but we completely destroyed the rest."

16 "Oh, be quiet!" Samuel told Saul. "Let me tell you what the Lord told me last night."

"Tell me what he said," Saul replied.

17 "Once you didn't use to think much of yourself, but haven't you become the leader of the tribes of Israel?" Samuel asked. "The Lord anointed you king of Israel."

18 Then he sent you out to do something, telling you, 'Go and exterminate those sinners, the Amalekites. Attack them until they're all destroyed.'

19 Why didn't you do what the Lord ordered? Why did you swoop down on the plunder and do what was evil in the Lord's sight?"

20 "But I did do what the Lord ordered!" Saul replied. "I went and did what the Lord sent me to do. I brought back Agag, king of Amalek, and completely destroyed the Amalekites."

21 The army took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was consecrated to God, to sacrifice them to the Lord your God in Gilgal."

<sup>22</sup> “Does the Lord prefer burnt offerings and sacrifices, or obedience to what he says?” Samuel asked. “Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice. Paying attention is more important than offering the fat of rams.

<sup>23</sup> Rebellion is as bad as witchcraft, and arrogance is as bad as the sin of idolatry. Because you have rejected the Lord's commands, he has rejected you as king.”

<sup>24</sup> “I have sinned,” Saul confessed to Samuel. “I disobeyed the Lord's orders and your instructions, because I was afraid of the people and followed what they said.

<sup>25</sup> So please forgive my sin and come back with me, so I can worship the Lord.”

<sup>26</sup> But Samuel told him, “I'm not going back with you. You have rejected the Lord's orders, and the Lord has rejected you as king of Israel!”

<sup>27</sup> As Samuel turned away to leave, Saul grabbed hold of the hem of his robe, and it ripped.

<sup>28</sup> Samuel said to him, “The Lord has ripped the kingdom of Israel away from you today and has given it to your neighbor—someone who is better than you!

<sup>29</sup> In addition, the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind, for he is not a human being who changes his mind!”

<sup>30</sup> “Yes, 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.”

<sup>31</sup> So Samuel went back with Saul after all, and Saul worshiped the Lord.

<sup>32</sup> Then Samuel said, “Bring me Agag, king of the Amalekites.” Agag came to him confidently, for he thought, “The threat of death of being killed must have passed.”

<sup>33</sup> But Samuel said, “In the same way that your sword has made women childless, so too your mother will be childless among women.” Samuel cut Agag to pieces before the Lord at Gilgal.

<sup>34</sup> Samuel left for Ramah, and Saul went home to Gibeah of Saul.

<sup>35</sup> Until the day of his death, Samuel never visited Saul again. Samuel mourned over Saul, and the Lord regretted he had made Saul the king of Israel.

## 16

<sup>1</sup> The Lord asked Samuel, “How long are you going to continue to mourn over Saul because I have rejected him as king of Israel? Fill your flask\* with olive oil and go. I’m sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have chosen a king for myself from among his sons.”

<sup>2</sup> “How can I go and do that?” Samuel asked. “Saul will hear about it and kill me!”

The Lord answered, “Take a young cow with you and say, ‘I’ve come to sacrifice to the Lord.’”

<sup>3</sup> Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you have to do. Anoint for me the one I tell you to.”

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\* **16:1** “Flask”: literally, “horn.”



<sup>4</sup> Samuel did what the Lord had told him to and went to Bethlehem. When the town elders met him, they were afraid and asked him, “Do you come in peace?”

<sup>5</sup> “Yes, I come in peace,” he replied. “I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Purify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.” He purified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

<sup>6</sup> When they arrived and Samuel saw Eliab, he said to himself, “This has got to be the Lord's anointed!”

<sup>7</sup> But the Lord said to Samuel, “Don't look at his outward appearance or how tall he is because I have rejected him, for the Lord does not look as human beings do. Human beings only see with their eyes what's on the outside, but the Lord looks at the way people think deep inside.”

<sup>8</sup> Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him come before Samuel, who said, “The Lord hasn't chosen this one either.”

<sup>9</sup> Then Jesse had Shammah come forward. But Samuel said, “The Lord hasn't chosen this one either.”

<sup>10</sup> Jesse had seven of his sons come before Samuel, but Samuel told him, “The Lord has not chosen any of these.”

<sup>11</sup> So he asked Jesse, “Don't you have any more sons?”

“Well, there's still the youngest,” Jesse replied, “but he is out looking after the sheep.”

“Send for him and bring him here because we will not sit down and eat<sup>†</sup> until he gets here,” Samuel told Jesse.

<sup>12</sup> So Jesse sent for him and brought him in. He had a red complexion with beautiful eyes, and looked handsome. The Lord said, “Go and anoint him, for he's the one.”

<sup>13</sup> Samuel took the flask of olive oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and the Spirit of the Lord came on David in power from that day on. Then Samuel left and returned to Ramah.

<sup>14</sup> The Spirit of the Lord had left Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him.<sup>‡</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Saul's servants told him, “It's definitely an evil spirit from God that's tormenting you.

<sup>16</sup> Give us your servants here the order to find someone who is good at playing the harp so that when the evil spirit from God comes on you, he can play and you'll feel much better.”

<sup>17</sup> Saul gave the order to his servants, “Find me someone who is good at playing the harp and bring him to me.”

<sup>18</sup> One of the servants replied, “I know a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who is good at playing

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<sup>†</sup> **16:11** “Sit down and eat”: literally, “surround.” This is usually thought to mean to surround a table before sitting down, but it could also mean to “surround” an altar, i.e. the beginning of the sacrificial rituals.    <sup>‡</sup> **16:14** As in other parts of Scripture, God is sometimes presented as doing something he does not actually prevent. The removal of the Spirit of the Lord left Saul open to control by another spirit. The way the servants react shows that this was a common view of the time—God is given responsibility for Saul's problems.

the harp. He is a brave man, a good fighter, well-spoken and handsome, and the Lord is with him.”

<sup>19</sup> Saul sent messengers to Jesse, telling him, “Send me your son David who takes care of the sheep.”

<sup>20</sup> So Jesse loaded a donkey with bread, a skin of wine, and a young goat and sent them with his son David to Saul.

<sup>21</sup> David came to Saul and began working for him. Saul thought a great deal of him, and David became his armor-bearer.

<sup>22</sup> Saul sent a message to Jesse, saying, “Please allow David to continue working for me because I am pleased with him.”

<sup>23</sup> So whenever the spirit from God came on Saul, David would take his harp and play, and Saul would gain relief and feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.

## 17

<sup>1</sup> The Philistine armies gathered for battle at Socoh in Judah. They set up camp between Socoh and Azekah in Ephes-dammim.

<sup>2</sup> Saul and the Israelites gathered and camped in the Valley of Elah and took up their positions to engage in battle with the Philistines.

<sup>3</sup> The Philistines were on one hill and the Israelites on another with the valley between them.

4 Then a champion\* came out of the Philistine camp. His name was Goliath from Gath, and he was six cubits and a span tall.†

5 He had on his head a bronze helmet and he wore a bronze coat of mail weighing five thousand shekels.

6 On his legs he wore bronze armor, and he carried a javelin‡ slung between his shoulders.

7 The shaft of his spear was as thick as weaver's beam, with an iron tip that weighed six hundred shekels. His shield-bearer walked ahead of him carrying his shield.§

8 Goliath stood and shouted at the lines of Israelite soldiers, "Why have you come and lined for battle? I am the Philistine, and you're Saul's servants. Pick one of your men and have him come down and fight me.

9 If he can fight me and kill me, then we will be your slaves. But if I beat him and kill him, then you'll be our slaves and work for us."

10 Then the Philistine said, "I mock the battle lines of Israel today! Give me a man so we can fight each other!"

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\* **17:4** "Champion": literally "a man of the space between." This is usually taken to mean a champion who will fight another in a kind of proxy battle but its precise meaning is uncertain as it only occurs here and in verse 23 in the whole of the Old Testament.

† **17:4** "Six cubits and a span tall." This is equivalent to around nine and a half feet. The Septuagint and a manuscript from Qumran have four cubits and a span, equivalent to six and a half feet. ‡ **17:6** "Javelin": some believe this was more likely a curved sword or scimitar, and certainly a sword is referenced in verse 51. § **17:7** "Carrying his shield": added for clarity.

11 Saul and all the Israelite soldiers were shattered and absolutely terrified when they heard what the Philistine said.

12 David was the son of a man named Jesse. He was an Ephrathite from Bethlehem of Judah who had eight sons. At the time Saul was king, Jesse was very old.

13 Jesse's three oldest sons had joined Saul's army war. These were Eliab (the firstborn), Abinadab (second), and Shammah (third).

14 David was the youngest. The three oldest were with Saul,

15 while David went to Saul and then back again to look after his father's sheep.

16 Every morning and evening for forty days the Philistine came out to take his stand.

17 Jesse told his son David, "Please take your brothers this ephah of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread for your brothers. Take them quickly to your brothers' camp.

18 Take these ten cheese pieces to their commander. Check carefully to see how your brothers are doing and bring back their news."

19 They were with Saul and the whole Israelite army in the Valley of Elah, fighting the Philistines.

20 David got up early in the morning and left the flock with a shepherd. He took the supplies and set out as Jesse had told him to. He arrived at the camp just as the army was marching out to its battle line, shouting the war cry.

21 The Israelites took up their battle line and the Philistines took up their battle line on the opposite side.

22 David left his supplies with the one responsible and ran to the battle line. When he got there he asked his brothers how they were.

23 While he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, came up out of his lines and shouted his challenge as he had before, and David heard what he said.

24 All the Israelite soldiers ran away when they saw him because they were terribly afraid.

25 “Have you seen this man who keeps on coming out to mock Israel?” they asked. “The king will make the man who kills him really rich. He will also give him his daughter in marriage, and his family will live tax-free in Israel.”

26 David asked the men who were standing beside him, “What will the man receive who kills this Philistine and removes this shame from Israel? Who does this heathen\* Philistine think he is, mocking the armies of the living God?”

27 The soldiers repeated what they had said, telling him, “This is what the man who kills him will receive.”

28 When David's oldest brother Eliab heard him talking with the men, he got angry with him. “What are you doing here?” he asked. “Who have you left those few sheep with in the wilderness? I know how proud and wicked you are! You've just come to watch the battle!”

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\* **17:26** “Heathen”: literally, “uncircumcised.” Also verse 36.

29 “What have I done now?” David asked. “Can't I even ask a question?”

30 He went over to some others and asked the same question, and they gave the same answer as before.

31 Someone overheard what David said and reported it to Saul who sent for him.

32 David told Saul, “No one should lose heart because of this Philistine. I, your servant, will go and fight him!”

33 “You can't go out and fight this Philistine,” Saul replied. “You're just a boy, and he's a warrior trained from his youth.”

34 David replied, “Your servant has been looking after his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock,

35 I would chase after it, knock it down, and save the lamb from its mouth. If it turned to attack me, I would grab its hair, hit it, and kill it.

36 I have killed lions and bears, and this heathen Philistine will be just like one of them, for he has mocked the armies of the living God.”

37 David concluded, “The Lord who saved me from the claws of the lion and the bear will save me from this Philistine.”

“Go, and may the Lord be with you,” Saul responded.

38 Saul gave David his own battle clothes to wear, placed a bronze helmet on his head, and put armor on him.

39 David strapped his sword on over the armor but he couldn't walk because he wasn't used to it.

“I can't walk in all this,” David told Saul. “I ‘m not used to it.” So David took all the armor off.

<sup>40</sup> He picked up his stick, chose five smooth stones from the stream, and put them in his shepherd's bag. Carrying his sling in his hand, he approached the Philistine.

<sup>41</sup> The Philistine came towards David, closer and closer, with his shield-bearer in front of him.

<sup>42</sup> When the Philistine looked closely he could see that David was just a red-faced handsome youth, and so he treated David with contempt.

<sup>43</sup> “Do you think I'm a dog, coming to fight me with a stick?” the Philistine asked David, and he cursed David by his gods.

<sup>44</sup> Then the Philistine shouted at David, “Come over here, and I'll feed your flesh to the birds and the wild animals.”

<sup>45</sup> David replied to the Philistine, “You come to attack me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin. But I come to attack you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel—the one you have mocked.

<sup>46</sup> Today the Lord will hand you over to me, and I will strike you down, cut off your head, and give the dead bodies of the Philistine soldiers to the birds and the wild animals. Then all the world will know that there is a God who acts for Israel.

<sup>47</sup> Everyone gathered here will realize that the Lord saves, but not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord's, and he will hand all of you over to us.”

<sup>48</sup> As the Philistine moved forward to attack him, David raced toward the battle line to



confront him.

<sup>49</sup> David reached into his bag, took out a stone, and fired it from his sling, hitting the Philistine on the forehead. The stone went into his forehead, and he collapsed facedown on the ground.

<sup>50</sup> This is how David defeated the Philistine with just a sling and a stone; with no sword in his hand David knocked the Philistine down and killed him.

<sup>51</sup> David ran and stood over the Philistine. He took the Philistine's sword and pulled it out of its sheath. He killed him and then he cut off his head with the sword. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they turned and ran away.

<sup>52</sup> Then the men of Israel and Judah rushed forward shouting the war-cry and chased the Philistines all the way to Gath and to the gates of Ekron. Their bodies were scattered along the Shaaraim road to Gath and Ekron.

<sup>53</sup> When the Israelites returned from their hot pursuit of the Philistines, they plundered their camps.

<sup>54</sup> David took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put the Philistine's weapons in his own tent.

<sup>55</sup> When Saul had watched David going out to fight the Philistine, he'd asked Abner the army commander, "Abner, whose son is that young man?"

"On your life, Your Majesty, I do not know," Abner replied.

<sup>56</sup> "Find out whose son this young man is," the king ordered.

<sup>57</sup> As soon as David returned from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul. David was still clutching the Philistine's head in his hand.

<sup>58</sup> "Whose son are you, young man?" Saul asked.

"I am the son of your servant Jesse of Bethlehem," David replied.

## 18

<sup>1</sup> After David finished speaking with Saul, Jonathan became great friends with David. He loved David as he loved himself.

<sup>2</sup> From that time on Jonathan had David work for him and would not let him go back home.

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan made a solemn agreement with David because he loved him as he loved himself.

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, together with his tunic, his sword, his bow, and his belt.\*

<sup>5</sup> David was successful in doing everything Saul asked him to do, so Saul made him an officer in the army. This pleased everyone, including Saul's other officers.

<sup>6</sup> When the soldiers returned home after David had killed the Philistine, the women of all the towns of Israel came out singing and dancing to meet King Saul, happily celebrating with tambourines and musical instruments.

<sup>7</sup> As they danced the women sang, "Saul has killed his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."

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\* **18:4** These actions were a way of confirming the agreement.

8 What they were singing made Saul very angry as he didn't think it was right. He said to himself, "They've given David credit for killing tens of thousands, but only thousands to me. All that's left is to give him the kingdom!"

9 From that time on Saul viewed David with suspicion.

10 The following day an evil spirit from God came on Saul with power, and he was ranting<sup>†</sup> inside the house while David played the harp as he regularly did. Saul happened to be holding a spear,

11 and he threw it at David, saying to himself, "I'll pin David to the wall." But David managed to escape him twice.

12 Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with David, but he had given up on Saul.

13 So Saul sent David away and made him a commander of a thousand soldiers, leading them out and back as part of the army.

14 David was very successful in everything he did, because the Lord was with him.

15 When Saul saw how successful David was, he was even more afraid of him.

16 But everyone in Israel and Judah loved David, because of his leadership in the army.

17 One day Saul told David, "Here's my oldest daughter Merab. I will give her to you in

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<sup>†</sup> **18:10** "Ranting": the word is normally translated "prophesying," (see for example 10:10 when it is applied to Saul), but the main function of a true prophet of God was to deliver messages from God. That the source was "an evil spirit" does not fit such a picture, even if the evil spirit "came from God."

marriage, but only if you prove to me you're a brave warrior and fight the battles of the Lord." For Saul was thinking, "I don't need to be the one to kill him—let the Philistines do it!"

<sup>18</sup> "But who am I, and what status does my family have in Israel, for me to become the son-in-law of the king?" David replied.‡

<sup>19</sup> However, when the time came to give Merab, Saul's daughter, to David, she was given in marriage to Adriel of Meholah instead.

<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile Saul's daughter Michal had fallen in love with David, and when Saul was told, he was happy about it.

<sup>21</sup> "I'll give her to David," Saul thought. "She can be the bait so the Philistines can trap him." So Saul said to David, "This is the second time you can become my son-in-law."

<sup>22</sup> Saul gave these instructions to his servants, "Talk with David in private and tell him, 'Look, the king is very happy with you, and all of us love you. Why not become the king's son-in-law?' "

<sup>23</sup> Saul's servants spoke privately to David, but he replied, "Do you think it's nothing to become the king's son-in-law? I'm a poor man, and I'm not important."

<sup>24</sup> When Saul's servants explained to him what David had said,

<sup>25</sup> Saul told them, "Tell David, 'The only dowry the king wants for the bride is one hundred foreskins of dead Philistine as a way of taking

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‡ **18:18** David may have been concerned at the cost of providing a dowry, especially as this is a condition of marriage mentioned later in verse 25.

revenge on his enemies.' ” Saul's plan was to have David be killed by the Philistines.

<sup>26</sup> When the servants reported what the king had said back to David, he was happy to become the king's son-in-law. While there was still time,

<sup>27</sup> David set off with his men and killed two hundred Philistines, and brought back their foreskins. They counted them all out before the king so that David could become the king's son-in-law. So Saul gave him his daughter Michal in marriage.

<sup>28</sup> Saul realized that the Lord was with David and that his daughter Michal was in love with David,

<sup>29</sup> and so he became even more afraid of David, and was David's enemy for the rest of his life.

<sup>30</sup> Whenever the Philistine commanders attacked, David was more successful in battle than all of Saul's officers, so that his reputation grew rapidly.

## 19

<sup>1</sup> Then Saul instructed his son Jonathan and all his officials to kill David. But Jonathan really liked David,

<sup>2</sup> so he warned him, “My father Saul is trying to kill you. So be careful tomorrow morning—find a place to hide and stay hidden.

<sup>3</sup> I'll go out with my father and stand in the field near to where you are hiding. I'll talk to him about you and see what I can find out, then I'll let you know.”

<sup>4</sup> Then Jonathan spoke positively about David to his father Saul, and told him, “The king should not do anything bad to his servant David because he’s not done anything bad to you—he has always served you well.

<sup>5</sup> He took his life in his hands when he killed the Philistine, and the Lord brought about great salvation for the whole of Israel. You saw it and you were delighted, so why would you sin and spill innocent blood by killing David without having any reason?”

<sup>6</sup> Saul accepted what Jonathan had to say, and promised with an oath: “I swear on the life of the Lord, he won’t be put to death.”

<sup>7</sup> Later Jonathan called David and told him all that had been said. Then he took him to Saul, and David worked for Saul as he had before.

<sup>8</sup> War broke out once again, and David went to fight the Philistines. He attacked them so forcefully that they ran away in defeat.

<sup>9</sup> A while later an evil spirit from the Lord came on Saul while he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand. As David played the lyre,

<sup>10</sup> Saul tried to pin David to the wall with the spear. David managed to dodge the spear which embedded itself in the wall. Then David escaped and ran away into the night.

<sup>11</sup> Saul sent some messengers to David’s house to keep watch and kill him in the morning. But Michal, David’s wife, warned him, “If you don’t get away tonight, tomorrow you’ll be killed.”

<sup>12</sup> Michal lowered David down from a window, and he ran off, managing to escape.

<sup>13</sup> Then she took a home idol\* and laid it in the bed, put a goat hair wig on its head, and covered it with bedclothes.

<sup>14</sup> When Saul sent the messengers to arrest David, Michal told them, "He's sick."

<sup>15</sup> Saul sent the messengers back to see David, saying, "Bring him to me in the bed so I can kill him."

<sup>16</sup> But when the messengers went into the bedroom, there was the idol in the bed with the goat hair wig on its head.

<sup>17</sup> "Why did you trick me like this—helping my enemy get away so he could escape?" Saul asked Michal.

"He told me, 'Get out of my way! I don't want to have to kill you!' " Michal replied.

<sup>18</sup> This is how David got away and escaped. He went to Samuel at Ramah and explained to him everything that Saul had done to him. Then he and Samuel went to stay in Naioth.

<sup>19</sup> When Saul got to hear that David was at Naioth in Ramah,

<sup>20</sup> he sent messengers to arrest him. But when they saw a group of prophets prophesying with Samuel leading out, the Spirit of God came on

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\* **19:13** "Home idol": the Hebrew word used here is teraphim and they are first mentioned in Genesis 31. They were cult objects that were used to determine the "god's" will, see Ezekiel 21:21; Zechariah 10:2. That such idols would be there in David's house shows the degree to which "pure religion" had been corrupted over time.

Saul's messengers and they started prophesying too.

<sup>21</sup> Saul was told what had happened, so he sent more messengers, and they started prophesying as well.

<sup>22</sup> For the third time Saul sent messengers, and they also started prophesying.

<sup>23</sup> In the end Saul went himself to Ramah and arrived at the large cistern at Secu. "Where are Samuel and David?" he asked.

"At Naioth in Ramah," someone told him.

So Saul went on to Naioth at Ramah, but the Spirit of God even came on him, and he was prophesying as he walked along until he arrived in Naioth.

<sup>24</sup> Then Saul also took off his clothes and he too prophesied in Samuel's presence. Then he fell down and lay there naked all that day and all that night. That's why it is said, "Is Saul one of the prophets too?"

## 20

<sup>1</sup> David ran from Naioth in Ramah to Jonathan and asked him, "What have I done? What is my wrong have I done? What terrible thing have I done to your father that he wants to kill me?"

<sup>2</sup> "Nothing!" Jonathan replied. "You're not going to die! Listen! My father tells me everything he's planning, whatever it is. Why would my father keep something like this from me? It's not true!"

<sup>3</sup> But David swore an oath again, saying, "Your father knows very well that I'm your friend, and so he's told himself, 'Jonathan can't find out



about this, otherwise he'll be really upset.' I swear on the life of the Lord, and on your own life, my life is hanging by a thread."\*

<sup>4</sup> "Tell me what you want me to do for you and I'll do it," Jonathan told David.

<sup>5</sup> "Well, the New Moon festival is tomorrow, and I'm meant to sit down and eat with the king. But if it's alright with you, I plan to go and hide in the field until the evening three days from now.

<sup>6</sup> If your father does indeed miss me, tell him, 'David had to urgently ask my permission to hurry down to Bethlehem, his hometown, because of a yearly sacrifice there for his whole family group.'

<sup>7</sup> If he says, 'That's fine,' then there's no problem for me, your servant, but if he gets mad, you'll know he intends to do me harm.

<sup>8</sup> So please treat me well, as you promised when you made an agreement with me before the Lord. If I've done wrong, then kill me yourself! Why take me to your father for him to do it?"

<sup>9</sup> "Absolutely not!" Jonathan replied. "If I knew for certain that if my father had plans to harm you, don't you think I'd tell you?"

<sup>10</sup> "So who's going to let me know if your father gives you a nasty answer?" David asked.

<sup>11</sup> "Come on, let's go out into the countryside," Jonathan said. So they both of them went out into the countryside.

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\* **20:3** "My life is hanging by a thread": literally, "there's just a step between me and death."

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan said to David, “I promise by the Lord, the God of Israel, that I will question my father by this time tomorrow or the day after. If things look good for you, I’ll send a message to you and let you know.

<sup>13</sup> But if my father plans to do you harm, then may the Lord punish me very severely, if I don’t let you know by sending you a message so you can get away safely. May the Lord be with you, just as he was with my father.

<sup>14</sup> While I live, please show me trustworthy love like that of the Lord so I don’t die,

<sup>15</sup> and please don’t ever remove your trustworthy love for my family, even when the Lord has removed every one of your enemies from the earth.”

<sup>16</sup> Jonathan made a solemn agreement with the family of David, saying, “May the Lord impose retribution on David’s enemies.”†

<sup>17</sup> Jonathan made David swear this once more by making an oath based on David’s love for him, for Jonathan already loved David as he loved himself.

<sup>18</sup> Then Jonathan said to David, “The New Moon festival is tomorrow. You’ll be missed, because your place will be empty.

<sup>19</sup> In three days time, go quickly to where you hid when all this started, and stay there beside the pile of stones.

<sup>20</sup> I’ll shoot three arrows to the side of it as if I were shooting at a target.

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† **20:16** This and the previous verses have a number of problems in translation.

21 Then I'll send a boy and tell him, 'Go and find the arrows!' Now, if I say to him specifically, 'Look, the arrows are this side of you; bring them over here,' then I swear on the life of the Lord it's safe for you to come out—there's no danger.

22 But if I tell the boy, 'Look, the arrows are way past you,' then you'll have to leave, for the Lord wants you to go away.

23 As for what you and I talked about, remember that the Lord is a witness between you and me forever."

24 So David hid himself in the field. When the New Moon festival arrived, the king sat down to eat.

25 He sat in his usual place by the wall opposite Jonathan. Abner sat next to Saul, but David's place was empty.

26 Saul didn't say anything that day because he thought, "Something has probably happened to David to make him ceremonially unclean—yes, he must be unclean."

27 But the second day, the day after the New Moon, David's place was still empty. Saul asked his son Jonathan, "Why hasn't the son of Jesse come to dinner either yesterday or today?"

28 Jonathan answered, "David had to urgently ask my permission to go to Bethlehem.

29 He told me, 'Please let me go, because our family is having a sacrifice in the town and my brother told me I had to be there. If you think well of me, please let me go and see my brothers.' That's why he's absent from the king's table."

<sup>30</sup> Saul got very angry with Jonathan and said, “You rebellious son of a whore! Don't you think I know that you prefer the son of Jesse? Shame on you! You're a disgrace to the mother who bore you!”

<sup>31</sup> While the son of Jesse remains alive, you and your kingship are not secure. Now go and bring him here to me, for he has to die!”

<sup>32</sup> “Why does he have to be put to death?” Jonathan asked. “What has he done?”

<sup>33</sup> Saul threw his spear at Jonathan, trying to kill him, so he knew that his father definitely wanted David dead.

<sup>34</sup> Jonathan left the table absolutely furious. He would not eat anything on the second day of the festival, for he was so upset by the shameful way his father had treated David.

<sup>35</sup> In the morning Jonathan went to the field to the place he had agreed with David, and a young boy was with him.

<sup>36</sup> He told the boy, “Run and find the arrows that I shoot.” The boy started running and Jonathan shot an arrow past him.

<sup>37</sup> When the boy got to the place where Jonathan's arrow had landed, Jonathan shouted to him, “Isn't the arrow farther past you?”

<sup>38</sup> Hurry up! Do it quickly! Don't wait!” The boy picked up the arrows and took them back to his master.

<sup>39</sup> The boy didn't suspect anything—only Jonathan and David knew what it meant.

<sup>40</sup> Jonathan gave his bow and arrows to the boy and said, “Take these back to town.”

<sup>41</sup> After the boy had gone, David got up from beside the pile of stones, fell facedown to the ground, and bowed three times. Then he and Jonathan kissed each other and cried together as friends, though David cried the hardest.

<sup>42</sup> Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, for the two of us have sworn a solemn oath in the name of the Lord. We said, 'The Lord will be a witness between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever.'" Then David left, and Jonathan went back to town.

## 21

<sup>1</sup> David went to the town of Nob to see Ahimelek the priest. Ahimelek was trembling in fear when he met him, and he asked, "Why are you here alone? Why isn't there anybody with you?"

<sup>2</sup> "The king has given me an assignment," David replied. "He told me 'Nobody must know anything about the assignment I have sent you to do.' As for my men, I've told them where to meet me."

<sup>3</sup> So what do you have on hand to eat? Let me have five loaves of bread, or whatever you can find."

<sup>4</sup> "There's no ordinary bread," the priest told David, "but there's some holy bread, as long as your men have not slept with any women lately."

<sup>5</sup> "We have not slept with any women," David answered. "In fact that's the rule when I lead the troops on mission. They keep themselves pure even during ordinary missions, and all the more so right now."

<sup>6</sup> So the priest gave him the holy bread as they didn't have any other bread there except this "Bread of the Presence," which had been removed from the presence of the Lord\* that day and replaced with fresh bread.

<sup>7</sup> One of Saul's servants happened to be there that day, trying to make himself right† with the Lord. He was Doeg the Edomite, Saul's chief shepherd.

<sup>8</sup> "Have you got a spear or sword here?" David asked Ahimelech. "I didn't bring my sword or any of my weapons with me, because what the king needed me to do was urgent."

<sup>9</sup> The priest replied, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine is here—the one you killed in the Valley of Elah. It's wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. You can take it if you want. It's the only one here."

"It's better than any other sword! Please give it to me," David replied.

<sup>10</sup> David ran away from Saul that day and went to Achish, king of Gath.‡

<sup>11</sup> But Achish's officials asked the king, "Isn't this David, the king of that country? Didn't they sing about him in their dances, 'Saul has

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\* **21:6** In other words placed in the Tent of Meeting. † **21:7** "Make himself right": literally "detained." It appears Doeg was offering a sacrifice for some sin he had committed and that the priest Ahimelech was aware of. This seems to be one reason Doeg informed on David (22:9) and executed Saul's command to kill Ahimelech and the other priests. ‡ **21:10** Gath was a Philistine town.

killed his thousands, and David his tens of thousands’?”

<sup>12</sup> David listened carefully to what they said and this made him very afraid of Achish, the king of Gath.

<sup>13</sup> So he changed the way he acted toward them and pretended to be crazy. He scratched marks on the town gates and let his spit run down his beard.

<sup>14</sup> Achish told his officials, “Look, you can see the man is completely mad! Why did you bring him to me?”

<sup>15</sup> Is it because I need more mad people that you've brought this man to go crazy right in front of me? Do you think I'm going to let him come into my house?”

## 22

<sup>1</sup> David escaped and went to the cave of Adullam. When they heard where he was his brothers and all the rest of his family went and joined him there.

<sup>2</sup> Everyone who was in trouble or in debt or resentful also came to him and he became their leader. He had around four hundred men with him.

<sup>3</sup> Then David went to Mizpeh in the country of Moab. He asked the king of Moab, “Please let my father and mother come and stay with you until I find out what God is planning for me.”

<sup>4</sup> So he left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with the king all the time David lived

in the stronghold.\*

<sup>5</sup> But then the prophet Gad told David, “Do not stay in the stronghold. Go back to the land of Judah.” So David left and went to the forest of Hereth.

<sup>6</sup> Saul found out that David had returned and where he was. Saul was sitting under the tamarisk tree on the hill in Gibeah. He had his spear in his hand, with all his officials surrounding him.

<sup>7</sup> Saul said to them, “Listen to me, you men of Benjamin! Is the son of Jesse going to give all of you fields and vineyards and make you commanders and officers in the army?”

<sup>8</sup> Is that why you've all plotted against me? Not a single one of you told me that my own son had made an agreement with Jesse's son. Not a single one of you has shown you cared about me, or explained to me that my son has encouraged him to try and kill me, which is what he's doing right now!”

<sup>9</sup> Doeg the Edomite, who was standing there with Saul's officers, spoke up, saying, “I saw the son of Jesse visit Ahimelech, son of Ahitub, at Nob.

<sup>10</sup> Ahimelech asked advice from the Lord for him and gave him food. He gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine as well.”

<sup>11</sup> The king sent a message to summon Ahimelech the priest, son of Ahitub, and all his family, who were priests at Nob. They all came to the king.

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\* **22:4** “Stronghold”: probably referring to his camp at the cave of Adullam.



12 “Now you listen, son of Ahitub,” the king shouted.

“What is it, my lord?” Ahimelech asked.

13 “Why have you and the son of Jesse plotted against me? You gave him bread and a sword, and asked advice from God for him so that he could rebel against me and try and kill me, which is what he's doing right now!”

14 “Who of all your officers is as trustworthy as David, the king's son-in-law? He is in charge of your bodyguard, and highly respected in your family!” Ahimelech responded.

15 “And was that day the first time he asked advice from God on his behalf? Of course not! The king should not accuse me your servant or any of my family, for I didn't know anything about any of this.”

16 “You're going to die for this!” the king declared. “You and all your family!”

17 Then the king turned to his bodyguards standing there and ordered them, “Kill these priests of the Lord, because they're on David's side! They knew he was a fugitive and yet they didn't tell me!” But the king's guards refused to attack the priests of the Lord.

18 So the king ordered Doeg, “You kill the priests!” Doeg the Edomite attacked and killed the priests, killing eighty-five men wearing the priestly ephod.

19 Then he went to Nob, the town of the priests, and slaughtered its men and women, children and infants, cattle, donkeys, and sheep.

<sup>20</sup> But one of the sons of Ahimelech, son of Ahitub, managed to escape. His name was Abiathar, and he ran away and joined David.

<sup>21</sup> He told David that Saul had killed the priests of the Lord.

<sup>22</sup> David told Abiathar, "I knew that day when Doeg the Edomite was there that he was going to tell Saul about it. It's my fault that all your family have died.

<sup>23</sup> But you can stay with me and you don't need to be afraid, because the man who wants to kill you wants to kill me too. I'll take good care of you."

## 23

<sup>1</sup> One day David heard the news, "The Philistines are attacking Keilah and stealing the grain from the threshing floors."

<sup>2</sup> So he asked advice from the Lord, "Should I go and attack these Philistines?"

The Lord told David, "Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah."

<sup>3</sup> But David's men told him, "Even here in Judah we feel afraid. If we went to Keilah to fight the Philistine armies we'd be absolutely terrified!"

<sup>4</sup> So David asked advice from the Lord again, and the Lord told him, "Go immediately to Keilah, for I will give you victory over the Philistines."

<sup>5</sup> Then David and his men went to Keilah and fought the Philistines. They slaughtered them and drove off their livestock. By doing this David saved the people of Keilah.

<sup>6</sup> (When Abiathar, son of Ahimelech, ran away to David at Keilah he brought the ephod with him.)

<sup>7</sup> When Saul found out that David had gone to Keilah, he said, "God has handed him over to me, because he has locked himself inside a town with gates that can be barred shut."

<sup>8</sup> So Saul called up his whole army to go and attack Keilah and to besiege David and his men.

<sup>9</sup> When David learned that Saul was plotting to attack him, he asked Abiathar the priest, "Please bring the ephod."

<sup>10</sup> David prayed, "Lord, God of Israel, I your servant have been clearly told that Saul plans to come to Keilah and destroy the town because of me.

<sup>11</sup> Are the town leaders of Keilah going to hand me over to him? Is Saul going to come, as I have heard? Lord, God of Israel, please tell me."

"Yes, he'll come," the Lord replied.

<sup>12</sup> "And will the town leaders of Keilah hand me and my men over to Saul?" David asked.

"Yes, they will," the Lord replied.

<sup>13</sup> So David and his men, who numbered around six hundred, left Keilah and moved around from place to place. When Saul discovered that David had escaped from Keilah, he didn't bother going there.

<sup>14</sup> David set up camp in the wilderness strongholds, staying in the mountains of the Desert of Ziph. Saul searched for him continually, but God did not let David be captured.

15 While David was staying at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he found out\* that Saul was on his way to murder him.

16 Saul's son Jonathan went to see David in Horesh and encouraged him to go on trusting in God, telling him,

17 "Don't worry, because my father Saul is never going to find you. You're going to be king of Israel, and I'll be your deputy. Even my father Saul knows this."

18 The two of them made an agreement before the Lord. David stayed in Horesh and Jonathan went home.

19 Then the people of Ziph went to Saul at Gibeah and told him, "David is hiding in our area, in the strongholds in Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, in the southern wastelands.

20 So, Your Majesty, please come whenever you want, and we'll make sure to hand him over to you."

21 "The Lord bless you for thinking about me," Saul replied.

22 "Please go and make absolutely sure you know exactly where he is—where he stays and who has seen him there—because people tell me that he's very devious.

23 Look for and mark down all his hiding places. Then come back to me when you're sure, and I'll go back with you. If he's here in the country, I will hunt him down among all the people of Judah."

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\* **23:15** "Found out": or "was afraid."

<sup>24</sup> So the people of Ziph set off, returning to Ziph ahead of Saul. David and his men were in the Desert of Maon in the Arabah Valley† in the southern wastelands.

<sup>25</sup> Saul and his men started hunting for him. When David found out, he went down to the rock, and stayed in the Desert of Maon. When Saul heard this, he chased after David in the Desert of Maon.

<sup>26</sup> Saul was traveling along one side of the mountain, while David and his men were on the other side, rushing to get away. But just as Saul and his men were closing in on David and his men, about to capture them,

<sup>27</sup> a messenger arrived to tell Saul, “Come at once! The Philistines have invaded the country!”

<sup>28</sup> So Saul had to stop chasing David and went to confront the Philistines. That’s why the place is called the “Rock of Escape.”

<sup>29</sup> Then David left and went to live in the strongholds of En-gedi.

## 24

<sup>1</sup> When Saul returned from chasing the Philistines, it was reported to him, “David is in the Desert of En-gedi.”

<sup>2</sup> So Saul took three thousand specially-picked men from all Israel and went searching for David and his men in the area around Wild Goats’ Rocks.

<sup>3</sup> As Saul passed the sheep pens on the way, there was a cave, and he went in to relieve

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† **23:24** “Arabah Valley”: another name for the Jordan Valley.

himself. David and his men were hiding deep inside the cave.

<sup>4</sup> David's men said to him, "Today's the day the Lord promised you when he told you, 'Listen, I'm going to hand over your enemy to you, so you can do to him whatever you want.'" Then David crept up quietly and cut a piece from the edge of Saul's robe.

<sup>5</sup> But afterwards David felt really bad because he'd cut off a piece of Saul's robe.

<sup>6</sup> He told his men, "May the Lord prevent me from doing anything like this\* to my master, the Lord's anointed one. I will never attack him, for he is the Lord's anointed one."

<sup>7</sup> He reprimanded his men and didn't allow them to attack Saul.

Saul stood up and went on his way.

<sup>8</sup> A little later David came out of the cave and shouted, "My master the king!" When Saul looked around, David bowed down with his face to the ground.

<sup>9</sup> "Why do you pay attention to people who say, 'Watch out, David wants to harm you?'" David asked.

<sup>10</sup> "Just look! You've seen with your own eyes today that the Lord handed you over to me in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I showed you compassion, and said, 'I refuse to attack my master, for he is the Lord's anointed one.'

<sup>11</sup> Take a look, my father! You see this piece of your robe I'm holding. Yes, I did I cut it off, but I didn't kill you. Now you can see for yourself

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\* **24:6** "Like this": probably referring his men's desire to attack the king.

and you can be sure that I have done nothing evil or rebellious. I have not sinned against you, but you are hunting me down, trying to kill me.

<sup>12</sup> May the Lord decide between you and me as to who of us is right, and may the Lord punish you, but I myself will never try to harm you.

<sup>13</sup> As the old saying goes, 'From the wicked comes wickedness,' but I myself will never try to harm you.

<sup>14</sup> Who is the king of Israel coming after? Who are you chasing? A dead dog! Just a flea!

<sup>15</sup> May the Lord decide and choose between you and me. May he pay attention to my case and support it; may he save me from you."

<sup>16</sup> After David finished saying this, Saul asked, "Is that you speaking, David my son?" and he wept out loud.

<sup>17</sup> He told David, "You are a better person than I am, because you have repaid me with good, but I have repaid you with evil.

<sup>18</sup> Today you have demonstrated how well you have treated me—for when the Lord handed me over to you, you didn't kill me.

<sup>19</sup> For if a man caught hold of his enemy, would he let him escape unharmed? The Lord reward you well for how you've treated me today.

<sup>20</sup> Listen, I know you definitely will be king, and your rule over the kingdom of Israel will be secure.

<sup>21</sup> Now swear to me by the Lord that you will not destroy my descendants who follow me, and that you will not wipe out my name from my family line."

<sup>22</sup> So David promised this to Saul with an oath. Then Saul went back home, but David and his men returned to the stronghold.

## 25

<sup>1</sup> Samuel died. Everyone in Israel gathered to mourn for him, and they buried him at his home in Ramah. David left and went to the Desert of Paran.

<sup>2</sup> A man from Maon was very wealthy. He had property in Carmel and owned one thousand goats and three thousand sheep. He was in Carmel shearing them.

<sup>3</sup> The man's name was Nabal,\* and his wife's name was Abigail. She was a wise and beautiful woman, but her husband was cruel and treated people badly. He was a descendant of Caleb.

<sup>4</sup> David was in the wilderness, and he heard that Nabal was shearing sheep.

<sup>5</sup> So David sent ten of his young men and told them, "Go and see Nabal at Carmel. Greet him in my name, and say hello from me.

<sup>6</sup> Tell him, 'I wish you a long life! Peace to you and your family, and may everything you do prosper.

<sup>7</sup> Now I've heard that you are busy shearing. When your shepherds were with us, we didn't mistreat them, and nothing belonging to them was stolen all the time they were in Carmel.

<sup>8</sup> Check with your men and they'll confirm it. Please be kind to my men, especially since we've come on this day of celebration. Please give

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\* **25:3** "Nabal" means "fool."



whatever food you can to us and to your good friend David.' ”

<sup>9</sup> David's young men arrived, gave Nabal this message from David, and waited for his reply.

<sup>10</sup> “Who does this ‘David, son of Jesse’ think he is?” Nabal replied. “Nowadays there are many servants on the run from their masters!

<sup>11</sup> Why should I take the bread and water I've supplied, and the meat I've slaughtered for my shearers, and hand it over to these strangers? I don't even know where they're from!”

<sup>12</sup> So David's men turned around and went back the way they came. When they got back they told David everything Nabal had said.

<sup>13</sup> “Everyone, put on your swords!” David ordered. They all put on their swords, and David did too. About four hundred followed David, while two hundred remained behind to guard their gear.

<sup>14</sup> In the meantime one of Nabal's men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, “David sent some messengers from the wilderness to bring greetings to our master, but he only insulted them.

<sup>15</sup> David's men were always very good to us and they never mistreated us. All the time we were out in the fields with them nothing was stolen from us.

<sup>16</sup> They were like a protective wall to us, both day and night, during the whole time we were with them looking after the sheep.

<sup>17</sup> You should know what happened and consider what you should do about it. Disaster is about to strike our master and his whole family,

but he's so obnoxious no one can talk sense into him!"

<sup>18</sup> Abigail quickly gathered together two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep already slaughtered, five seahs of roasted grain, a hundred raisin cakes, and two hundred fig cakes, and then loaded everything on donkeys.

<sup>19</sup> She told her men, "Go on ahead. I'll follow you." But she didn't say anything to her husband Nabal.

<sup>20</sup> As Abigail was riding her donkey through a mountain valley, she saw David and his men descending towards her, and she met them.

<sup>21</sup> David had just been complaining, "So much for my protecting everything that belonged to this man in the wilderness! Nothing at all was stolen from him, and yet what does he do? Pay me back evil for good!"

<sup>22</sup> May God punish me very severely if I leave even a single one of his men alive by morning!"

<sup>23</sup> When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off the donkey, and bowed before him, her face to the ground.

<sup>24</sup> Falling at his feet in respect, she said, "Sir, I accept full responsibility for what's happened. Please listen to what I, your servant, have to say.

<sup>25</sup> Please don't concern yourself with this worthless man Nabal. His name means 'fool,' and he is really foolish! As for me, your servant, I didn't even see the men you sent.

<sup>26</sup> Now, sir, as the Lord lives and as you live, the Lord has kept you from shedding blood and

from taking your own revenge. Sir, may your enemies and those who want to do you harm be like Nabal.

<sup>27</sup> Please accept this present that I, your servant, have brought to you, sir, and give it to your men.

<sup>28</sup> Please forgive any offense that I, your servant, have committed, for the Lord is sure to set up a dynasty for you that will last for a long time, because you, sir, fight the battles of the Lord. Wickedness should not be found in you as long as you live.†

<sup>29</sup> If anyone pursues you and tries to kill you, then your life will remain bound up with those the Lord your God looks after, safe in his care. But he will throw away the lives of your enemies like stones from a sling.

<sup>30</sup> So when the Lord has done for you, sir, everything good he promised, and has made you ruler over Israel,

<sup>31</sup> you won't have feelings of remorse or a guilty conscience over unnecessary bloodshed or of taking your own revenge. And when the Lord has done these good things for you, sir, please remember me, your maidservant."

<sup>32</sup> Then David said to Abigail, "Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent you to meet me today!

<sup>33</sup> May you be rewarded for your wise decisions, for preventing me from shedding blood today and taking my own revenge.

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† **25:28** Perhaps Abigail is suggesting that David's current mission is not sanctioned by God and that to follow through with it would be to compromise his reputation, especially as future king of Israel.

34 On the contrary, as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you hadn't rushed to meet me, then definitely not a single one of Nabal's men would have been left alive by dawn."

35 David accepted from Abigail what she had brought him, and told her, "You may go home in peace, because I agree with your advice and grant your request."

36 When Abigail got back home to Nabal, he was in the house, partying like a king. He was feeling very merry, and he was very drunk. So she didn't tell him anything until the morning.

37 When Nabal had sobered up the next morning, his wife told him what had happened. When he heard what she had to say he had a heart attack and was paralyzed.‡

38 About ten days later the Lord struck Nabal down and he died.

39 When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Praise the Lord who has supported me against Nabal's insult and has kept me from doing evil. For the Lord made Nabal's wickedness fall back on himself." Then David sent a message to Abigail, asking for her to marry him.

40 When David's men arrived at Carmel, they said to Abigail, "David has sent us to you to bring you back to become his wife."

41 She stood up, then bowed down low, and said, "I am David's maidservant. I am prepared

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‡ 25:37 "Was paralyzed": literally, "he was as a stone."

to serve and to wash the feet of my master's servants.”

<sup>42</sup> Abigail quickly got on a donkey and, with her five female servants, went back with David's men and became his wife.

<sup>43</sup> David had also married Ahinoam of Jezreel. So they both were his wives.

<sup>44</sup> However, Saul had given his daughter Michal, David's wife, to Paltiel, son of Laish. He was from Gallim.

## 26

<sup>1</sup> The people of Ziph went to Saul at Gibeah and told him, “David's hiding on the hill of Hakilah, opposite the wastelands.”

<sup>2</sup> So Saul went to the Desert of Ziph along with three thousand specially-picked men from Israel to search for David there.

<sup>3</sup> Saul set up camp beside the road at the hill of Hachilah opposite the wastelands, near to where David was living in the desert. When he realized that Saul had come looking for him there,

<sup>4</sup> he sent out spies and found out Saul had definitely arrived.

<sup>5</sup> One night\* David got up and went over to Saul's camp and saw where Saul was sleeping, along with Abner, son of Ner, the army commander. Saul was lying in the middle of the camp with his men all around him.

<sup>6</sup> David asked Ahimelech the Hittite and Abishai, son of Zeruah,† Joab's brother, “Who wants to go with me into the camp to Saul?”

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\* **26:5** “One night”: implied. † **26:6** Zeruah was David's sister and mother of Joab, Abishai, and Asahel.

“I’ll go with you,” Abishai replied.

<sup>7</sup> So David and Abishai went to the army camp at night. Saul was sleeping there in the camp with his spear stuck in the ground beside his head, with Abner and his men sleeping around him.

<sup>8</sup> Abishai said to David, “God has handed your enemy over to you today. So please let me spear him to the ground in one go. I won’t need to do it twice!”

<sup>9</sup> But David said to Abishai, “No, don’t kill him! Who can attack the Lord’s anointed one and not be guilty of a crime?”

<sup>10</sup> As the Lord lives, the Lord himself will kill him. Either his time will come and he’ll die, or he will go into battle and be killed.

<sup>11</sup> May the Lord prevent me from attacking the Lord’s anointed one. Just pick up the spear and water jug beside his head, and let’s go.”

<sup>12</sup> David took the spear and water jug beside Saul’s head, and they left. Nobody saw anything; nobody knew what had happened; nobody woke up. Everybody stayed asleep, because the Lord had made them fall into a deep sleep.

<sup>13</sup> Then David went back over to the other side, and stood on top of the hill far enough away—there was a considerable distance between them.

<sup>14</sup> He shouted down to the army and Abner, son of Ner, “Aren’t you going to answer me, Abner?”

“Who is that shouting, disturbing the king?” Abner called back.

<sup>15</sup> David called to Abner, “Aren’t you meant to be this great man? Is there anyone in Israel who is better than you? So why didn’t you protect

your master the king when someone came to kill him?

<sup>16</sup> You haven't done well at all. As the Lord lives, you all deserve to die, because you did not protect your master, the Lord's anointed. Take a look around. Where are the king's spear and water jug that were beside his head?"

<sup>17</sup> Saul recognized David's voice and asked, "Is that you speaking, David, my son?"

"Yes it's me, my lord and king," David replied.

<sup>18</sup> "Why is my lord hunting me, his servant? What is it that I've done? What crime am I guilty of?" he continued.

<sup>19</sup> "Please listen to me, my lord and king. If the Lord has made you angry with me, then may he be happy to accept an offering. But if it's men that have done it, may they be cursed before the Lord! For all this while they've been driving me away from living among God's chosen people, telling me, 'Go away and worship other gods.'

<sup>20</sup> Please don't let me die so far from the presence of the Lord. The king of Israel has come to chase down one little flea, hunting me like someone who hunts a partridge in the mountains."

<sup>21</sup> "I've done wrong," Saul replied, "Come back, David, my son. I won't ever try to harm you again, because you valued me and spared my life today. I've been so stupid! I've made a big mistake!"

<sup>22</sup> "I have the king's spear here," said David. "Send one of your men over to collect it.

<sup>23</sup> The Lord rewards all those who do what is right and who are trustworthy. The Lord handed

you over to me today, but I refused to harm the Lord's anointed one.

<sup>24</sup> In the same way as I valued your life today, may the Lord value my life, and may he rescue me from all my troubles.”

<sup>25</sup> Saul said to David, “May you be blessed, David my son. You will accomplish a great deal and always be successful.” David left, and Saul went back home.

## 27

<sup>1</sup> But David said to himself, “One of these days Saul is going to get me. I think I'd better run away to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up looking for me all over Israel and he won't catch me.”

<sup>2</sup> So David and the six hundred men with him set off, crossed the border, and went to Achish, son of Maach, the king of Gath.

<sup>3</sup> David and his men settled down with Achish in Gath. All the men had their families with them, and David had his two wives, Ahinoam from Jezreel and Abigail from Carmel, Nabal's widow.

<sup>4</sup> When Saul found out that David had run away to Gath, he didn't go on looking for him.

<sup>5</sup> David said to Achish, “Please do me a favor: assign me somewhere in one of the towns in the countryside so I can live there. I, your servant, don't really deserve to live in the royal city with you.”

<sup>6</sup> Achish gave him Ziklag right away, and the town still belongs to the kings of Judah to this day.



<sup>7</sup> David lived in the country of the Philistines for a year and four months.

<sup>8</sup> During that time David and his men were raiding the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites. These people had lived in the land as far as Shur and Egypt from ancient times.

<sup>9</sup> When David attacked a place, he did not leave anybody alive. He took the flocks and herds, the donkeys, camels, and clothing. Then he would go back to Achish.

<sup>10</sup> When Achish asked him, "Where have you been raiding today?" David would reply, "In the desert\* of Judah," or "the desert of Jerahmeel," or "the desert of the Kenites."

<sup>11</sup> David didn't leave anybody alive that could come to Gath because he thought, "They might tell on us and say, 'David did this.'" This is what he did all the time he lived in the country of the Philistines.

<sup>12</sup> Achish trusted David, and said to himself, "He's made himself so offensive to his people the Israelites that he'll have to serve me forever."

## 28

<sup>1</sup> Around that time the Philistines called up their armies to go to war against Israel. So Achish told David, "You do realize that you and your men must accompany me as part of the army."

<sup>2</sup> "That's fine!" David replied. "Then you yourself will discover what I, your servant, can do."

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\* **27:10** "Desert," literally "the Negev," the southern arid region.

"That's fine too," Achish responded. "I'll make you my bodyguard for life."

<sup>3</sup> By now Samuel had died, and all of Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his home town. Saul had got rid of mediums and spiritists from the country.

<sup>4</sup> The Philistine armies gathered and set up camp at Shunem. Saul called up all the Israelite army and set up camp at Gilboa.

<sup>5</sup> When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was terrified, shaking with fear.

<sup>6</sup> He asked advice from the Lord, but the Lord didn't answer him either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets.

<sup>7</sup> So Saul told his officers, "Find me a woman who is a medium so I can go and ask her advice."

"There's a woman who is a medium at Endor," his officers replied.

<sup>8</sup> Saul disguised himself by wearing different clothes. He went with two of his men to the woman at night. Saul told her, "Bring up a spirit for me so I can ask some questions. I'll give you the name."

<sup>9</sup> "Don't you know what Saul has done," she replied. "He's got rid of the mediums and spiritists from the country. Are you trying to set a trap for me and get me killed?"

<sup>10</sup> Saul swore an oath to her by the Lord, "As the Lord lives, you won't be held guilty for doing this."

<sup>11</sup> "Who do you want me to bring up for you?" the woman asked.

"Bring up Samuel," he replied.

12 But when the woman saw Samuel, she shouted loudly, and said to Saul, "Why have you tricked me? You're Saul!"

13 "Don't be scared," The king told her. "What can you see?"

"I see a god coming up out of the ground," the woman replied.

14 "What does he look like?" Saul asked. "An old man is coming up," she replied. "He has a robe wrapped around him" Saul thought it must be Samuel, and he bowed facedown in respect.

15 Samuel said to Saul, "Why are you bothering me by bringing me up?"

"I'm in terrible trouble," Saul replied. "The Philistines are attacking me, and God has abandoned me. He doesn't answer me anymore, either by prophets or by dreams. That's why I have called you up so you tell me what to do."

16 "Why come and ask me when the Lord has abandoned you and has become your enemy?" Samuel asked.

17 "The Lord has done to you exactly what he said through me, for Lord has ripped the kingdom from you and has given it to your neighbor, David.

18 The Lord has done this to you today because you did not do what the Lord commanded and you did not execute his furious anger on the Amalekites.

19 The Lord will hand over Israel and you yourself to the Philistines. Tomorrow you and your sons will die and be with me. The Lord will

also hand over the Israelite army of Israel to the Philistines.”

<sup>20</sup> Saul collapsed face down on the ground, terrified at what Samuel had said. He had no strength, because he hadn't eaten anything all that day and night.

<sup>21</sup> The woman came over to Saul and saw that he was absolutely terrified. She told him, “Look, sir, I did what you asked. I risked my life and did what you told me.

<sup>22</sup> Now please do what I tell you. Let me bring you a little bit of food. Eat it, and you'll have the strength to go on your way.”

<sup>23</sup> But he refused, saying, “I can't eat anything.” But his men and the woman encouraged him to eat, and he did what they said. He got up from the ground and sat on the bed.

<sup>24</sup> The woman had a fattened calf at the house, and she quickly went and slaughtered it. She also got some flour, kneaded it, and baked some unleavened bread.

<sup>25</sup> She served the meal to Saul and his men, and they ate it. Then they got up and left, the same night.

## 29

<sup>1</sup> The Philistines gathered all their armies at Aphek, and the Israelites set up camp by the spring in Jezreel.

<sup>2</sup> The Philistine rulers were marching out in their divisions of hundreds and thousands with David and his men at the rear with King Achish.

<sup>3</sup> But the Philistine commanders asked, “What are these Hebrews doing here?”\*

Achish replied to the Philistine commanders, “That’s David, an officer of King Saul of Israel. He’s been with me for a long time, years even, and I haven’t found any fault in him since the day he came over to our side up till now.”

<sup>4</sup> But the Philistine commanders got angry with Achish, and told him, “Send him back to the place he came from, to the town you assigned to him. He can’t go with us into battle. What if he turns on us during the fighting? What a great way for him to please his master—by handing over the heads of our men!

<sup>5</sup> Isn’t this the David they sing about in their dances: ‘Saul has killed his thousands, and David his tens of thousands’?”

<sup>6</sup> So Achish called David over and told him, “As the Lord lives, you are honest and you’ve done what’s right as far as I can see. As far as I’m concerned you should march with me into battle because I haven’t found any fault in you from the day you arrived until now. But the other leaders don’t approve of you.

<sup>7</sup> So go back home in peace, and that way you won’t do anything to upset the Philistine leaders.”

<sup>8</sup> “But what have I done?” David asked. “What fault have you found in me, your servant, from the day I came to you until now, that would

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\* **29:3** This could also be translated, “Who are these Hebrews?” since the text simply says “What these Hebrews?”

prevent me from going to fight the enemies of my lord the king?"

<sup>9</sup> "As far as I'm concerned, you're as good as an angel of God," Achish replied. "But the Philistine commanders have stated, 'He can't go into battle with us.'

<sup>10</sup> So get up early tomorrow morning and leave with your men as soon as it's light."

<sup>11</sup> David and his men got up early in the morning and went back to the country of the Philistines. But the Philistines advanced on Jezreel.

## 30

<sup>1</sup> Three days later David and his men arrived back in Ziklag. Some Amalekites had raided the Negev and Ziklag. They had attacked Ziklag and burned it down.

<sup>2</sup> They had captured the women and everyone else there, young and old. They hadn't killed anyone, but they took everyone with them as they left.

<sup>3</sup> When David and his men arrived back in town, they found it burned to the ground, and their wives and children captured.

<sup>4</sup> David and his men cried loudly until they couldn't cry any more.

<sup>5</sup> David's two wives had also been taken as prisoners—Ahinoam from Jezreel and Abigail, Nabal's widow, from Carmel.

<sup>6</sup> David was in a great deal of trouble, because the men were so upset over losing their children that they began to talk of stoning him.

But trusting in the Lord his God,

<sup>7</sup> David went to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, and said, "Bring me the ephod." Abiathar brought it to him.

<sup>8</sup> David asked the Lord, "Should I chase after these raiders? Will I catch up with them?"

"Yes, chase after them," the Lord replied, "for you will definitely catch up with them and rescue the prisoners."

<sup>9</sup> David and six hundred of his men set off for the Besor Valley.

<sup>10</sup> Two hundred of them remained behind there because they were too tired to cross the valley while David continued on with four hundred men.

<sup>11</sup> They came across an Egyptian in the countryside and they took him to David. They gave him some food to eat and water to drink.

<sup>12</sup> They also gave him a piece of a fig cake and two raisins cakes. He ate them and recovered, because he hadn't had any food or water for three days and nights.

<sup>13</sup> "Whose slave are you, and where do you come from?" David asked him.

"I'm an Egyptian," he replied, "the slave of an Amalekite. My master left me behind three days ago when I got sick.

<sup>14</sup> We raided the Kerethites in the Negev, as well as the part that belongs to Judah, and the Negev of Caleb. We burned Ziklag too."

<sup>15</sup> "Can you lead me to these raiders?" David asked.

"If you swear to me by God that you won't kill me or hand me over to my master, then I'll take you to them," the man replied.

<sup>16</sup> He led David to the Amalekites, where they were spread out all over the place, eating, drinking, and dancing because of the large haul of plunder they had taken from the lands of the Philistines and of Judah.

<sup>17</sup> David attacked them from dusk until the following evening. Nobody escaped, except for four hundred men who managed to get away, riding on camels.

<sup>18</sup> David got back everything the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives.

<sup>19</sup> Everything was accounted for—all the adults and children, as well as all the plunder the Amalekites had taken. David brought everything back.

<sup>20</sup> He also recovered all the flocks and herds. His men drove them ahead of the other livestock, shouting, “This is David’s plunder!”

<sup>21</sup> When David got back to the two hundred men who had been too tired to continue with him from the Besor Valley, they came to meet him and the men with him. As David approached the men to greet them,

<sup>22</sup> all the unpleasant, good-for-nothing men of those who had gone with David said, “They weren’t with us, so we won’t share the plunder that we took, except to give them back their wives and children. They can take them and leave.”

<sup>23</sup> But David intervened, saying, “No, my brothers, you shouldn’t do this with what the Lord has given us. He has protected us and handed over to us the raiders that had attacked us.



<sup>24</sup> Who's going to listen to you when you say such things? Whatever share those who went into battle receive will be the same as those who stayed to guard the supplies.”

<sup>25</sup> David made this the rule and regulation for Israel from that day until now.

<sup>26</sup> When David got back to Ziklag, he sent some of the plunder to each of his friends among the elders of Judah, saying, “Here's a gift for you from the plunder of the Lord's enemies.”

<sup>27</sup> David sent it to those who lived in Bethuel,\* Ramoth Negev, Jattir,

<sup>28</sup> Aroer, Siphmoth, Eshtemoa,

<sup>29</sup> Racal, and the towns of the Jerahmeelites and Kenites,

<sup>30</sup> Hormah, Bor-ashan, Athach,

<sup>31</sup> Hebron—all the places David and his men had gone to.

## 31

<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile the Philistines had attacked Israel, and the Israelite army ran away from them, and many were killed on Mount Gilboa.

<sup>2</sup> The Philistines chased down Saul and his sons, killing Saul's sons Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua.

<sup>3</sup> The fighting became very intense around Saul, and the arrows of the Philistine archers found their target, wounding Saul very badly.

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\* **30:27** “Bethuel”: far more likely than “Bethel” as in the Hebrew text.

<sup>4</sup> Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Take your sword and kill me, or these heathen\* men will come and kill and torture me!"

But the armor-bearer didn't want to do it because he was too afraid. So Saul took his own sword and fell on it.

<sup>5</sup> When his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his own sword and died with him.

<sup>6</sup> Saul, his three sons, his armor-bearer, and all the men with him, died the same day.

<sup>7</sup> When the Israelites who lived along the valley and those on the other side of the Jordan realized that the Israelite army had run away, and that Saul and his sons had died, they abandoned their cities and they also ran away. So the Philistines came and took them over.

<sup>8</sup> The next day, when the Philistines went to strip the dead, they found Saul and his three sons lying on Mount Gilboa.

<sup>9</sup> They cut off Saul's head, stripped him of his armor, and sent messengers throughout the country of the Philistines to announce the news in the temples of their idols and to their people.

<sup>10</sup> They placed his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths, and nailed his body to the town wall of Beth-shan.

<sup>11</sup> However, when the people of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul,

<sup>12</sup> all their strong warriors set out, traveled all night, and took down the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth-shan. When they got back to Jabesh, they burned the bodies there.

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\* **31:4** "Heathen": literally, "uncircumcised."

<sup>13</sup> Then they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh, and fasted for seven days.

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Language: English

Dialect: American

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