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1 Samuel

Elkanah's Family Worships at Shiloh

1 There was a man named Elkanah from Ramah in the hill country of Ephraim. Elkanah was from the Zuph* family. Elkanah was the son of Jeroham.* Jeroham was Elihu's son. Elihu* was Tohu's son. Tohu* was the son of Zuph, from the family group of Ephraim.

²Elkanah had two wives. One wife was named Hannah and the other wife was named Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah did not.

³Every year Elkanah left his town of Ramah and went up to Shiloh. Elkanah worshiped the Lord All-Powerful at Shiloh and offered sacrifices* to the Lord there. Shiloh was where Hophni and Phinehas served as priests of the Lord. Hophni and Phinehas were the sons of Eli. ⁴Every time Elkanah offered his sacrifices, he always gave one share of the food to his wife Peninnah. Elkanah also gave shares of the food to Peninnah's children. ⁵Elkanah always gave an equal share* of the food to Hannah. Elkanah did this even though the Lord had not let Hannah have any children. Elkanah did this because Hannah was the wife he really loved.

Peninnah Upsets Hannah

⁶Peninnah always upset Hannah and made her feel bad. Peninnah did this because Hannah was not able to have children. ⁷The same thing happened every year. Every time their family went to the Lord's house at

Shiloh, Peninnah made Hannah upset. One day Elkanah was giving sacrifices.* Hannah became upset and began to cry. Hannah would not eat anything. ⁸Her husband, Elkanah, said to her, "Hannah, why are you crying? Why won't you eat? Why are you sad? You have me—I am your husband. You should think I am better than ten sons."

Hannah's Prayer

⁹After eating and drinking, Hannah quietly got up and went to pray to the Lord. Eli the priest was sitting on a chair near the door of the Lord's Holy Building.* ¹⁰Hannah was very sad. She cried very much while she prayed to the Lord. ¹¹She made a special promise to God. She said, "Lord All-Powerful, see how very sad I am. Remember me! Don't forget me. If you will give me a son, then I will give him to you. He will be a Nazirite: He will not drink wine or strong drink.* And no one will ever cut his hair.*"

¹²Hannah prayed to the Lord a long time. Eli was watching Hannah's mouth while she was praying. ¹³Hannah was praying in her heart. Her lips were moving, but she did not say the words out loud. So Eli thought Hannah was drunk. ¹⁴Eli said to Hannah, "You have had too much to drink! It is time to put away the wine."

Holy Building This could mean the Holy Tent at Shiloh where people went to worship the Lord or a larger area where they put the Holy Tent.

He will ... not drink This is in the ancient Greek translation and one of the ancient Hebrew scrolls from Qumran, but not in the standard Hebrew text.

He will ... hair Nazirites were people who made a promise to serve God in a special way. They did not cut their hair and they did not eat grapes or drink wine. See Num. 6:5.

Zuph A family of Levites. See 1 Chron. 6:33-38.

Jeroham, Elihu, Tohu Or, "Jerahmeel, Eliel, Toah."

sacrifice(s) A gift to God. Usually it was a special animal that was killed and burned on an altar.

equal share Or, "double share."

¹⁵Hannah answered, “Sir, I have not drunk any wine or beer. I am deeply troubled. I was telling the Lord about all my problems. ¹⁶Don’t think I am a bad woman. I have been praying so long because I have so many troubles and I am very sad.”

¹⁷Eli answered, “Go in peace. May the God of Israel give you the things you asked.”

¹⁸Hannah said, “I hope you are happy with me.” Then Hannah left and ate something. She was not sad any more.

¹⁹Early the next morning Elkanah’s family got up. They worshiped the Lord and then went back home to Ramah.

Samuel’s Birth

Elkanah had sexual relations with his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered Hannah. ²⁰By that time the following year, Hannah had become pregnant and had a son. Hannah named her son Samuel.* She said, “His name is Samuel because I asked the Lord for him.”

²¹That year Elkanah went [to Shiloh] to offer sacrifices and to keep the promises he made to God. He took his family with him. ²²But Hannah did not go. She told Elkanah, “When the boy is old enough to eat solid food, I will take him to Shiloh. Then I will give him to the Lord. He will become a Nazirite.** He will stay there at Shiloh.

²³Hannah’s husband Elkanah said to her, “Do what you think is best. You may stay home until the boy is old enough to eat solid food. May the Lord do what you have said.” So Hannah stayed at home to nurse her son until he was old enough to eat solid food.

Hannah Takes Samuel to Eli at Shiloh

²⁴When the boy was old enough to eat solid food, Hannah took him to the Lord’s

Samuel This name means “His name is El (God).” But in Hebrew it is like the word “ask” or the name “Saul.” There are many places in 1 Samuel where there are word plays with the names Saul and Samuel and the word “ask.”

Nazirite A person who has made a special promise to God. This name is from the Hebrew word meaning “to separate from.”

He will become a Nazirite This is not in the standard Hebrew text, but it is in the ancient Greek translation and in one of the Hebrew scrolls from Qumran.

house at Shiloh. Hannah also took a bull that was three years old, 20 pounds* of flour, and a bottle of wine.

²⁵They went before the Lord. Elkanah killed the bull as a sacrifice to the Lord like he usually did.* Then Hannah gave the boy to Eli. ²⁶Hannah said to Eli, “Pardon me, sir. I am the same woman that stood near you praying to the Lord. I promise that I am telling the truth. ²⁷I prayed for this child, and the Lord answered my prayer. The Lord gave me this child. ²⁸And now I give this child to the Lord. He will serve* the Lord all his life.”

Then Hannah left the boy there* and worshiped the Lord.

Hannah Gives Thanks

2 Hannah said:

“My heart is happy in the Lord!

I feel very strong* in my God!

I laugh at my enemies.*

I am very happy in my victory!

2 There is no Holy God like the Lord.

There is no God but you!

There is no Rock* like our God.

3 Don’t continue bragging!

Don’t speak proud words!

Why? Because the Lord God

knows everything,

God leads and judges people.

4 The bows of strong soldiers break!

And weak people become strong!

5 People who had plenty of food in the past must now work to get food.

But people who were hungry in the past now grow fat on food!

20 pounds Literally, “an Ephah.”

They went ... he usually did This is from the ancient Greek translation and one of the ancient Hebrew scrolls from Qumran. It is not in the standard Hebrew text.

serve Or, “belong to.”

left the boy there This is from one of the ancient Hebrew scrolls from Qumran. It is not in the standard Hebrew text.

I feel very strong Literally, “In the Lord my horn is lifted high.” The horn is a symbol of strength.

I laugh at my enemies Literally, “My mouth is wide open over my enemies.”

Rock A name for God. It shows he is like a fortress or a strong place of safety.

- The woman who was not able
to have children
now has seven children!
But the woman who had many children
is sad because her children are gone.
- 6 The Lord causes people to die,
and he causes them to live.
The Lord sends people down to the grave,*
and he can raise them up [to live again].
- 7 The Lord makes some people poor,
and he makes other people rich.
The Lord humbles some people,
and he honors other people.
- 8 The Lord raises poor people from the dust.
He takes away their sadness.*
The Lord makes poor people important.
He seats them with princes
and at the places for honored guests.
The Lord made the whole world!
And the whole world belongs to him!*
- 9 The Lord protects his holy people.
He keeps them from stumbling.
But bad people will be destroyed.
They will fall in the darkness.
Their power will not help them win.
- 10 The Lord destroys his enemies.
God Most-High will thunder in heaven
against people.
The Lord will judge even the faraway
lands.
He will give power to his king.
He will make his special king strong.”

¹¹Elkanah [and his family] went home to Ramah. The boy stayed in Shiloh and served the Lord under Eli the priest.

Eli's Evil Sons

¹²Eli's sons were bad men. They did not care about the Lord. ¹³They did not care about how priests were supposed to treat people. This is what priests should do for people: Each time a person brings a sacrifice, the

priests should put the meat in a pot of boiling water. Then the priest's servant should get the special fork that has three points. ¹⁴The priest's servant should use that fork to get some meat out of the pot or kettle. The priest should get only whatever meat the servant removes from the pot with the fork. That is what the priests should have done for all the Israelites who came [to offer sacrifices] at Shiloh.

¹⁵But Eli's sons did not do that]. Even before the fat was burned on the altar, their servant would go to the people offering sacrifices. The priest's servant would say, “Give the priest some meat to roast. The priest won't accept boiled meat from you.”

¹⁶Maybe the man offering the sacrifice would say, “Burn the fat* first, and then you can take anything you want.” Then the priest's servant would answer: “No, give me the meat now. If you don't give it to me, I'll take it from you!”

¹⁷In this way, Hophni and Phinehas showed that they did not respect the offerings made to the Lord. This was a very bad sin against the Lord!

¹⁸But Samuel served the Lord. Samuel was a helper who wore the linen ephod.* ¹⁹Every year Samuel's mother made a little robe for Samuel. She took the little robe to Samuel when she went up [to Shiloh] with her husband for the sacrifice every year.

²⁰Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife. Eli would say, “May the Lord give you more children through Hannah. These children will take the place of the boy Hannah prayed for and gave to the Lord.”

Elkanah and Hannah went home and ²¹the Lord was kind to Hannah. She had three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew up [at the holy place] near the Lord.

grave Or, “Sheol,” the place of death.

takes away their sadness Literally, “He picks up poor people from the ashes.”

The Lord made ... belongs to him Literally, “The whole world, even to its foundations, belongs to the Lord. The Lord set the world on those pillars.”

Burn the fat The fat was the part of the animal that belonged only to God. The priests were supposed to burn the fat on the altar as a gift to God.

ephod A special coat a man wore to show that he was a priest or a priest's helper.

Eli Fails to Control His Evil Sons

²²Eli was very old. He heard again and again about the things his sons were doing to all the Israelites at Shiloh. Eli also heard about his sons sleeping with the women who served at the door of the Meeting Tent.

²³Eli said to his sons, “The people here told me about the bad things you have done. Why do you do these bad things? ²⁴Sons, don’t do these bad things. The Lord’s people are saying bad things about you. ²⁵If a person sins against another person, God may help him. But if a person sins against the Lord, then who can help that person?”

But Eli’s sons refused to listen to Eli. So the Lord decided to kill Eli’s sons.

²⁶The boy Samuel kept growing. He was pleasing to God and to the people.

The Terrible Prophecy about Eli’s Family

²⁷A man of God* came to Eli and said, “The Lord says these things, ‘Your ancestors* were slaves of Pharaoh’s family. But I appeared to your ancestors at that time. ²⁸I chose your family group from all the family groups of Israel. I chose your family group to be my priests. I chose them to offer sacrifices on my altar. I chose them to burn incense* and wear the ephod.* I also let your family group have the meat from the sacrifices that the people of Israel give to me. ²⁹So why don’t you respect those sacrifices and gifts? You honor your sons more than me. You become fat on the best parts of the meat—and the people of Israel bring that meat to me.’”

³⁰“The Lord God of Israel promised that your father’s family would serve him forever. But now the Lord says this, ‘That will never be! I will honor people who honor me. But bad things will happen to people who refuse to respect me. ³¹The time is coming when I

will destroy all your descendants.* No one in your family will live to be an old man.

³²Good things will happen to Israel, but you will see bad things happening at home.* No one in your family will live to be an old man.

³³There is one man that I will save to serve [as priest] at my altar. [He will live to be very old.] He will live until his eyes wear out and his strength is gone. All of your descendants will die by the sword. ³⁴I will give you a sign [to show these things will come true]. Your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will die on the same day. ³⁵I will choose a faithful priest for myself. This priest will listen to me and do what I want. I will make this priest’s family strong. He will always serve before my chosen king.* ³⁶Then all the people who are left in your family will come and bow down before this priest. They will beg for a little money or a piece of bread. They will say, “Please give me a job as priest so I can have some food to eat.””

God Calls Samuel

3 The boy Samuel served the Lord under Eli. At that time, the Lord did not speak directly to people very often. There were very few visions.*

²Eli’s eyes were so weak he was almost blind. One night he lay down in bed. ³Samuel lay in bed in the Lord’s Holy Building.* God’s Holy Box* was in that Holy Building. The Lord’s lamp was still burning. ⁴The Lord called Samuel. Samuel answered, “Here I am.” ⁵[Samuel thought Eli was calling him. So] Samuel ran to Eli. Samuel said to Eli, “Here I am. You called me.”

descendants A person’s children and their future families.

but you will see bad things happening at home This phrase is not in the ancient Greek translation or the Hebrew scrolls from Qumran.

chosen king Literally, “anointed one.”

visions Like dreams. God gave messages to his special people by letting them see and hear things in visions.

Holy Building This could mean the Holy Tent at Shiloh where people went to worship the Lord, or a larger area where they put the Holy Tent.

God’s Holy Box The Box of the Agreement. In this box were many things from the time Israel was in the Sinai desert.

man of God A prophet, a person who spoke for God.

ancestors Literally, “father’s house.” This means the people that a person is descended from.

incense A kind of spice that smells good when it is burned. It was burned as a gift to God.

ephod A special coat a man wore to show that he was a priest or a priest’s helper.

But Eli said, “I didn’t call you. Go back to bed.”

Samuel went back to bed. ⁶Again the Lord called, “Samuel!” Again Samuel ran to Eli and said, “Here I am. You called me.”

Eli said, “I didn’t call you. Go back to bed.”

⁷Samuel did not yet know the Lord. The Lord had not spoken directly to him yet.*

⁸The Lord called Samuel the third time. Again Samuel got up and went to Eli. Samuel said, “Here I am. You called me.”

Then Eli understood that the Lord was calling the boy. ⁹Eli told Samuel, “Go to bed. If he calls you again, say, ‘Speak, Lord. I am your servant, and I am listening.’”

So Samuel went back to bed. ¹⁰The Lord came and stood there. He called as he did before. He said, “Samuel, Samuel!”

Samuel said, “Speak. I am your servant, and I am listening.”

¹¹The Lord said to Samuel, “I will soon do something in Israel. People who hear about it will be shocked. ¹²I will do everything I said I would do against Eli and his family. I will do everything from the beginning to the end. ¹³I told Eli I would punish his family forever. I will do that because Eli knew that his sons were saying and doing bad things against God but Eli failed to control them. ¹⁴That is why I swore (*promised*) that sacrifices and grain offerings will never take away the sins of the people in Eli’s family.”

¹⁵Samuel lay down in bed until the morning came. He got up early and opened the doors of the Lord’s house. Samuel was afraid to tell Eli about the vision.*

¹⁶But Eli said to Samuel, “Samuel, my son!”

Samuel answered, “Yes, sir.”

¹⁷Eli asked, “What did the Lord say to you? Don’t hide it from me. God will punish you if you hide anything from the message God spoke to you.”

¹⁸So Samuel told Eli everything. Samuel did not hide anything from Eli.

The Lord had not spoken directly to him yet Literally, “The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.”

vision Like a dream. God gave messages to his special people by letting them see and hear things in visions.

Eli said, “He is the Lord. Let him do whatever he thinks is right.”

¹⁹The Lord was with Samuel while he grew up. The Lord did not let any of Samuel’s messages prove false. ²⁰Then all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, knew that Samuel was a true prophet of the Lord. ²¹And the Lord continued to appear to Samuel at Shiloh. The Lord revealed himself to Samuel as the word of the Lord.*

4 News about Samuel spread through all of Israel. Eli was very old. His sons kept doing bad things before the Lord.*

The Philistines Defeat the Israelites

At that time, the Israelites went out to fight against the Philistines. The Israelites made their camp at Ebenezer. The Philistines made their camp at Aphek. ²The Philistines prepared to attack Israel. The battle began.

The Philistines defeated the Israelites. The Philistines killed about 4,000 soldiers from Israel’s army. ³The Israelite soldiers came back to their camp. The elders (*leaders*) of Israel asked, “Why did the Lord let the Philistines defeat us? Let’s bring the Lord’s Box of the Agreement* from Shiloh. In this way, God will go with us into battle. He will save us from our enemies.”

⁴So the people sent men to Shiloh. The men brought back the Lord All-Powerful’s Box of the Agreement.* On top of the Box are the Cherub angels. They are like the throne that the Lord sits on. Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, came with the Box.

⁵When the Lord’s Box of the Agreement* came into the camp, all the Israelites gave a great shout. That shout made the ground shake. ⁶The Philistines heard Israel’s shout.

word of the Lord Sometimes this means simply, “a message from God.” But sometimes it seems that this was a special way or form that God used when he spoke with his prophets.

Eli was very old ... before the Lord This phrase is in the ancient Greek translation, but not in the Hebrew.

Box of the Agreement Also called the “Ark of the Covenant.” This box contained the Ten Commandments written on stone tablets and the other things that proved God was with the people of Israel during their time in the Sinai Desert.

They asked, “Why are the people so excited in the Hebrew* camp?”

Then the Philistines learned that the Lord’s Holy Box* had been brought into Israel’s camp. ⁷The Philistines became afraid. The Philistines said, “Gods have come to their camp! We’re in trouble. This has never happened before! ⁸We are worried. Who can save us from these powerful gods? These gods are the same gods that gave the Egyptians those diseases and terrible sicknesses. ⁹Be brave, Philistines! Fight like men! In the past, the Hebrew people were our slaves. So fight like men or you will become their slaves!”

¹⁰So the Philistines fought very hard and defeated the Israelites. Every Israelite soldier ran away to his tent. It was a terrible defeat for Israel. 30,000 Israelite soldiers were killed. ¹¹The Philistines took God’s Holy Box* and killed Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas.

¹²That day a man from the family group of Benjamin ran from the battle. He tore his clothes and put dust on his head [to show his great sadness]. ¹³Eli was sitting on a chair near the city gates when this man came to Shiloh. Eli was worried about God’s Holy Box,* so he was sitting there waiting and watching. Then the Benjamite man came into Shiloh and told the bad news. All the people in town began to cry out loud. ^{14–15}Eli was 98 years old. Eli was blind, [so he could not see what was happening]. But he could hear the loud noise of the people crying. Eli asked, “Why are the people making this loud noise?”

The Benjamite man ran to Eli and told him what happened. ¹⁶The Benjamite man told Eli, “I am the man who just came from the battle. I ran away from the battle today!”

Eli asked, “What happened, son?”

¹⁷The Benjamite man answered, “Israel ran away from the Philistines. The Israelite army has lost many soldiers. Your two sons are both dead. And the Philistines took God’s Holy Box.*”

Hebrew Or, “Israelite.”

Holy Box The Box of the Agreement.

¹⁸When the Benjamite man mentioned God’s Holy Box,* Eli fell backward off his chair near the gate and broke his neck. Eli was old and fat, so he died. Eli had led Israel for 20 years.*

The Glory Is Gone

¹⁹Eli’s daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant. It was nearly time for her baby to be born. She heard the news that God’s Holy Box* was taken. She also heard that her father-in-law Eli and her husband Phinehas were both dead. As soon as she heard the news, her pain started and she began giving birth to her baby. ²⁰She was about to die when the women who were helping her said, “Don’t worry! You have given birth to a son.”

But Eli’s daughter-in-law did not answer or pay attention. ²¹Eli’s daughter-in-law named the baby Ichabod,* that is to say, “Israel’s glory has been taken away!”* She did this because God’s Holy Box* was taken away and because both her father-in-law and her husband were dead. ²²She said, “Israel’s glory has been taken away” because the Philistines had taken God’s Holy Box.

The Holy Box Troubles the Philistines

5 The Philistines carried God’s Holy Box,* from Ebenezer to Ashdod. ²The Philistines carried God’s Holy Box into the temple of Dagon* and put it next to the statue of Dagon. ³The next morning, the people of Ashdod got up and found Dagon lying face down on the ground. Dagon had fallen down before the Lord’s Box.

20 years This is from the ancient Greek translation and Josephus. The standard Hebrew text has “40 years.”

Ichabod This name means “No glory!” The Greek has “Ouai Barchaboth.”

Eli’s daughter-in-law ... taken away This is not in the Greek translation.

Dagon The Canaanite people worshiped this false god hoping he would give them a good harvest of grain. This was probably the most important god for the Philistine people.

The people of Ashdod put the statue of Dagon* back in its place. ⁴But the next morning when the people of Ashdod got up, they found Dagon on the ground again! Dagon had fallen down before the Lord's Holy Box.* This time, Dagon's head and hands were broken off and lying on the threshold.* Only Dagon's body was still in one piece. ⁵That is why, even today, Dagon's priests or any other people who enter Dagon's Temple at Ashdod refuse to step on the threshold.

⁶The Lord made life hard for the people of Ashdod and their neighbors. The Lord gave them many troubles. He caused them to get tumors.* The Lord also sent mice to them. The mice ran all over their ships and then onto their land. The people in the city were very afraid.* ⁷The people of Ashdod saw what was happening. They said, "The Holy Box* of the God of Israel can't stay here! God is punishing us and Dagon* our god."

⁸The people of Ashdod called the five Philistine rulers together. The people of Ashdod asked the rulers, "What must we do with the Holy Box* of the God of Israel?"

The rulers answered, "Move the Holy Box* of the God of Israel _{to Gath}." So the Philistines moved God's Holy Box.

⁹But after the Philistines had moved God's Holy Box* to Gath, the Lord punished that city. The people became very scared. God caused many troubles for all the people— young and old. God caused the people in Gath to have tumors.* ¹⁰So the Philistines sent God's Holy Box to Ekron.

But when God's Holy Box* came into Ekron, the people of Ekron complained. They said, "Why are you bringing the Box of the God of Israel to our city Ekron? Do you want

to kill us and our people?" ¹¹The people of Ekron called all the Philistine rulers together. The people of Ekron said to the rulers, "Send the Box of the God of Israel back to its place before it kills us and our people!"

The people of Ekron were very scared! God made life very hard for them in that place. ¹²_{Many people died.} And the people who did not die, had tumors.* The people of Ekron cried loudly to heaven.

God's Holy Box Is Sent Back Home

6 The Philistines kept the Holy Box* in their land seven months. ²The Philistines called their priests and magicians. The Philistines said, "What must we do with the Lord's Box? Tell us how to send the Box back home!"

³The priests and magicians answered, "If you send back the Holy Box* of the God of Israel, don't send it away empty. You must offer gifts so the God of Israel will take away your sins. Then you will be healed. You will be made pure. You should do these things so God will stop punishing you."*

⁴The Philistines asked, "What kind of gifts should we send for Israel's God to forgive us?"

The priests and magicians answered, "There are five Philistine leaders. _{One leader for each city.} All of you people and your leaders had the same problems. So you must make five gold models to look like five tumors. And you must make five gold models to look like five mice. ⁵So, make models of the tumors and models of the mice that are ruining the country. Give these gold models to the God of Israel as payment. Then maybe the God of Israel will stop punishing you, your gods, and your land. ⁶Don't be stubborn like Pharaoh and the Egyptians. God punished the Egyptians. That is why the Egyptians let the Israelites leave Egypt.

⁷"You must build a new wagon and get two cows that just had calves. These must be cows that have never worked in the fields. Tie the cows to the wagon so they can pull it. Then

Dagon The Canaanite people worshiped this false god hoping he would give them a good harvest of grain. This was probably the most important god for the Philistine people.

Holy Box The Box of the Agreement, the box that contained the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments written on them and the other things that proved God was with the people of Israel during their time in the Sinai Desert.

threshold The bottom part of a door opening.

tumors Bad growths on the skin.

Verse 6 This is from the ancient Greek translation.

You should do ... punishing you This is from the ancient Greek translation and one of the ancient Hebrew scrolls from Qumran. The standard Hebrew has "Then you will know why God did not stop punishing you."

take the calves back home and put them in their pen. Don't let them follow their mothers.* ⁸Put the Lord's Holy Box* on the wagon. You must put the golden models in the bag beside the Box. The golden models are your gifts for God to forgive your sins. Send the wagon straight on its way. ⁹Watch the wagon. If the wagon goes toward Beth Shemesh in Israel's own land, then the Lord has given us this great sickness. But if the cows do not go straight to Beth Shemesh, then we will know that Israel's God has not punished us. We will know that our sickness just happened."

¹⁰The Philistines did what the priests and magicians said. The Philistines found two cows that had just had calves. The Philistines tied the cows to the wagon and put the calves in their pens at home. ¹¹Then the Philistines put the Lord's Holy Box* on the wagon. They also put the bag with the golden models of the tumors and mice on the wagon. ¹²The cows went straight to Beth Shemesh. The cows stayed on the road, mooing all the way. The cows did not turn right or left. The Philistine rulers followed the cows as far as the city limits of Beth Shemesh.

¹³The people of Beth Shemesh were harvesting their wheat in the valley. They looked up and saw the Holy Box.* They were very happy to see the Box again. They ran to get it. ^{14–15}The wagon came to the field that belonged to Joshua of Beth Shemesh and stopped there near a large rock.

Some Levites* took down the Lord's Holy Box* and the bag that had the golden models. The Levites put the Lord's Box and the bag that was with it on the large rock.

The people of Beth Shemesh cut up the wagon and killed the cows. That day, they

sacrificed the cows as burnt offerings to the Lord.

¹⁶The five Philistine rulers watched the people of Beth Shemesh do all these things. Then the five Philistine rulers went back to Ekron that same day.

¹⁷In this way, the Philistines sent golden models of tumors as gifts for their sins to the Lord. They sent one golden model of a tumor for each Philistine town. These Philistine towns were Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron. ¹⁸And the Philistines also sent golden models of mice. The number of these golden mice was the same number as the towns that belonged to the five Philistine rulers. These towns had walls around them. And each town had villages around it.

The people of Beth Shemesh put the Lord's Holy Box* on a rock. That rock is still in the field of Joshua from Beth Shemesh. ¹⁹But there were no priests* there, and the men of Beth Shemesh looked at the Holy Box of the Lord. So God killed 70 men from Beth Shemesh. The people of Beth Shemesh cried because the Lord punished them so severely. ²⁰So the people of Beth Shemesh said, "Where is a priest that can care for this Holy Box? Where should the Box go from here?"

²¹[There was a priest at Kiriath Jearim.] The people of Beth Shemesh sent messengers to the people of Kiriath Jearim. The messengers said, "The Philistines have brought back the Lord's Holy Box.* Come down and take it to your city."

7 The men of Kiriath Jearim came and took the Lord's Holy Box.* They took the Lord's Box up the hill to the house of [the priest,] Abinadab. They did a special ceremony to prepare Abinadab's son, Eleazar, to guard the Lord's Box. ²The Box stayed at Kiriath Jearim a long time. It stayed there 20 years.

The Lord Saves the Israelites

The people of Israel began to follow the Lord again. ³Samuel told the people of Israel, "If you are really coming back to the Lord—with all your heart—then you must throw

Don't ... follow their mothers The Philistines thought that if the cows did not try to find their calves it would prove that God was leading them and that he had accepted their gifts.

Holy Box The Box of the Agreement, the box that contained the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments written on them and the other things that proved God was with the people of Israel during their time in the Sinai Desert.

Levites People from the family group of Levi who helped the priests.

no priests Only priests were allowed to carry the Box of the Agreement.

away your foreign gods. You must throw away your idols of Ashtoreth.* And you must give yourselves fully to the Lord. You must serve only the Lord! Then the Lord will save you from the Philistines.”

⁴So the Israelites threw away their statues of Baal* and Ashtoreth.* The Israelites served only the Lord.

⁵Samuel said, “All Israel must meet at Mizpah. I will pray to the Lord for you.”

⁶The Israelites met together at Mizpah. They got water and poured it out before the Lord. [In this way, they began a time of fasting.] They did not eat any food that day and they confessed their sins. They said, “We have sinned against the Lord.” So Samuel served as a judge* of Israel at Mizpah.

⁷The Philistines heard that the Israelites were meeting at Mizpah. The Philistine rulers went to fight against the Israelites. The Israelites heard the Philistines were coming, and they became afraid. ⁸The Israelites said to Samuel, “Don’t stop praying to the Lord our God for us! Ask the Lord to save us from the Philistines!”

⁹Samuel took a baby lamb. He burned the lamb as a whole burnt offering to the Lord. Samuel prayed to the Lord for Israel. The Lord answered Samuel’s prayer. ¹⁰While Samuel was burning the sacrifice, the Philistines came to fight Israel. But the Lord caused loud thunder near the Philistines. This confused the Philistines. The thunder scared the Philistines, and they became confused. [Their leaders were not able to control them.] So the Israelites defeated the Philistines in battle. ¹¹The men of Israel ran out of Mizpah and chased the Philistines. They chased them all the way to Beth Car. They killed Philistine soldiers all along the way.

Ashtoreth The Canaanite people thought that this false goddess could make people able to have babies. She was their goddess of love and war.

Baal The Canaanite people believed that this false god brought the rain and storms. They also thought that he made the land produce good crops.

judge(s) Special leaders who had the work of leading, judging, and protecting the people of Israel before there were kings in Israel.

Peace Comes to Israel

¹²After this, Samuel set up a special stone. [He did this to help people remember the things God did.] Samuel put the stone between Mizpah and Shen.* Samuel named the stone “Stone of Help.”* Samuel said, “The Lord helped us all the way to this place!”

¹³The Philistines were defeated. They did not enter the land of Israel again. The Lord was against the Philistines during the rest of Samuel’s life. ¹⁴The Philistines had taken some cities from Israel. But the Israelites won back those towns. Israel rescued those cities throughout the Philistine area, from Ekron to Gath.

There was also peace between Israel and the Amorites.

¹⁵Samuel led Israel all his life. ¹⁶Samuel went from place to place judging the people of Israel. Every year he traveled around the country. He went to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah. So he judged and ruled the people of Israel in all these places. ¹⁷But Samuel’s home was in Ramah. So Samuel always went back to Ramah. Samuel judged and ruled Israel from that town. And Samuel built an altar to the Lord in Ramah.

Israel Asks For A King

8 When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges* for Israel. ²Samuel’s first son was named Joel. His second son was named Abijah. Joel and Abijah were judges in Beersheba. ³But Samuel’s sons did not live the same way he did. Joel and Abijah accepted bribes. They took money secretly and changed their decisions in court. They cheated people in court. ⁴So all the elders (*leaders*) of Israel met together. They went to Ramah to meet with Samuel. ⁵The elders (*leaders*) said to Samuel, “You’re old, and your sons don’t live right. They are not like you. Now, give us a king to rule us like all the other nations.”

⁶So, the elders (*leaders*) asked for a king to lead them. Samuel thought this was a bad

Shen Or, “Jeshanah,” a town about 17 miles north of Jerusalem.

Stone of Help Or, “Ebenezer.”

idea. So Samuel prayed to the Lord. ⁷The Lord told Samuel, “Do what the people tell you. They have not rejected you. They have rejected me! They don’t want me to be their king! ⁸They are doing the same thing they have always done. I took them out of Egypt. But they left me and served other gods. They are doing the same to you. ⁹So listen to the people [and do what they say]. But give them a warning. Tell the people what a king will do to them! Tell them how a king rules people.”

¹⁰Those people asked for a king. So Samuel told those people everything the Lord said. ¹¹Samuel said, “If you have a king ruling over you, this is what he will do: He will take away your sons. He will force your sons to serve him. He will force them to be soldiers—they must fight from his chariots and become horse soldiers in his army. Your sons will become guards running in front of the king’s chariot.

¹²“A king will force your sons to become soldiers. That king will choose which of your sons will be officers over 1,000 men and which will be officers over 50 men.

“A king will force some of your sons to plow his fields and gather his harvest. He will force some of your sons to make weapons for war. He will force them to make things for his chariots!

¹³“A king will take your daughters. He will force some of your daughters to make perfume for him. And he will force some of your daughters to cook and bake for him.

¹⁴“A king will take your best fields, vineyards, and olive groves. He will take those things from you and give them to his officers. ¹⁵He will take one tenth of your grain and grapes. He will give these things to his officers and servants.

¹⁶“A king will take your men and women servants. He will take your best cattle* and your donkeys. He will use them all for his own work. ¹⁷And he will take one tenth of your flocks.

“And you yourselves will become slaves of this king. ¹⁸When that time comes, you will cry because of the king you chose. But the Lord will not answer you at that time.”

¹⁹But the people would not listen to Samuel. They said, “No! We want a king to rule over us. ²⁰Then we will be the same as all the other nations. Our king will lead us. He will go before us and fight our battles.”

²¹Samuel listened to the people and then repeated their words to the Lord. ²²The Lord answered, “You must listen to them! Give them a king.”

Then Samuel told the people of Israel, “[Fine! You will have a new king.] Now, all of you people go back home.”

Saul Looks for His Father’s Donkeys

9 Kish was an important man from the family group of Benjamin. Kish was the son of Abiel. Abiel was the son of Zeror. Zeror was the son of Becorath. Becorath was the son of Aphiah, a man from Benjamin. ²Kish had a son named Saul. Saul was a handsome young man. There was no one more handsome than Saul. Saul stood a head taller than any other man in Israel.

³One day, Kish’s donkeys became lost. So Kish said to his son Saul, “Take one of the servants and go look for the donkeys.” ⁴Saul went to look for the donkeys. Saul walked through the hills of Ephraim. Then Saul walked through the area around Shalisha. But Saul and the servant could not find Kish’s donkeys. So Saul and the servant went to the area around Shaalim. But the donkeys were not there either. So Saul traveled through the land of Benjamin. But he and the servant still could not find the donkeys.

⁵Finally, Saul and the servant came to the town named Zuph. Saul said to his servant, “Let’s go back. My father will stop worrying about the donkeys and start worrying about us.”

⁶But the servant answered, “A man of God* is in this town. People respect him.

cattle This is from the ancient Greek translation. The Hebrew has, “young men.”

man of God A prophet, a person that God sent to speak to the people.

Everything he says comes true. So let's go into town. Maybe the man of God will tell us where we should go next."

⁷Saul said to his servant, "Sure, we can go into town. But what can we give to him? We have no gift to give the man of God. Even the food in our bags is gone. What can we give him?"

⁸Again the servant answered Saul. "Look, I have a little bit of money.* Let's give it to the man of God.* Then he will tell us where we should go."

⁹⁻¹¹Saul said to his servant, "That is a good idea! Let's go!" So they went to the town where the man of God was.

Saul and the servant were walking up the hill toward town. They met some young women on the road. The young women were coming out to get water. Saul and the servant asked the young women, "Is the seer* here?" (In the past, people in Israel called a prophet a "seer." So if they wanted to ask something from God, they would say, "Let's go to the seer.")

¹²The young women answered, "Yes, the seer* is here. He is just up the road. He came to town today. Some people are meeting together today to share in a fellowship offering at the place for worship.* ¹³So, go into town and you will find him. If you hurry, you can catch him before he goes up to eat at the place for worship. The seer blesses the sacrifice. So the people won't start eating until he gets there. If you hurry, you can find the seer."

¹⁴Saul and the servant started walking up the hill to town. Just as they came into town, they saw Samuel walking toward them. Samuel was just coming out of town on his way to the place for worship.*

¹⁵The day before, the Lord had told Samuel, ¹⁶"At this time tomorrow I will send

a man to you. He will be from the family group of Benjamin. You must anoint* him and make him the new leader over my people Israel. This man will save my people from the Philistines. I have seen my people suffering. I have listened to the cries from my people."

¹⁷Samuel saw Saul, and the Lord said to Samuel, "This is the man I told you about. He will rule my people."

¹⁸Saul went up to a man near the gate to ask directions. This man just happened to be Samuel. Saul said, "Excuse me. Could you tell me where the seer's* house is?"

¹⁹Samuel answered, "I am the seer.* Go on up ahead of me to the place for worship.* You and your servant will eat with me today. I will let you go home tomorrow morning. I will answer all your questions. ²⁰And don't worry about the donkeys that you lost three days ago. They have been found. Now, there is something that everybody in Israel is looking for and that something is you and your family!"

²¹Saul answered, "But I am a member of the family group of Benjamin. It is the smallest family group in Israel. And my family is the smallest in the family group of Benjamin. Why do you say Israel wants me?"

²²Then Samuel took Saul and his servant to the eating area. About 30 people had been invited to eat together and share the sacrifice. Samuel gave Saul and his servant the most important place at the table. ²³Samuel said to the cook, "Bring the meat I gave you. It is the share I told you to save."

²⁴The cook brought out the thigh* and put it on the table in front of Saul. Samuel said, "Eat the meat that was put in front of you. It was saved for you for this special time when I called the people together." So Saul ate with Samuel that day.

²⁵After they finished eating, they came down from the place for worship* and went

a little bit of money Literally, "1/4 shekel of silver." This was about 1/10 ounce of silver.

man of God A prophet, a person that God sent to speak to the people.

seer Another name for a prophet. This shows that prophets often saw their message from God in some special way.

place for worship Literally, "high place."

anoint To pour olive oil on a person's head to show he was chosen by God to be a king, priest, or prophet.

thigh This was probably the left thigh that was reserved for important guests. The right thigh was reserved for the priest that sacrificed the animal. This priest helped kill the animal and put the fat from the animal on the altar as a gift to God.

back to town. Samuel made a bed for Saul on the roof,* and Saul went to sleep.

²⁶Early the next morning, Samuel shouted to Saul on the roof. Samuel said, “Get up. I will send you on your way.” Saul got up and went out of the house with Samuel.

²⁷Saul, his servant, and Samuel were walking together near the edge of town. Samuel said to Saul, “Tell your servant to go on ahead of us. I have a message for you from God.” So the servant walked ahead of them.

Samuel Anoints Saul

10 Samuel took a jar of the special oil. Samuel poured the oil on Saul’s head. Samuel kissed Saul and said, “The Lord has anointed (*chosen*) you to be the leader over the people who belong to him. You will control the Lord’s people. You will save them from the enemies that are all around them. The Lord has anointed you to be ruler over his people. Here is a sign that will prove this is true:* ²After you leave me today, you will meet two men near Rachel’s tomb on the border of Benjamin at Zelzah. The two men will say to you, ‘Someone found the donkeys you were looking for. Your father stopped worrying about his donkeys. Now he is worrying about you. He is saying: What will I do about my son?’”

³Samuel said, “Then you will go until you come to the large oak tree at Tabor. Three men will meet you there. Those three men will be on their way to worship God at Bethel. One man will be carrying three young goats. The second man will be carrying three loaves of bread. And the third man will have a bottle of wine. ⁴These three men will say hello to you. They will offer you two loaves of bread. And you will accept those two loaves of bread from them. ⁵Then you will go to Gibeath Elohim. There is a Philistine fort in that place. When you come to this town, a group of

prophets will come out. These prophets will come down from the place for worship.*

They will be prophesying.* They will be playing harps, tambourines, flutes, and lyres.

⁶Then the Lord’s Spirit will come on you with great power. You will be changed. You will be like a different man. You will begin to prophesy with these prophets. ⁷After that happens, you can do whatever you choose to do. Why? Because God will be with you.

⁸“Go to Gilgal before me. Then I will come there to you. And I will offer burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. But you must wait seven days. Then I will come and tell you what to do.”

Saul Becomes Like the Prophets

⁹Just as Saul turned to leave Samuel, God turned Saul’s life around. All those things happened that day. ¹⁰Saul and his servant went to Gibeath Elohim. At that place, Saul met a group of prophets. God’s Spirit came on Saul with great power, and Saul prophesied with the prophets. ¹¹Some of the people who had known Saul before saw him prophesying* with the prophets. So they asked each other, “What has happened to Kish’s son? Is Saul also one of the prophets?”

¹²A man living in Gibeath Elohim said, “Yes! And it seems that he is their leader.”* That is why this became a famous saying: “Is Saul also one of the prophets?”

Saul Arrives Home

¹³After Saul finished prophesying,* he went to the place for worship [near his home].

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

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

¹⁵Saul’s uncle said, “Please tell me, what did Samuel say to you?”

Samuel made a bed for Saul on the roof This is from the Greek translation. The Hebrew has, “Samuel spoke with Saul on the roof.” In Israel the roofs were flat, and people used them like an extra room and for storing things.

You will control ... true These lines are from the ancient Greek translation. They are not in the Hebrew text.

place for worship Literally, “high place.”

prophesying Usually, this means “speaking for God.” But here this also means that the Spirit of God took control of the person and caused him to sing and dance.

Yes ... leader Literally, “And who is their father?” Often the man who taught and led other prophets was called “father.”

¹⁶Saul answered, “Samuel told us the donkeys were already found.” Saul did not tell his uncle everything. Saul did not tell him the things Samuel said about the kingdom.

Samuel Announces Saul as King

¹⁷Samuel told all the people of Israel to meet together with the Lord at Mizpah. ¹⁸Samuel told the people of Israel, “The Lord, the God of Israel says, ‘I led Israel out of Egypt. I saved you from Egypt’s control and from the other kingdoms that tried to hurt you.’ ¹⁹But today you have rejected your God. Your God saves you from all your troubles and problems. But you said, ‘No, we want a king to rule us.’ Now come, stand before the Lord in your families and family groups.”

²⁰Samuel brought all the family groups of Israel near. [Then Samuel began to choose the new king.] First, the family group of Benjamin was chosen. ²¹Samuel told each family in the family group of Benjamin to pass by. Matri’s family was chosen. Then Samuel told each man in Matri’s family to walk by. Saul son of Kish was chosen.

But when the people looked for Saul, they could not find him. ²²Then they asked the Lord, “Has Saul come here yet?”

The Lord said, “Saul is hiding behind the supplies.”

²³The people ran and took Saul out from behind the supplies. Saul stood up among the people. Saul was a head taller than any other person.

²⁴Samuel said to all the people, “See the man the Lord has chosen. There is no person like Saul among the people.”

Then the people shouted, “Long live the king!”

²⁵Samuel explained the rules of the kingdom to the people. He wrote the rules in a book. He put the book before the Lord. Then Samuel told the people to go home.

²⁶Saul also went to his home in Gibeah. God touched the hearts of brave men, and these brave men began to follow Saul. ²⁷But some troublemakers said, “How can this man save us?” They said bad things about Saul and

refused to bring gifts to him. But Saul said nothing.

Nahash, King of the Ammonites

Nahash, the king of the Ammonites, had been hurting the family groups of Gad and Reuben. Nahash poked out the right eye of each of the men. Nahash did not allow anyone to help them. Nahash king of the Ammonites poked out the right eye of every Israelite man living in the area east of the Jordan River. But 7,000 Israelite men ran away from the Ammonites and came to Jabesh Gilead.*

11 About a month later, Nahash the Ammonite and his army surrounded Jabesh Gilead. All the people of Jabesh said to Nahash, “If you will make a treaty with us, we will serve you.”

²But Nahash the Ammonite answered, “I will make a treaty with you people only if I can poke out the right eye of each person. Then all Israel will be ashamed!”

³The leaders of Jabesh said to Nahash, “Let us have seven days. We will send messengers through all Israel. If no one comes to help us, we will come up to you [and surrender to you].”

Saul Saves Jabesh Gilead

⁴The messengers came to Gibeah where Saul lived. They told the news to the people. The people cried loudly. ⁵Saul had been out in the field with his cows. Saul came in from the field and heard the people crying. Saul asked, “What’s wrong with the people? Why are they crying?”

Then the people told Saul what the messengers from Jabesh said. ⁶Saul listened to their story. Then God’s Spirit came on Saul with great power. Saul became very angry. ⁷Saul took a pair of cows and cut them in pieces. Then he gave the pieces of those cows to messengers. He ordered the messengers to carry the pieces throughout the land of Israel. He told them to give this message to the people of Israel: “Come follow Saul and

Nahash ... came to Jabesh Gilead This part is not in the standard Hebrew text, but is found in some ancient translations and in one of the ancient Hebrew scrolls from Qumran.

Samuel. If any person does not come and help them, then this same thing will happen to his cows!”

A great fear from the Lord came on the people. They all came together like one person. ⁸Saul gathered the men together at Bezek. There were 300,000 men from Israel and 30,000 men from Judah.

⁹Saul and his army told the messengers from Jabesh, “Tell the people at Jabesh in Gilead that by noon tomorrow, you will be saved.”

The messengers told Saul’s message to the people at Jabesh. The people at Jabesh were very happy. ¹⁰Then the people of Jabesh said to Nahash the Ammonite, “Tomorrow we will come to you. Then you can do anything you want to us.”

¹¹The next morning Saul separated his soldiers into three groups. At sunrise, Saul and his soldiers entered the Ammonite camp. Saul attacked while they were changing guards that morning. Saul and his soldiers defeated the Ammonites before noon. The Ammonite soldiers all ran away in different directions—no two soldiers stayed together.

¹²Then the people said to Samuel, “Where are the people who said they didn’t want Saul to rule as king? Bring those people here, and we will kill them!”

¹³But Saul said, “No! Don’t kill anyone today! The Lord saved Israel today!”

¹⁴Then Samuel said to the people, “Come, let’s go to Gilgal. At Gilgal we will again make Saul the king.”

¹⁵All the people went to Gilgal. There, in front of the Lord, the people made Saul king. They offered fellowship offerings to the Lord. Saul and all the Israelites had a great celebration.

Samuel Speaks About the King

12 Samuel said to all Israel: “I have done everything you wanted me to do. I have put a king over you. ²Now you have a king to lead you. I am old and gray, but my sons are here with you. I have been your leader since I was a young boy. ³Here I am. If I have done anything wrong, you must tell those things to the Lord and his chosen king. Did I steal

anyone’s cow or donkey? Did I hurt or cheat anyone? Did I ever take money, or even a pair of shoes, to do something wrong? If I did any of these things, then I will make it right.”

⁴The Israelites answered, “No! You never did anything bad to us. You never cheated us or took things from us!”

⁵Samuel said to the Israelites, “The Lord and his chosen king are witnesses today. They heard what you said. They know that you could find nothing wrong with me.” The people answered, “Yes! The Lord is witness!”

⁶Then Samuel said to the people, “The Lord has seen what happened. The Lord is the One who chose Moses and Aaron. And he is the one who brought your ancestors* out of Egypt. ⁷Now, stand there and I will tell you about the good things the Lord did for you and your ancestors.

⁸“Jacob went to Egypt. Later, the Egyptians made life hard for his descendants.* So they cried to the Lord for help. The Lord sent Moses and Aaron. Moses and Aaron took your ancestors out of Egypt and led them to live in this place.

⁹“But your ancestors* forgot the Lord their God. So the Lord let them become the slaves of Sisera. Sisera was the commander of the army at Hazor. Then the Lord let them become the slaves of the Philistines and the king of Moab. They all fought against your ancestors. ¹⁰But your ancestors cried to the Lord for help. They said, ‘We have sinned. We left the Lord, and we served the false gods Baal* and Ashtoreth.* But now save us from our enemies, and we will serve you.’

¹¹“So the Lord sent Jerub Baal (*Gideon*), Barak, Jephthah, and Samuel. The Lord saved you from your enemies around you. And you lived in safety. ¹²But then you saw Nahash king of the Ammonites coming to fight

ancestors Literally, “fathers.” This means a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

descendants A person’s children and their future families.

Baal The Canaanite people believed that this false god brought the rain and storms. They also thought that he made the land produce good crops.

Ashtoreth The Canaanite people thought that this false goddess could make people able to have babies. She was their goddess of love and war.

against you. You said, ‘No! We want a king to rule over us!’ You said that, even though the Lord your God was already your king! ¹³Now, here is the king you chose. The Lord put this king over you. ¹⁴You must fear and respect the Lord. You must serve him and obey his commands. You must not turn against him. You and the king ruling over you must follow the Lord your God. If you do those things, then God will save you.* ¹⁵But if you don’t obey the Lord and if you turn against him, then he will be against you. The Lord will destroy you and your king!

¹⁶“Now stand still and see the great thing the Lord will do before your eyes. ¹⁷Now is the time of the wheat harvest.* I will pray to the Lord. I will ask him to send thunder and rain. Then you will know you did a very bad thing against the Lord when you asked for a king.”

¹⁸So Samuel prayed to the Lord. That same day the Lord sent thunder and rain. And the people became very afraid of the Lord and Samuel. ¹⁹All the people said to Samuel, “Pray to the Lord your God for us, your servants. Don’t let us die! We have sinned many times. And now we have added to those sins—we have asked for a king.”

²⁰Samuel answered, “Don’t be afraid. It is true! You did all those bad things. But don’t stop following the Lord. Serve the Lord with all your heart. ²¹Idols are only statues—they can’t help you! So don’t worship them. Idols can’t help you or save you. They are nothing!

²²“But the Lord won’t leave his people. No, the Lord was pleased to make you his own people. So, for his own good name, he won’t leave you. ²³And as for me, I would never stop praying for you. If I stopped praying for you, then I would be sinning against the Lord. I will continue to teach you the right way to live a good life. ²⁴But you must honor the Lord. You must truly serve the Lord with all your heart. Remember the wonderful things he did for you! ²⁵But if you are stubborn and do

then God will save you This is from the ancient Greek translation.

time of ... harvest This was the dry time of year when no rains fell.

evil, then God will throw you and your king away—like sweeping dirt out with a broom.”

Saul Makes His First Mistake

13 At that time, Saul had been king one year. After Saul had ruled over Israel two years,* ²he chose 3,000 men from Israel. There were 2,000 men who stayed with him at Micmash in the hill country of Bethel. There were 1,000 men who stayed with Jonathan at Gibeah in Benjamin. Saul sent the other men in the army back home.

³Jonathan defeated the Philistines at their camp in Geba. The Philistines heard about this. They said, “The Hebrews have rebelled.”

Saul said, “Let the Hebrew people hear what happened.” So Saul told the men to blow trumpets through all the land of Israel. ⁴All the Israelites heard the news. They said, “Saul has killed the Philistine leader. Now the Philistines really hate the Israelites!”

The people of Israel were called to join Saul at Gilgal. ⁵The Philistines gathered to fight Israel. The Philistines camped at Micmash, east of Beth Aven. The Philistines had 3,000* chariots and 6,000 horse soldiers. There were so many Philistines that they were like sand on the seashore.

⁶The Israelites saw that they were in trouble. They felt trapped. They ran away to hide in caves and cracks in the rock. They hid among the rocks, in wells, and in other holes in the ground. ⁷Some Hebrews even went across the Jordan River to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul was still at Gilgal. All the men in his army were shaking with fear.

⁸Samuel said he would meet Saul at Gilgal. Saul waited there seven days. But Samuel had not yet come to Gilgal, and the soldiers began to leave Saul. ⁹So Saul said, “Bring me the burnt offerings and the fellowship offerings.” Then Saul offered the burnt offering. ¹⁰As soon as Saul finished offering that sacrifice, Samuel arrived. Saul went out to meet him.

Verse 1 Or, “Saul was ... 1 year(s) old when he became king. He ruled ... 2 years.” This verse is very hard to understand in Hebrew. Part of the numbers may be missing. This verse is not in the ancient Greek translation.

3,000 The Hebrew has, “30,000.”

¹¹Samuel asked, “What have you done?”

Saul answered, “I saw the soldiers leaving me. You were not here on time, and the Philistines were gathering at Micmash. ¹²I thought to myself, ‘The Philistines will come here and attack me at Gilgal. And I haven’t asked the Lord to help us yet! So I forced myself to offer the burnt offering.’”

¹³Samuel said, “You did a foolish thing! You did not obey the Lord your God! If you had obeyed God’s command, then he would have let your family rule Israel forever. ¹⁴But now your kingdom will not continue. The Lord was looking for a man who wants to obey him! The Lord has found that man—and the Lord is choosing him to be the new leader of his people. You didn’t obey the Lord’s command, so the Lord is choosing a new leader.” ¹⁵Then Samuel got up and left Gilgal.

The Battle at Micmash

Saul and the rest of his army left Gilgal. They went to Gibeah in Benjamin. Saul counted the men who were still with him. There were about 600 men. ¹⁶Saul, his son Jonathan, and the soldiers went to Geba in Benjamin.

The Philistines were camped at Micmash. ¹⁷The Philistines decided to punish the Israelites living in that area. So their best soldiers began the attack. The Philistine army split into three groups. One group went north on the road to Ophrah, near Shual. ¹⁸The second group went southeast on the road to Beth Horon. And the third group went east on the road to the border. That road looks over the Valley of Zeboim toward the desert.

¹⁹None of the people of Israel could make things from iron. There weren’t any blacksmiths* in Israel. The Philistines did not teach the Israelites how to make things from iron because the Philistines were afraid the Israelites would make iron swords and spears. ²⁰Only the Philistines could sharpen iron tools. So if the Israelites needed to sharpen their plows, hoes, axes or sickles, they had to go to the Philistines. ²¹The

Philistine blacksmiths charged $\frac{1}{3}$ ounce* of silver for sharpening plows and hoes. And they charged $\frac{1}{6}$ ounce* of silver for sharpening picks, axes and the iron tip on oxgoads.* ²²So, on the day of battle, none of the Israelite soldiers with Saul had iron swords or spears. Only Saul and his son Jonathan had iron weapons.

²³A group of Philistine soldiers guarded the mountain pass at Micmash.

Jonathan Attacks the Philistines

14 That day, Saul’s son Jonathan was talking with the young man who carried his weapons. Jonathan said, “Let’s go to the Philistine camp on the other side of the valley.” But Jonathan did not tell his father.

²Saul was sitting under a pomegranate* tree in Migron at the edge of the hill.* This was near the threshing floor* at that place. Saul had about 600 men with him. ³One the men was named Ahijah. Ahijah was a son of Ichabod’s brother Ahitub. Ichabod was the son of Phinehas. Phinehas was the son of Eli. Eli had been the Lord’s priest at Shiloh. Now Ahijah was the priest—Ahijah now wore the ephod.*

Those men did not know that Jonathan had left. ⁴Jonathan was planning to go through a pass to get to the Philistine camp. There was a large rock on each side of the pass. The large rock on one side was named Bozez. The large rock on the other side was named Seneh. ⁵One large rock stood looking north toward Micmash. The other large rock stood looking south toward Geba.

⁶Jonathan said to his young helper who carried his weapons, “Come on, let’s go to the

1/3 ounce Literally, “1 pim.”

1/6 ounce Literally, “ $\frac{1}{3}$ shekel.”

oxgoad(s) A sharp stick that a person used to make animals go the right way.

pomegranate A red fruit with many tiny seeds inside it. Each seed is covered with a soft, tasty part of the fruit.

edge of the hill Or, “the edge of Gibeah.”

threshing floor A place where grain is beaten or walked on to remove the hulls from the grain.

ephod A special coat a man wore to show that he was a priest or a priest’s helper.

blacksmiths Workers that make things from iron.

camp of those foreigners.* Maybe the Lord will use us to defeat these people! Nothing can stop the Lord—it doesn't matter if we have many soldiers or just a few soldiers."

⁷The young man who carried Jonathan's weapons said to him, "Do what you think is best. I am with you all the way."

⁸Jonathan said, "Let's go! We'll cross [the valley] and go to those Philistine guards. We'll let them see us. ⁹If they say to us, 'Stay there until we come to you,' we will stay where we are. We won't go up to them. ¹⁰But if the Philistine men say, 'Come up here,' we will climb up to them. Why? Because that will be a sign from God. That will mean that the Lord will allow us to defeat them."

¹¹So Jonathan and his helper let the Philistines see them. The Philistine guards said, "Look! The Hebrews are coming out of the holes they were hiding in!" ¹²The Philistines in the fort shouted to Jonathan and his helper, "Come up here. We'll teach you a lesson!"

Jonathan said to his helper, "Follow me up the hill. The Lord is letting Israel defeat the Philistines!"

^{13–14}So Jonathan climbed up the hill with his hands and feet. And his helper was right behind him. Jonathan and his helper attacked those Philistines. In the first attack, they killed 20 Philistines in an area about one-half acre in size. Jonathan fought the men who attacked from the front. And Jonathan's helper came behind him and killed the men who were only wounded.

¹⁵All of the Philistine soldiers became scared—the soldiers in the field, the soldiers in the camp, and the soldiers at the fort. Even the bravest soldiers were scared. The ground began to shake and that really scared the Philistine soldiers!

¹⁶Saul's guards at Gibeah in the land of Benjamin saw the Philistine soldiers running away in different ways. ¹⁷Saul said to the

army with him, "Count the men. I want to know who left camp."

They counted the men. Jonathan and his helper were gone.

¹⁸Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring God's Holy Box!*" (At that time God's Holy Box was there with the Israelites.) ¹⁹Saul was talking to Ahijah the priest. [Saul was waiting for advice from God.] But the noise and confusion in the Philistine camp was growing and growing. [Saul was becoming impatient.] Finally, Saul said to Ahijah the priest, "That's enough! Put your hand down [and stop praying]!"

²⁰Saul gathered his army together and went to the battle. The Philistine soldiers were really confused! They were even fighting each other with their swords! ²¹There were Hebrews who served the Philistines in the past and who stayed in the Philistine camp. But now these Hebrews joined the Israelites with Saul and Jonathan. ²²All the Israelites who had hidden in the hill country of Ephraim heard the Philistine soldiers were running away. So these Israelites also joined in the battle and began chasing the Philistines.

²³So the Lord saved the Israelites that day. The battle moved on past Beth Aven. The whole army was with Saul—he now had about 10,000 men. The battle spread to every city in the hill country of Ephraim.*

Saul Makes Another Mistake

²⁴But Saul made a big mistake that day.* The Israelites were tired and hungry. This was because Saul forced the people to make this promise: Saul said, "If any man eats food before evening comes and before I finish defeating my enemies, then that man will be punished!" So none of the Israelite soldiers ate any food.

^{25–26}Because of the fighting, the people went into some woods. Then they saw a

Holy Box The Box of the Agreement, the box that contained the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments written on them and the other things that proved God was with the people of Israel during their time in the Sinai Desert.

The whole army ... Ephraim These words are in the ancient Greek translation, but not in the Hebrew.

But Saul ... that day These words are in the ancient Greek translation, but not in the Hebrew.

foreigners Literally, "uncircumcised." This showed these people were not Israelites and had not shared in their special agreement with God.

honeycomb on the ground. The Israelites went up to the honeycomb, but they didn't eat any of it. They were afraid to break the promise. ²⁷But Jonathan didn't know about that promise. Jonathan didn't hear his father force the people to make that promise. Jonathan had a stick in his hand. He dipped the end of the stick into the honeycomb and pulled out some honey. He ate the honey and began to feel much better.

²⁸One of the soldiers told Jonathan, "Your father forced the soldiers to make a special promise. Your father said that any man who eats today will be punished! [So the men have not eaten anything.] That is why the men are weak."

²⁹Jonathan said, "My father has brought a lot of trouble to the land! See how much better I feel after just tasting a little of this honey! ³⁰It would have been much better for the men to eat the food that they took from their enemies today. We could have killed many more Philistines!"

³¹That day the Israelites defeated the Philistines. They fought them all the way from Micmash to Aijalon. So the people were very tired and hungry. ³²They had taken sheep, cows, and calves from the Philistines. Now the people of Israel were so hungry they killed the animals on the ground and ate them. And the blood was still in the animals!

³³A person said to Saul, "Look! The men are sinning against the Lord. They're eating meat that still has blood in it!"

Saul said, "You have sinned! Roll a large stone over here. Now!" ³⁴Then Saul said, "Go to the men and tell them each person must bring his bull and sheep to me. Then the men must kill their bulls and sheep here. Don't sin against the Lord! Don't eat meat that still has blood in it."

That night every person brought his animals and killed them there. ³⁵Then Saul built an altar for the Lord. Saul himself began building that altar for the Lord!

³⁶Saul said, "Let's go after the Philistines tonight. We will take everything from them! We will kill them all!"

The army answered, "Do whatever you think is best."

But the priest said, "Let's ask God."

³⁷So Saul asked God, "Should I go chase the Philistines? Will you let us defeat the Philistines?" But God did not answer Saul that day.

³⁸So Saul said, "Bring all the leaders to me! Let's find who did the sin today. ³⁹I swear (*promise*) by the Lord who saves Israel, even if my own son Jonathan did the sin, he must die." None of the people said a word.

⁴⁰Then Saul said to all the Israelites, "You stand on this side. I and my son Jonathan will stand on the other side."

The soldiers answered, "As you wish, sir!"

⁴¹Then Saul prayed, "Lord, God of Israel, why haven't you answered your servant today? If I or my son Jonathan have sinned, Lord God of Israel, give Urim. If your people Israel have sinned, give Thummim.*

Saul and Jonathan were chosen, and the people went free. ⁴²Saul said, "Throw them again to show who is guilty—me or my son Jonathan." Jonathan was chosen.

⁴³Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done."

Jonathan told Saul, "I only tasted a little honey from the end of my stick. Should I die for doing that?"

⁴⁴Saul said, "I made a promise and asked God to punish me if I didn't keep my promise! Jonathan must die!"

⁴⁵But the soldiers said to Saul, "Jonathan led Israel to a great victory today. Must Jonathan die? Never! We swear (*promise*) by the living God that [no one will hurt Jonathan]—not one hair of Jonathan's head will fall to the ground! God helped Jonathan fight against the Philistines today!" So the people saved Jonathan. He was not put to death.

⁴⁶Saul did not chase the Philistines. The Philistines went back to their place.

Urim ... Thummim The priest used Urim and Thummim to learn God's answer to questions. We don't know exactly what they were, but they were used like lots—stones, sticks, or bones that were thrown like dice to help people make decisions.

Saul Fights Israel's Enemies

⁴⁷Saul took full control of Israel. Saul fought all the enemies that lived around Israel. Saul fought Moab, the Ammonites, Edom, the king of Zobah, and the Philistines. Saul defeated Israel's enemies wherever he went. ⁴⁸Saul was very brave. Saul saved Israel from all the enemies who tried to take things from the people of Israel. Saul defeated even the Amalekites!

⁴⁹Saul's sons were Jonathan, Ishvi and Malki Shua. Saul's older daughter was named Merab. Saul's younger daughter was named Michal. ⁵⁰Saul's wife was named Ahinoam. Ahinoam was the daughter of Ahimaaz.

The commander of Saul's army was named Abner son of Ner. Ner was Saul's uncle. ⁵¹Saul's father Kish and Abner's father Ner were sons of Abiel.

⁵²Saul was brave all his life. He fought hard against the Philistines. Any time Saul saw a man who was strong or brave, he took that man and put him into the group of soldiers that stayed near the king and protected him.

Saul Destroys the Amalekites

15 ¹One day, Samuel said to Saul, "The Lord sent me to anoint* you king over his people Israel. Now listen to the Lord's message. ²The Lord All-Powerful says: 'When the Israelites came out of Egypt, the Amalekites tried to stop them from going to Canaan. I saw what the Amalekites did. ³Now, go fight against the Amalekites. You must completely destroy the Amalekites and everything that belongs to them. Don't let anything live; you must kill all the men and women and all of their children and little babies. You must kill all of their cows and sheep and all of their camels and donkeys.'"

⁴Saul gathered the army together at Telaim. There were 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 other men. That includes the men from Judah. ⁵Then Saul went to the city of Amalek and waited in the valley. ⁶Saul said to the Kenite people, "Go away, leave the Amalekites. Then

I won't destroy you with the Amalekites. You showed kindness to the Israelites when they came out of Egypt." So the Kenite people left the Amalekites.

⁷Saul defeated the Amalekites. He fought them and chased them all the way from Havilah to Shur, at the border of Egypt. ⁸Agag was the king of the Amalekites. Saul captured Agag alive. Saul let Agag live, but he killed all the men in Agag's army. ⁹Saul and the Israelite soldiers felt bad about destroying everything. So they let Agag live. They also kept the fat cows, the best sheep, and the lambs. They kept everything that was worth keeping. They didn't want to destroy those things. They destroyed only the things that were not worth keeping.

Samuel Tells Saul About His Sin

¹⁰Then Samuel received a message from the Lord. ¹¹The Lord said, "Saul has stopped following me. So I am sorry that I made Saul king. He is not doing what I tell him." Samuel became angry and cried to the Lord all night.

¹²Samuel got up early the next morning and went to meet Saul. But the people told Samuel, "Saul went to the town in Judah named Carmel. Saul went there to set up a stone monument to honor himself. Saul is traveling around to several places and will finally go down to Gilgal."

So Samuel went to the place where Saul was. Saul had just offered the first part of the things he took from the Amalekites. Saul was offering them as a burnt offering to the Lord.* ¹³Samuel went to Saul. Saul greeted him. Saul said, "Lord bless you! I obeyed the Lord's commands."

¹⁴But Samuel said, "Then what is that sound I hear? Why do I hear sheep and cattle?"

¹⁵Saul said, "The soldiers took them from the Amalekites. The soldiers saved the best sheep and cattle to burn as sacrifices* to the Lord your God. But we destroyed everything else."

Saul had just offered ... Lord This is from the ancient Greek translation. It is not in the standard Hebrew text.

sacrifice(s) A gift to God. Usually it was a special animal that was killed and burned on an altar.

anoint To pour olive oil on a person's head to show he was chosen by God to be a king, priest, or prophet.

¹⁶Samuel said to Saul, “Stop! Let me tell you what the Lord said to me last night.”

Saul answered, “Fine, tell me what he said.”

¹⁷Samuel said, “In the past, you thought you were not important. But then you became the leader of the family groups of Israel. The Lord chose you to be king over Israel. ¹⁸The Lord sent you on a special mission. The Lord said, ‘Go and destroy all of the Amalekites. They are evil people. Destroy them all! Fight them until they are completely finished!’ ¹⁹But you didn’t listen to the Lord! Why? You wanted to keep those things, so you did what the Lord said is bad!”

²⁰Saul said, “But I did obey the Lord! I went where the Lord sent me. I destroyed all the Amalekites! I brought back only one person—their king Agag. ²¹And the soldiers took the best sheep and cattle to sacrifice* to the Lord your God at Gilgal!”

²²But Samuel answered, “Which pleases the Lord more: burnt offerings and sacrifices* or obeying the Lord’s command? It is better to obey God than to offer sacrifices to him. It is better to listen to God than to offer the fat from rams. ²³Refusing to obey is as bad as the sin of sorcery.* Being stubborn and doing what you want is like the sin of worshiping idols. You refused to obey the Lord’s command. For this reason, the Lord now refuses to accept you as king.”

²⁴Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned. I did not obey the Lord’s commands, and I did not do what you told me. I was afraid of the people, and I did what they said. ²⁵Now I beg you, forgive me for doing this sin. Come back with me, so I may worship the Lord.”

²⁶But Samuel said to Saul, “I won’t go back with you. You refused the Lord’s command, and now the Lord refuses you as king of Israel.”

²⁷When Samuel turned to leave, Saul caught Samuel’s robe. The robe tore. ²⁸Samuel said to Saul, “You tore my robe. In

the same way, the Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today. The Lord has given the kingdom to one of your friends. This man is a better person than you. ²⁹The Lord is the God of Israel. The Lord lives forever. The Lord does not lie or change his mind. The Lord is not like a man who changes his mind.”

³⁰Saul answered, “All right, I sinned! But please come back with me. Show me some respect in front of the leaders and the people of Israel. Come back with me so I may worship the Lord your God.” ³¹Samuel went back with Saul, and Saul worshiped the Lord.

³²Samuel said, “Bring Agag, the king of the Amalekites, to me.”

Agag came to Samuel. Agag was tied with chains. Agag thought, “Surely he won’t kill me.”*

³³But Samuel said to Agag, “Your sword took babies from their mothers. So now, your mother will have no children.” And Samuel cut Agag to pieces before the Lord at Gilgal.

³⁴Then Samuel left and went to Ramah. And Saul went up to his home in Gibeah. ³⁵After that Samuel never saw Saul again all his life. Samuel was very sad for Saul. And the Lord was very sorry that he had made Saul king of Israel.

Samuel Goes to Bethlehem

16 The Lord said to Samuel, “How long will you feel sorry for Saul? You are feeling sorry for him, even after I told you that I refuse to let Saul be the king of Israel! Fill your horn* with oil and go to Bethlehem. I am sending you to a man named Jesse. Jesse lives in Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be the new king.”

²But Samuel said, “If I go, Saul will hear the news. Then he will try to kill me.”

The Lord said, “Go to Bethlehem. Take a young calf with you. Say, ‘I have come to

sacrifice(s) A gift to God. Usually it was a special animal that was killed and burned on an altar.

sorcery When a person tries to use the power of demons and bad spirits to do magic.

“Surely ... kill me Or, “This treatment is worse than death.”

horn An animal’s horn is hollow and was often used like a bottle.

make a sacrifice* to the Lord.’³ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice. Then I will show you what to do. You must anoint* the person I show you.”

⁴Samuel did what the Lord told him to do. Samuel went to Bethlehem. The elders (*leaders*) of Bethlehem shook with fear. They met Samuel and asked, “Do you come in peace?”

⁵Samuel answered, “Yes, I come in peace. I come to make a sacrifice* to the Lord. Prepare yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me.” Samuel prepared Jesse and his sons. Then Samuel invited them to come and share the sacrifice.

⁶When Jesse and his sons arrived, Samuel saw Eliab. Samuel thought, “Surely this is the man that the Lord has chosen!”

⁷But the Lord said to Samuel, “Eliab is tall and handsome. But don’t think about things like that. God does not look at the things people see. People look only at the outside of a person, but the Lord looks at his heart. Eliab is not the right man.”

⁸Then Jesse called his second son, Abinadab. Abinadab walked by Samuel. But Samuel said, “No, this is not the man that the Lord chose.”

⁹Then Jesse told Shammah to walk by Samuel. But Samuel said, “No, the Lord did not choose this man, either.”

¹⁰Jesse showed seven of his sons to Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen any of these men.”

¹¹Then Samuel asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?”

Jesse answered, “No, I have another son—my youngest, but he is out taking care of the sheep.”

Samuel said, “Send for him. Bring him here. We will not sit down to eat until he arrives.”

¹²Jesse sent someone to get his youngest son. This son was a good-looking, red-faced* young man. He was very handsome.

sacrifice(s) A gift to God. Usually it was a special animal that was killed and burned on an altar.

anoint To pour olive oil on a person’s head to show he was chosen by God to be a king, priest, or prophet.

red-faced Or “tanned” or possibly, “red-haired.” The Hebrew word means “red” or “ruddy.”

The Lord said to Samuel, “Get up and anoint* him. He is the one.”

¹³Samuel took the horn* with the oil in it, and poured the special oil on Jesse’s youngest son in front of his brothers. The Lord’s Spirit came on David with great power from that day on. Then Samuel went back home to Ramah.

A Bad Spirit Bothers Saul

¹⁴The Lord’s Spirit left Saul. Then the Lord sent a bad spirit to Saul. It caused him much trouble. ¹⁵Saul’s servants said to him, “A bad spirit from God is bothering you. ¹⁶Give us the command and we will look for someone who can play the harp. If the bad spirit from the Lord comes on you, this person will play music for you. Then you will feel better.”

¹⁷So Saul said to his servants, “Find a person who plays music well and bring him to me.”

¹⁸One of the servants said, “There is a man named Jesse living in Bethlehem. I saw Jesse’s son. He knows how to play the harp. He is also a brave man and fights well. He is smart and handsome. And the Lord is with him.”

¹⁹So Saul sent messengers to Jesse. They told Jesse, “You have a son named David. He takes care of your sheep. Send him to me.”

²⁰So Jesse got some things as a gift for Saul. Jesse got a donkey, some bread and a bottle of wine, and a young goat. Jesse gave those things to David and sent him to Saul. ²¹So David went to Saul and stood in front of him. Saul loved David very much. David became the helper who carried Saul’s weapons. ²²Saul sent a message to Jesse. “Let David stay and serve me. I like him very much.”

²³Any time the bad spirit from God came on Saul, David would take his harp and play it. The bad spirit would leave Saul and he would begin to feel better.

Goliath Challenges Israel

17 The Philistines gathered their armies together for war. They met at Socoh in Judah. Their camp was between Socoh and Azekah, at a town called Ephes Dammim.

horn An animal’s horn is hollow and often used like a bottle.

²Saul and the Israelite soldiers also gathered together. Their camp was in the Valley of Elah. Saul's soldiers were lined up and ready to fight the Philistines. ³The Philistines were on one hill. The Israelites were on the other hill. And the valley was between them.

⁴The Philistines had a champion fighter named Goliath. Goliath was from Gath. Goliath was over 9 feet* tall. Goliath came out of the Philistine camp. ⁵He had a bronze helmet on his head. He wore a coat of armor that was made like the scales on a fish. This armor was made of bronze and weighed about 125 pounds.* ⁶Goliath wore bronze protectors on his legs. He had a bronze javelin* tied on his back. ⁷The wooden part of Goliath's spear was as big as a weaver's rod. The spear's blade weighed 15 pounds.* Goliath's helper walked in front of him, carrying Goliath's shield.

⁸Each day Goliath would come out and shout a challenge to the Israelite soldiers. He would say, "Why are all of your soldiers lined up ready for battle? You are Saul's servants. I am a Philistine. So choose one man and send him to fight me. ⁹If that man kills me, then he wins and we Philistines will become your slaves. But if I kill your man, then I win, and you will become our slaves. You will have to serve us!"

¹⁰The Philistine also said, "Today I stand and make fun of the army of Israel! I dare you to send me one of your men and let us fight!"

¹¹Saul and the Israelite soldiers heard the things Goliath said. And they were very afraid.

David Goes to the Battle Front

¹²David was the son of Jesse. Jesse was from the Ephrathah family in Bethlehem, Judah. Jesse had eight sons. In Saul's time Jesse was an old man. ¹³Jesse's three oldest

sons went with Saul to the war. The first son was Eliab. The second son was Abinadab. And the third son was Shammah. ¹⁴David was the youngest son. The three oldest sons were in Saul's army. ¹⁵But David left Saul from time to time to take care of his father's sheep at Bethlehem.

¹⁶The Philistine (*Goliath*) came out every morning and evening and stood before the Israelite army. Goliath made fun of Israel like this for 40 days.

¹⁷One day, Jesse said to his son David, "Take this basket* of cooked grain and these ten loaves of bread to your brothers in the camp. ¹⁸Also take these ten pieces of cheese for the officer who commands your brothers' group of 1,000 soldiers. See how your brothers are doing. Bring back something to show me your brothers are all right. ¹⁹Your brothers are with Saul and all the Israelite soldiers in the Valley of Elah. They are there to fight against the Philistines."

²⁰Early in the morning, David let another shepherd take care of the sheep. David took the food and left as Jesse had told him to. David drove their wagon to the camp. The soldiers were going out to their battle positions just as David arrived. The soldiers began shouting their war cry. ²¹The Israelites and Philistines were lined up and ready for battle.

²²David left the food and things with the man who kept supplies. David ran to the place where the Israelite soldiers were. David asked about his brothers. ²³While David was talking with his brothers, the Philistine champion fighter came out from the Philistine army. This was Goliath, the Philistine from Gath. Goliath shouted things against Israel as usual. David heard what he said.

²⁴The Israelite soldiers saw Goliath and ran away. They were all afraid of Goliath. ²⁵One of the Israelite men said, "Did you see that guy! Look at him! Goliath comes out and makes fun of Israel again and again. Whoever kills that guy will get rich! King Saul will give him a lot of money. Saul will also let his

over 9 feet Literally, "6 cubits and 1 span." Josephus, the ancient Greek translation, and one of the ancient Hebrew scrolls from Qumran all have "4 cubits and 1 span," or about 6 feet 9 inches.

125 pounds Literally, "5,000 shekels."

javelin A small spear.

15 pounds Literally, "600 shekels."

basket Literally, "ephah."

daughter marry the man who kills Goliath. And Saul will also make that man's family free in Israel."

²⁶David asked the men standing near him, "What did he say? What is the reward for killing this Philistine and taking away this shame from Israel? Who is this Goliath anyway? He is only some foreigner.* Goliath is nothing but a Philistine. Why does he think he can speak against the army of the living God?"

²⁷So the Israelite told David about the reward for killing Goliath. ²⁸David's oldest brother Eliab heard David talking with the soldiers. Eliab became angry at David. Eliab asked David, "Why did you come here? Who did you leave those few sheep with in the desert? I know why you came down here! You didn't want to do what you were told to do. You just wanted to come down here to watch the battle!"

²⁹David said, "What did I do now? I didn't do anything wrong! I was only talking." ³⁰David turned to some other people and asked them the same questions. They gave David the same answers as before.

³¹Some men heard David talking. They took David to Saul and told him what David had said. ³²David said to Saul, "People shouldn't let Goliath discourage them. I am your servant. I will go fight this Philistine!"

³³Saul answered, "You can't go out and fight against this Philistine (*Goliath*). You're not even a soldier!* And Goliath has been fighting in wars since he was a boy."

³⁴But David said to Saul, "I, your servant, was taking care of my father's sheep. A lion and a bear came and took a sheep from the flock. ³⁵Each time I chased that wild animal. I attacked it and took the sheep from its mouth. That wild animal jumped on me, but I caught it by the fur under its mouth. And I hit it and killed it. ³⁶I killed a lion and a bear like that! And I will kill that foreigner,* Goliath, just

like them! Goliath will die because he made fun of the army of the living God. ³⁷The Lord saved me from the lion and the bear. The Lord will also save me from this Philistine."

Saul said to David, "Go and may the Lord be with you." ³⁸Saul put his own clothes on David. Saul put a bronze helmet on David's head and armor* on David's body. ³⁹David put on the sword and tried to walk around. David tried to wear Saul's uniform, but David was not used to all those heavy things.

David said to Saul, "I can't fight in these things. I'm not used to them." So David took them all off. ⁴⁰David took his walking stick in his hand and went to find five smooth stones from the stream. He put the five stones in his shepherd's bag and held his sling* in his hand. And then he went to meet the Philistine (*Goliath*).

David Kills Goliath

⁴¹The Philistine (*Goliath*) slowly walked closer and closer to David. Goliath's helper walked in front of him, carrying the shield. ⁴²Goliath looked at David [and laughed]. Goliath saw that David was only a handsome, red-faced* boy* ⁴³Goliath said to David, "What is that stick for? Did you come to chase me away like a dog?" Then Goliath used the names of his gods to say curses against David. ⁴⁴Goliath said to David, "Come here, and I'll feed your body to the birds and wild animals!"

⁴⁵David said to the Philistine (*Goliath*), "You come to me using sword, spear, and javelin.* But I come to you in the name of the Lord All-Powerful, the God of the armies of Israel! You have said bad things about him. ⁴⁶Today the Lord will let me defeat you! I will kill you. Today I will cut off your head and feed your body to the birds and wild animals. We will do that to all the other

foreigner Literally, "uncircumcised." This shows Goliath was a foreigner and did not share in the agreement God made with the people of Israel.

You're not even a soldier Or, "You are only a boy!" The Hebrew word for "boy" often means "servant" or "the helper that carries a soldier's weapons."

armor The heavy clothes made from leather and metal that a soldier wore to protect himself.

sling A strip of leather for throwing rocks.

red-faced Or, "tanned" or possibly "red-haired." The Hebrew word means "red" or "ruddy."

boy Or, "teenager" or "soldier's helper."

javelin A small spear.

Philistines too! Then all the world will know there is a God in Israel! ⁴⁷All the people gathered here will know that the Lord does not need swords or spears to save people. The battle belongs to the Lord! And the Lord will help us defeat all of you Philistines.”

⁴⁸Goliath the Philistine started to attack David. Goliath slowly walked closer and closer towards David. But David ran out to meet Goliath.

⁴⁹David took out a stone from his bag. He put it in his sling* and swung the sling. The stone flew from the sling and hit Goliath right between the eyes. The stone sank deep into his head, and Goliath fell to the ground—face down.

⁵⁰So David defeated the Philistine with only a sling* and one stone! He hit the Philistine and killed him. David didn't have a sword, ⁵¹so he ran and stood beside the Philistine. Then David took Goliath's own sword out of its sheath* and used it to cut off Goliath's head. And that is how David killed the Philistine.

When the other Philistines saw their hero was dead, they turned and ran. ⁵²The soldiers of Israel and Judah shouted and started chasing the Philistines. The Israelites chased the Philistines all the way to the city limits of Gath and to the gates of Ekron. They killed many of the Philistines. Their bodies were scattered along the Shaaraim road all the way to Gath and Ekron. ⁵³After chasing the Philistines, the Israelites came back to the Philistine camp and took many things from that camp.

⁵⁴David took the Philistine's head to Jerusalem, but David kept the Philistine's weapons at home.

Saul Begins to Fear David

⁵⁵Saul watched David go out to fight Goliath. Saul spoke to Abner, the commander of the army. “Abner, who is that young man's father?”

Abner answered, “I swear I don't know, sir.”

sling A strip of leather for throwing rocks.

sheath A case for carrying a sword.

⁵⁶King Saul said, “Find out who that young man's father is.”

⁵⁷When David came back after killing Goliath, Abner brought him to Saul. David was still holding the Philistine's head.

⁵⁸Saul asked him, “Young man, who is your father?”

David answered, “I am the son of your servant Jesse, from Bethlehem.”

David and Jonathan Become Close Friends

18 As soon as David finished talking with Saul, Jonathan developed a strong bond with David.* Jonathan loved David as much as he loved himself.

²Saul kept David with him from that day on. Saul did not let David go back home to his father.

³Jonathan and David made a special agreement because he loved him as much as he loved himself. ⁴Jonathan took off the coat he was wearing and gave it to David. Jonathan gave David his whole uniform—including his sword, and his bow, and even his belt.

Saul Notices David's Success

⁵Saul sent David to fight in many different battles. David was very successful. Then Saul put David in charge of the soldiers. This pleased everyone, even Saul's officers! ⁶David would go out to fight against the Philistines. On the way home after the battles, women in every town in Israel would come out to meet David. They laughed and danced and played drums and lutes.* They did this right in front of Saul! ⁷The women sang,

“Saul has killed thousands of enemies.
But David has killed tens of thousands!”

⁸The women's song upset Saul and he became very angry. Saul thought, “The women say David killed tens of thousands [of enemies]. And they say I killed only thousands [of enemies].” ⁹So from that time on, Saul watched David very closely.

Jonathan ... with David Literally, “Jonathan's soul was tied to David's soul”.

lutes A musical instrument with strings like a harp.

Saul Is Afraid of David

¹⁰The next day, a bad spirit from God took control of Saul. Saul became wild* in his house. David played the harp like he usually did. ¹¹But Saul had a spear in his hand. Saul thought, “I’ll pin David to the wall.” Saul threw the spear two times. But David jumped out of the way both times.

¹²The Lord was with David. And the Lord had left Saul. So Saul was afraid of David. ¹³Saul sent David away from him. Saul made David a commander over 1,000 soldiers. David led the soldiers in battle. ¹⁴The Lord was with David. So David was successful in everything. ¹⁵Saul saw that David was very successful. And Saul became more and more afraid of David.

¹⁶But all the people of Israel and Judah loved David. They loved him because he led them into battle and fought for them.

Saul Wants His Daughter to Marry David

¹⁷But Saul wanted to kill David. Saul thought of a way to trick David. Saul said to David, “Here is my oldest daughter, Merab. I will let you marry her. Then you can become a powerful soldier. You will be like a son to me! Then you will go and fight the Lord’s battles!” [This was a trick.] Saul was really thinking, “Now I won’t have to kill David. I will let the Philistines kill him for me!”

¹⁸But David said, “I am not from an important family! And I am not an important man! I can’t marry the king’s daughter.”

¹⁹So when the time came for Saul’s daughter Merab to marry David, Saul let her marry Adriel from Meholah.

²⁰Saul’s other daughter Michal loved David. The people told Saul that Michal loved David. This made Saul happy. ²¹Saul thought, “I will use Michal to trap David. I will let Michal marry David. And then I will let the Philistines kill him.” So Saul said to David a second time, “You can marry my daughter today.”

Saul became wild Or, “Saul prophesied.” The Hebrew word means that the person lost control of the things he said and did. Usually this meant that God was using the person to give a special message to other people.

²²Saul gave an order to his officers. Saul told them, “Speak to David in private. Tell him, ‘Look, the king likes you. His officers like you. You should marry his daughter.’”

²³Saul’s officers said those things to David. But David answered, “Do you think it is easy to become the king’s son-in-law? [I don’t have the money to pay for the king’s daughter!] I am just a poor, ordinary guy.”

²⁴Saul’s officers told Saul what David said. ²⁵Saul told them, “Say this to David, ‘David, the king doesn’t want you to pay money for his daughter!* Saul wants to get even with his enemy. So the price for marrying his daughter is 100 Philistine foreskins.’” That was Saul’s secret plan. Saul thought the Philistines would kill David.

²⁶Saul’s officers told those things to David. David was happy that he had a chance to become the king’s son-in-law, so he did something immediately. ²⁷David and his men went out to fight the Philistines. They killed 200* Philistines. David took these Philistine foreskins and gave them to Saul. David did this because he wanted to become the king’s son-in-law.

Saul let David marry his daughter Michal. ²⁸Saul saw that the Lord was with David. Saul also saw that his daughter, Michal, loved David. ²⁹So Saul became even more afraid of David. Saul was against David all that time.

³⁰The Philistine commanders continued to go out to fight the Israelites. But every time, David defeated them. David was Saul’s best officer! David became famous.

Jonathan Helps David

19 Saul told his son Jonathan and his officers to kill David. But Jonathan liked David very much. ^{2–3}Jonathan warned David. “Be careful! Saul is looking for a chance to kill you. In the morning, go into the field and hide. I will go out into the field with my father. We will stand in the field where you are hiding. I will talk to my father about you. Then I will tell you what I learn.”

money for his daughter In Bible times a man usually had to give money to a woman’s father before he could marry her.

200 The ancient Greek translation has “100.”

⁴Jonathan talked to his father Saul. Jonathan said good things about David. Jonathan said, “You are the king. David is your servant. David hasn’t done anything wrong to you. So don’t do anything wrong to him. David has always been good to you.”
⁵David risked his life when he killed the Philistine (*Goliath*). The Lord won a great victory for all Israel. You saw it, and you were happy. Why do you want to hurt David? He’s innocent. There is no reason to kill him!”

⁶Saul listened to Jonathan. Saul made a promise. Saul said, “As surely as the Lord lives, David won’t be put to death.”

⁷So Jonathan called David and told him everything that was said. Then Jonathan brought David to Saul. So David was with Saul like before.

Saul Again Tries to Kill David

⁸War started again and David went out to fight the Philistines. David defeated the Philistines, and they ran away from him. ⁹But a bad spirit from the Lord came on Saul. Saul was sitting in his house. Saul had his spear in his hand. David was playing the harp. ¹⁰Saul tried to throw his spear into David’s body and pin him to the wall. But David jumped out of the way. The spear missed David and stuck in the wall. That night, David ran away.

¹¹Saul sent men to David’s house. The men watched David’s house. They stayed there all night. They were waiting to kill David in the morning. But David’s wife Michal warned him. She said, “You must run away tonight and save your life. If you don’t, then you will be killed tomorrow.” ¹²Then Michal let David down out of a window. David escaped and ran away. ¹³Michal took the household god and put clothes on it. Then she put that statue in the bed. She also put goats’ hair on its head.

¹⁴Saul sent messengers to take David prisoner. But Michal said, “David is sick.”

¹⁵The men went and told Saul, but he sent the messengers back to see David. Saul told these men, “Bring David to me. Bring him lying on his bed if you must, even if it kills him.”

¹⁶The messengers went to David’s house. They went inside to get David, but they saw it was only a statue on the bed. And they saw its hair was only goat’s hair.

¹⁷Saul said to Michal, “Why did you trick me like this? You let my enemy escape! David has run away!”

Michal answered Saul, “David told me he would kill me if I didn’t help him escape!”

David Goes to the Camps at Ramah

¹⁸David escaped and ran away to Samuel at Ramah. David told Samuel everything that Saul had done to him. Then David and Samuel went to the camps ¹where the prophets stayed. David stayed there.

¹⁹Saul heard that David was there in the camps near Ramah. ²⁰Saul sent men to arrest David. But when those men came to the camps, there was a group of prophets prophesying.* Samuel was standing there leading the group. God’s Spirit came on Saul’s messengers and they began prophesying.

²¹Saul heard about this, so he sent other messengers. But they also began prophesying. So Saul sent messengers a third time. And they also began prophesying. ²²Finally, Saul himself went to Ramah. Saul came to the big well by the threshing floor* at Secu. Saul asked, “Where are Samuel and David?”

The people answered, “In the camps near Ramah.”

²³So Saul went out to the camps near Ramah. God’s Spirit also came on Saul, and Saul began prophesying.* Saul continued prophesying all the way to the camps at Ramah. ²⁴Saul even took off his clothes. Saul lay there naked all day and all night. So even Saul was prophesying there in front of Samuel.

That is why people say, “Is Saul also one of the prophets?”

prophesying Usually, this means “speaking for God.” But here this also means that the Spirit of God took control of the person and caused him to sing and dance.

threshing floor A place where grain is beaten or walked on to remove the hulls from the grain.

David and Jonathan Make an Agreement

20 David ran away from the camps near Ramah. David went to Jonathan and asked him, “What have I done wrong? What is my crime? Why is your father trying to kill me?”

²Jonathan answered, “That can’t be true! My father isn’t trying to kill you! My father doesn’t do anything without first telling me. It doesn’t matter if it is very important or just a small thing, my father always tells me. Why would my father refuse to tell me that he wants to kill you? No, it is not true!”

³But David answered, “Your father knows very well that I am your friend. Your father said to himself, ‘Jonathan must not know about it. If he knows, he will tell David.’ But as sure as you and the Lord are alive, I am very close to death!”

⁴Jonathan said to David, “I will do anything you want me to do.”

⁵Then David said, “Look, tomorrow is the New Moon Feast.* I am supposed to eat with the king. But let me hide in the field until the evening. ⁶If your father notices I am gone, tell him, ‘David wanted to go home to Bethlehem. His family is having its own feast for this monthly sacrifice. David asked me to let him run down to Bethlehem and join his family.’ ⁷If your father says, ‘Fine,’ then I am safe. But if your father becomes angry, then you will know that he wants to hurt me. ⁸Jonathan, be kind to me. I am your servant. You have made an agreement with me before the Lord. If I am guilty, then you may kill me yourself! But don’t take me to your father.”

⁹Jonathan answered, “No, never! If I learn that my father plans to hurt you, then I will warn you.”

¹⁰David said, “Who will warn me if your father says bad things to you?”

¹¹Then Jonathan said, “Come, let’s go out into the field.” So Jonathan and David went together into the field.

New Moon Feast The first day of the Jewish month. This was a special day of rest and worship. The people met together and shared in the fellowship offerings like those described in Lev. 7:16–21.

¹²Jonathan said to David, “I make this promise before the Lord, the God of Israel. I promise that I will learn how my father feels about you. I will learn if he feels good about you or not. Then, in three days, I will send a message to you in the field. ¹³If my father wants to hurt you, I will let you know. I will let you leave in safety. May the Lord punish me if I don’t do this. May the Lord be with you as he has been with my father. ¹⁴Be kind to me as long as I live. And after I die, ¹⁵don’t ever stop showing your kindness to my family. The Lord will destroy all your enemies from the earth. ¹⁶If at that time Jonathan’s family must be separated from David, then let it happen. May the Lord punish David’s enemies.”

¹⁷Then Jonathan asked David to repeat his promise of love for him. Jonathan did this because he loved David as much as he loved himself.

¹⁸Jonathan said to David, “Tomorrow is the New Moon Feast.* Your seat will be empty, so my father will see that you are gone. ¹⁹On the third day, go to the same place you hid when this trouble began. Wait by that hill. ²⁰On the third day, I will go to that hill and act like I am shooting at a target. I will shoot some arrows. ²¹Then I will tell the boy to go find the arrows. If everything is fine, then I will tell the boy, ‘You went too far! The arrows are closer to me. Come back and get them.’ If I say that, then you can come out of hiding. I promise, as surely as the Lord lives, you are safe. There is no danger. ²²But if there is trouble, then I will say to the boy, ‘The arrows are farther away. Go get them.’ If I say that, then you must leave. The Lord is sending you away. ²³Remember this agreement between you and me. The Lord is our witness forever!”

²⁴Then David hid in the field.

Saul’s Attitude at the Feast

The time for the New Moon Feast* came, and the king sat down to eat. ²⁵The king sat next to the wall where he usually sat. Jonathan sat across from Saul. Abner sat next to Saul. But David’s place was empty. ²⁶That day Saul said nothing. He thought, “Maybe

something happened to David so that he is not clean.*”

²⁷On the next day, the second day of the month, David’s place was empty again. Then Saul said to his son Jonathan, “Why didn’t Jesse’s son come to the New Moon Feast* yesterday or today?”

²⁸Jonathan answered, “David asked me to let him go to Bethlehem. ²⁹He said, ‘Let me go. Our family is having a sacrifice* in Bethlehem. My brother ordered me to be there. Now if I am your friend, please let me go and see my brothers.’ That is why David has not come to the king’s table.”

³⁰Saul was very angry with Jonathan. He said to Jonathan, “You are the son of a slave woman who refuses to obey. [And you are just like her.] I know you are on David’s side! You bring shame to yourself and to your mother. ³¹As long as Jesse’s son lives, you’ll never be king and have a kingdom. Now, bring David to me! He is a dead man!”

³²Jonathan asked his father, “Why should David be killed? What did he do wrong?”

³³But Saul threw his spear at Jonathan and tried to kill him. So Jonathan knew that his father wanted very much to kill David. ³⁴Jonathan became angry and left the table. Jonathan was so upset and angry at his father that Jonathan refused to eat any food on the second day of the feast. Jonathan was angry because Saul humiliated him and because Saul wanted to kill David.

David and Jonathan Say Goodbye

³⁵The next morning Jonathan went out to the field. He went to meet David just like they agreed to do. Jonathan brought a little boy with him. ³⁶Jonathan said to the boy, “Run. Go find the arrows I shoot.” The boy began to run, and Jonathan shot the arrows over his

head. ³⁷The boy ran to the place where the arrows fell. But Jonathan called, “The arrows are farther away!” ³⁸Then Jonathan shouted, “Hurry! Go get them! Don’t just stand there!” The boy picked up the arrows and brought them back to his master. ³⁹The boy knew nothing about what went on. Only Jonathan and David knew. ⁴⁰Jonathan gave his bow and arrows to the boy. Then Jonathan told the boy, “Go back to town.”

⁴¹The boy left, and David came out from the place he was hiding on the other side of the hill. David bowed with his face to the ground in front of Jonathan. David bowed three times. Then David and Jonathan kissed each other. They both cried together, but David cried more than Jonathan.

⁴²Jonathan said to David, “Go in peace. We used the Lord’s name and promised to be friends. We said that the Lord will be the witness between us and our descendants* forever.”

David Goes to See Ahimelech the Priest

21 Then David went away, and Jonathan went back to the town. ²David went to the town named Nob* to see Ahimelech the priest.

Ahimelech went out to meet David. Ahimelech was afraid for David. Ahimelech asked David, “Why are you alone? Why isn’t anyone with you?”

³David answered Ahimelech, “The king gave me a special order. He told me, ‘Don’t let anyone know about this mission. No person must know what I told you to do.’ I told my men where to meet me. ⁴Now, what food do you have with you? Give me five loaves of bread or whatever you have to eat.”

⁵The priest said to David, “I don’t have any ordinary bread here, but I do have some of the Holy Bread.* Your officers can eat it if they

clean Or, “acceptable.” Pure or able to be used in worshipping God. See Lev. 11–15 for the Old Testament rules about clean and unclean things.

New Moon Feast The first day of the Jewish month. This was a special day of rest and worship. The people met together and shared in the fellowship offerings like those described in Lev. 7:16–21.

sacrifice(s) A gift to God. Usually it was a special animal that was killed and burned on an altar.

descendants A person’s children and their future families.

Nob A city near Ranah where many priests lived. See 1 Sam. 22:19.

Holy Bread This was the special bread that was put in the Holy Tent. It is also called “shewbread” or “the bread of the Presence.” Normally, only the priests should eat this bread. See Lev. 24:5–9.

have not had sexual relations with any women.”*

⁶David answered the priest, “We have not been with any women. My men keep their bodies holy every time we go out to fight, even on ordinary missions.* And this is especially true today, when our work is so special.”

⁷There was no bread except the Holy Bread.* So the priest gave David that bread. This was the bread that the priests put on the holy table before the Lord. Each day they took this bread away and put fresh bread in its place.

⁸One of Saul’s officers was there that day. He was Doeg the Edomite. Doeg was the leader of Saul’s shepherds.* Doeg had been kept there before the Lord.*

⁹David asked Ahimelech, “Do you have a spear or sword here? The king’s business is very important. I had to leave quickly, and I didn’t bring my sword or any other weapon.”

¹⁰The priest answered, “The only sword here is the sword of Goliath the Philistine. It is the sword you took from him when you killed him in the Valley of Elah. That sword is behind the ephod,* wrapped in a cloth. You may take it if you want to.”

David said, “Give it to me. There is no sword like Goliath’s sword!”

David Runs Away to the Enemy at Gath

¹¹That day David ran away from Saul. David went to Achish king of Gath. ¹²Achish’s officers [did not like this. They] said, “This is David, the king of the land [of

Your officers ... women This would make the men unclean and not able to eat any food that had been made holy by offering it to God. See Lev. 7:21,15:1–33.

My men ... missions See 2 Sam. 11:11 and the rules in Deut. 23:9–14.

Holy Bread This was the special bread that was put in the Holy Tent. It is also called “shewbread” or “the bread of the Presence.” Normally, only the priests should eat this bread. See Lev. 24:5–9.

shepherds Or, “messengers.”

kept there before the Lord This might mean that Doeg was there as part of a special promise to God or some other religious reason. Or it might mean he was being held there because of some crime, such as accidentally killing a man.

ephod A special coat a man wore to show that he was a priest or a priest’s helper.

Israel]. He is the person the Israelites sing about. They dance and sing this song about him:

“Saul has killed thousands of enemies.
But David has killed tens of thousands!”

¹³David paid close attention to what they said. David was afraid of Achish, king of Gath. ¹⁴So David pretended to be crazy in front of Achish and his officers. While David was with them he acted like a crazy man. He spat on the doors of the gate. He let spit fall down his beard.

¹⁵Achish said to his officers, “Look at the man! He is crazy! Why did you bring him to me? ¹⁶I have enough crazy men. I don’t need you to bring this man to my house to act crazy in front of me! Don’t let this man come into my house again!”

David Goes to Different Places

22 David left Gath. David ran away to the cave* of Adullam. David’s brothers and relatives heard that David was at Adullam. They went to see David there. ²Many people joined David. There were men who were in some kind of trouble. And there were men who owed a lot of money. And there were men who were just not satisfied with life. All those kinds of people joined David, and David became their leader. David had about 400 men with him.

³David left Adullam and went to Mizpah in Moab. David said to the king of Moab, “Please let my father and mother come and stay with you until I learn what God is going to do to me.” ⁴So David left his parents with the king of Moab. David’s parents stayed with the king of Moab as long as David was at the fort.

⁵But the prophet Gad said to David, “Don’t stay in the fort. Go to the land of Judah.” So David left and went to Hereth Forest.

Saul Destroys Ahimelech’s Family

⁶Saul heard that his people had learned about David and his men. Saul was sitting under the tree on the hill at Gibeah. Saul had

cave Or possibly, “fortress.”

his spear in his hand. All of his officers were standing around him. ⁷Saul said to his officers that were standing around him, “Listen, men of Benjamin! Do you think the son of Jesse (*David*) will give you fields and vineyards? Do you think David will promote you and make you officers over 1,000 men and officers over 100 men? ⁸You men are plotting against me! You made secret plans. Not one of you told me about my son Jonathan. Not one of you told me that he made an agreement with the son of Jesse! Not one of you cares about me! Not one of you told me that my son Jonathan encouraged David. Jonathan told my servant David to hide and attack me! And that is what David is doing now!”

⁹Doeg the Edomite was standing there with Saul’s officers. Doeg said, “I saw Jesse’s son (*David*) at Nob. David came to see Ahimelech son of Ahitub. ¹⁰Ahimelech prayed to the Lord for David. Ahimelech also gave David food. And Ahimelech gave David the sword of Goliath the Philistine.”

¹¹Then King Saul ordered some men to bring the priest to him. Saul told them to bring Ahimelech son of Ahitub and all his relatives. Ahimelech’s relatives were priests at Nob. All of them came to the king. ¹²Saul said to Ahimelech, “Listen now, son of Ahitub.”

Ahimelech answered, “Yes, sir.”

¹³Saul said to Ahimelech, “Why did you and Jesse’s son (*David*) make secret plans against me? You gave David bread and a sword! You prayed to God for him. And right now, David is waiting to attack me!”

¹⁴Ahimelech answered, “David is very faithful to you. Not one of your other officers is as faithful as David. David is your own son-in-law. And David is the captain of your bodyguards. Your own family respects David. ¹⁵That was not the first time I prayed to God for David. Not at all. Don’t blame me or any of my relatives. We are your servants. I know nothing about what is happening.”

¹⁶But the king said, “Ahimelech, you and all your relatives must die!” ¹⁷Then the king told the guards at his side, “Go and kill the priests of the Lord. Do this because they are

on David’s side also. They knew David was running away, but they didn’t tell me!”

But the king’s officers refused to hurt the priests of the Lord.

¹⁸So the king gave the order to Doeg. Saul said, “Doeg, you go kill the priests.” So Doeg the Edomite went and killed the priests. That day Doeg killed 85 men who were priests.* ¹⁹Nob was the city of the priests. Doeg killed all the people of Nob. Doeg used his sword and killed men, women, children and small babies. And Doeg killed their cows, donkeys, and sheep.

²⁰But Abiathar escaped. Abiathar was the son of Ahimelech. Ahimelech was the son of Ahitub. Abiathar ran away and joined David. ²¹Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the Lord’s priests. ²²Then David told Abiathar, “I saw Doeg the Edomite at Nob that day. And I knew he would tell Saul! I am responsible for the death of your father’s family. ²³Stay with me. Don’t be afraid. Why? Because the man (*Saul*) who tried to kill you is the same man who wants to kill me. I will protect you if you stay with me.”

David at Keilah

23 People told David, “Look, the Philistines are fighting against the city of Keilah. They are robbing grain from the threshing floors.*

²David asked the Lord, “Should I go and fight these Philistines?”

The Lord answered David, “Yes, go attack the Philistines. Save Keilah.”

³But David’s men said to him, “Look, we are here in Judah and we are scared. Just think how scared we will be if we go to where the Philistine army is.”

⁴David again asked the Lord. And the Lord answered David, “Go down to Keilah. I will help you defeat the Philistines.” ⁵So David and his men went to Keilah. David’s men fought the Philistines. David’s men defeated the Philistines and took their cattle. In this

priests Literally, “men who wore the linen ephod.”

threshing floors Places where grain is beaten or walked on to remove the hulls from the grain.

way, David saved the people of Keilah. ⁶(When Abiathar ran away to David, Abiathar took an ephod* with him.)

⁷People told Saul that David was now at Keilah. Saul said, “God has given David to me! David has trapped himself. He went into a town that has gates and bars to lock the gates.” ⁸Saul called all his army together for battle. They prepared to go down to Keilah to attack David and his men.

⁹David learned that Saul was making plans against him. David then said to Abiathar the priest, “Bring the ephod.”*

¹⁰David prayed, “Lord God of Israel, I have heard that Saul plans to come to Keilah and destroy the town because of me. ¹¹Will Saul come to Keilah? Will the people of Keilah give me to Saul? Lord God of Israel, I am your servant! Please tell me!”

The Lord answered, “Saul will come.”

¹²Again David asked, “Will the people of Keilah give me and my men to Saul?”

The Lord answered, “They will.”

¹³So David and his men left Keilah. There were about 600 men who went with David. David and his men kept moving from place to place. Saul learned that David escaped from Keilah. So Saul did not go to that city.

Saul Chases David

¹⁴David went to the desert and stayed in the fortresses* there. David also went to the hill country in the Desert of Ziph. Every day Saul looked for David, but the Lord didn’t let Saul catch him.

¹⁵David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph. He was afraid, because Saul was coming to kill him. ¹⁶But Saul’s son Jonathan went to see David at Horesh. Jonathan helped David to have a stronger faith in God. ¹⁷Jonathan told David, “Don’t be afraid. My father Saul won’t hurt you. You will become the king of Israel. And I will be second to you. Even my father knows this.”

ephod A special coat a man wore to show that he was a priest or a priest’s helper. The priest wore an ephod when he went to ask the Lord for advice.

fortress(es) A building or city with tall, strong walls for protection.

¹⁸Jonathan and David both made an agreement before the Lord. Then Jonathan went home. And David stayed at Horesh.

The People of Ziph Tell Saul About David

¹⁹The people from Ziph came to Saul at Gibeah. They told Saul, “David is hiding in our area. He is at the fortresses* of Horesh on Hakilah Hill, south of Jeshimon. ²⁰Now, King, come down any time you want. It is our duty to give David to you.”

²¹Saul answered, “The Lord bless you for helping me. ²²Go and learn more about David. Learn where he is staying. And learn who has seen David there. Saul thought, ‘David is smart. He is trying to trick me.’ ²³Find all the hiding places that David uses. Then come back to me and tell me everything. Then I’ll go with you. If David is in the area, I will find him. I will find him even if I must look through all the families in Judah.”

²⁴Then those people went back to Ziph. Saul went there later.

David and his men were in the Desert of Maon. They were in the desert area south of Jeshimon. ²⁵Saul and his men went to look for David. But people warned David. They told him that Saul was looking for him. David then went down to “The Rock” in the Desert of Maon. Saul heard that David had gone to the Desert of Maon. So Saul went to that place to find David.

²⁶Saul was on one side of the mountain. David and his men were on the other side of the same mountain. David was hurrying to get away from Saul. Saul and his soldiers were going around the mountain to capture David and his men.

²⁷Then a messenger came to Saul. The messenger said, “Come quickly! The Philistines are attacking us!”

²⁸So Saul stopped chasing David and went to fight the Philistines. That is why people call this place “Slippery Rock.”* ²⁹David left the Desert of Maon and went to the fortresses* near En Gedi.

Slippery Rock Or, “Sela Hammahlekoth.”

David Shames Saul

24 After Saul had chased the Philistines away, people told Saul, “David is in the desert area near En Gedi.”

²So Saul chose 3,000 men from all over Israel. Saul took these men and began looking for David and his men. They looked near Wild Goat Rocks. ³Saul came to the sheep pens beside the road. There was a cave near there. Saul went into the cave to relieve himself. David and his men were hiding far back in the cave. ⁴The men said to David, “Today is the day the Lord talked about! The Lord told you, ‘I will give your enemy to you, then you can do anything you want with your enemy.’”

So David crawled closer and closer to Saul. Then David cut off a corner of Saul’s robe. Saul did not see David. ⁵Later, David felt bad about cutting off a corner of Saul’s robe. ⁶David said to his men, “I hope the Lord stops me from doing anything like that to my master again! Saul is the person the Lord chose to be king. I should not do anything against Saul, because he is the Lord’s chosen king!” ⁷David said these things to stop his men. David would not let his men hurt Saul.

Saul left the cave and went his way. ⁸David came out of the cave. David shouted to Saul, “My lord the king!”

Saul looked back. David bowed with his face to the ground. ⁹David said to Saul, “Why do you listen when people say, ‘David plans to hurt you’? ¹⁰‘I don’t want to hurt you!’ You can see that with your own eyes! The Lord let me have you today in the cave. But I refused to kill you. I was merciful to you. I said, ‘I won’t hurt my master. Saul is the Lord’s chosen king!’ ¹¹Look at this piece of cloth in my hand. I cut off the corner of your robe. I could have killed you, but I didn’t! Now, I want you to understand this. I want you to know that I am not planning anything against you! I did nothing wrong to you! But you are hunting me and trying to kill me. ¹²Let the Lord be the judge! The Lord might punish you for the wrong you did me. But I myself won’t fight you. ¹³There is an old saying:

‘Bad things come from bad people.’

‘I haven’t done anything bad! I am not a bad person!’ I won’t hurt you. ¹⁴Who are you chasing? Who is the king of Israel coming to fight against? You are not chasing someone who will hurt you! It is like you are chasing a dead dog or a flea. ¹⁵Let the Lord be the judge. Let him decide between you and me. The Lord will support me and show that I am right. The Lord will save me from you.”

¹⁶David finished speaking, and Saul asked, “Is that your voice, David my son?” Then Saul began to cry. Saul cried very much. ¹⁷Saul said, “You are right, and I am wrong. You have been good to me. But I have been bad to you. ¹⁸You told me about the good things you did. The Lord brought me to you, but you did not kill me. ¹⁹‘This shows I am not your enemy.’ A man doesn’t catch his enemy, and then just let him go! He doesn’t do good things for his enemy. I hope the Lord rewards you for being good to me today. ²⁰I know that you will become the new king. You will rule the kingdom of Israel. ²¹Now make a promise to me. Use the Lord’s name and promise that you will not kill my descendants,* even after I die. Promise me that you will not erase my name from my father’s family.”

²²So David made a promise to Saul. David promised that he would not kill Saul’s family. Then Saul went back home. David and his men went up to the fort.

David and Nabal the Fool

25 Samuel died. All the Israelites met together and showed their sadness about Samuel’s death. They buried Samuel at his home in Ramah. Then David moved to the Desert of Paran.

²There was a very rich man living in Maon. He had 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats. That man was in Carmel taking care of some business. He went there to cut the wool from his sheep. ³This man’s name was Nabal.* He was from Caleb’s family. Nabal’s wife was named Abigail. She was a wise and beautiful woman. But Nabal was a mean and cruel man.

descendant(s) A person’s children and their future families.

Nabal This name means “foolish.”

⁴David was in the desert when he heard that Nabal was cutting the wool from his sheep. ⁵David sent ten young men to talk to Nabal. David told them, “Go to Carmel. Find Nabal and tell him ‘Hello’ for me.” ⁶David gave them this message for Nabal: “I hope you and your family are fine. I hope that everything you own is fine. ⁷I heard that you are cutting wool from your sheep. Your shepherds were with us for a while. And we did nothing wrong to them. We never took anything from your shepherds while they were at Carmel. ⁸Ask your servants and they will tell you this is true. Please be kind to my young men. We come to you now, at this happy time. Please give these young men anything you can. Please do this for me, your friend* David.”

⁹David’s men went to Nabal. They gave David’s message to Nabal. ¹⁰But Nabal _lwas mean to them_j. Nabal said, “Who is David? Who is this son of Jesse? There are many slaves that have run away from their masters these days! ¹¹I have bread and water. And I have the meat I killed for my servants who cut the wool from my sheep. But I won’t give them to men I don’t even know!”

¹²David’s men went back and told David everything that Nabal said. ¹³Then David said to his men, “Put on your swords!” So David and his men put on their swords. About 400 men went with David. And 200 men stayed with the supplies.

Abigail Prevents Trouble

¹⁴One of Nabal’s servants spoke to Nabal’s wife Abigail. The servant said, “David sent messengers from the desert to meet our master (*Nabal*). But Nabal was mean to David’s messengers. ¹⁵These men were very good to us. We were out in the fields with the sheep. David’s men were with us the whole time. And they never did anything wrong to us! They did not steal anything from us the whole time! ¹⁶David’s men protected us night and day! They were like a wall around us—they protected us while we were with them caring

for the sheep. ¹⁷Now think about it and decide what you can do. Nabal was foolish to say the things he did! Terrible trouble is coming to our master (*Nabal*) and all his family.”

¹⁸Abigail hurried and took 200 loaves of bread, two full winebags, five cooked sheep, about a bushel* of cooked grain, about 2 quarts* of raisins, and 200 cakes of pressed figs. She put them on donkeys. ¹⁹Then Abigail told her servants, “Go on. I’ll follow you.” But she did not tell her husband.

²⁰Abigail rode her donkey and came down to the other side of the mountain. She met David and his men coming from the other direction.

²¹Before David met Abigail,_j David was saying, “I protected Nabal’s property in the desert. I made sure none of his sheep were missing. I did all that for nothing! I did good things to him, but he has been bad to me. ²²I hope God punishes me if I let even one man in Nabal’s family live till tomorrow morning.”

²³Just then Abigail arrived. When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey. She bowed down with her face to the ground in front of David. ²⁴Abigail lay at David’s feet and said, “Sir, please let me talk to you. Listen to what I say. Blame me for what happened. ²⁵I didn’t see the men you sent. Sir, don’t pay any attention to that worthless man (*Nabal*). He is the same as his name. His name means ‘Foolish,’ and he really is foolish. ²⁶The Lord has kept you from killing innocent people. Surely as the Lord lives and surely as you live, I hope your enemies and all the people who want to harm you become like Nabal. ²⁷Now, I am bringing this gift to you. Please give these things to your men. ²⁸Please forgive me for doing wrong. I know the Lord will make your family strong! The Lord will do this because you fight his battles. People will never find anything bad about you as long as you live! ²⁹If a person chases you to kill you, the Lord your God will save your life! But the Lord will throw away your

friend Literally, “son.”

about a bushel Literally, “5 seahs.”

2 quarts Literally, “1 omer.”

enemies like a stone from a sling!* ³⁰The Lord promised to do many good things for you. And the Lord will keep all his promises! God will make you leader over Israel. ³¹And you won't be guilty of killing innocent people. You won't fall into that trap. Please remember me when the Lord brings you success."

³²David answered Abigail, "Praise the Lord, the God of Israel. Praise God for sending you to meet me. ³³God bless you for your good judgment. You kept me from killing innocent people today. ³⁴Surely as the Lord the God of Israel lives, if you hadn't come quickly to meet me, then not one man in Nabal's family would have lived until tomorrow morning."

³⁵Then David accepted Abigail's gifts. David told her, "Go home in peace. I have listened to your request, and I will do what you asked."

Nabal's Death

³⁶Abigail went back to Nabal. Nabal was in the house. Nabal had been eating like a king. Nabal was drunk and feeling good. So Abigail told Nabal nothing until the next morning. ³⁷The next morning, Nabal was sober. So his wife told him everything. Nabal had a heart attack and became as stiff as a rock! ³⁸About ten days later, the Lord caused Nabal to die.

³⁹David heard that Nabal was dead. David said, "Praise the Lord! Nabal said bad things about me, but the Lord supported me. The Lord kept me from doing wrong. And the Lord caused Nabal to die because he did wrong."

Then David sent a message to Abigail. David asked her to become his wife. ⁴⁰David's servants went to Carmel and said to Abigail, "David sent us to get you. David wants you to become his wife."

⁴¹Abigail bowed her face to the ground. She said, "I am your woman servant. I am

ready to serve you. I am ready to wash the feet of my master's (*David's*) servants."*

⁴²Abigail quickly got on a donkey and went with David's messengers. Abigail brought five maids with her. She became David's wife.

⁴³David had also married Ahinoam of Jezreel. Both Ahinoam and Abigail were David's wives. ⁴⁴David was also married to Saul's daughter Michal. But Saul had taken her away from him and had given her to a man named Palti, son of Laish. Palti was from the town named Gallim.

David and Abishai Enter Saul's Camp

26 The people of Ziph went to see Saul at Gibeah. They said to Saul, "David is hiding on the hill of Hakilah. This hill is across from Jeshimon."

²Saul went down to the desert of Ziph. Saul took the 3,000 soldiers he had chosen from all over Israel. Saul and these men looked for David in the desert of Ziph. ³Saul set up his camp on the hill of Hakilah. The camp was beside the road across from Jeshimon.

David was staying in the desert. David learned that Saul had followed him there. ⁴So David sent out spies.* David learned that Saul had come to Hakilah. ⁵Then David went to the place where Saul had set up his camp. David saw where Saul and Abner were sleeping. (Abner son of Ner was the commander of Saul's army.) Saul was sleeping in the middle of the camp. The army was all around Saul.

⁶David talked to Ahimelech the Hittite and Abishai son of Zeruiah. (Abishai was Joab's brother.) He asked them, "Who will go down into the camp with me to Saul?"

Abishai answered, "I'll go with you."

⁷Night came. David and Abishai went into Saul's camp. Saul was asleep in the middle of the camp. His spear was stuck in the ground

wash the feet ... servants This showed Abigail was humble and willing to be like a servant.

spies People who secretly go to learn about the enemy's strengths and weaknesses.

sling A strip of leather for throwing rocks.

near his head. Abner and the other soldiers were asleep around Saul. ⁸Abishai said to David, “Today God has let you defeat your enemy. Let me pin Saul to the ground with his spear. I’ll only do it once!”

⁹But David said to Abishai, “Don’t kill Saul! Any person who hurts the Lord’s chosen king must be punished! ¹⁰Surely as the Lord lives, the Lord himself will punish Saul. Maybe Saul will die naturally or maybe Saul will be killed in battle. ¹¹But I pray that the Lord never lets me hurt the Lord’s chosen king! Now pick up the spear and water jug by Saul’s head. Then let’s go.”

¹²So David took the spear and water jug that were near Saul’s head. Then David and Abishai left Saul’s camp. No one knew what had happened! No one saw it. No one even woke up! Saul and all of his soldiers slept because the Lord had put them into a deep sleep.

David Shames Saul Again

¹³David crossed over to the other side of the valley. David stood on top of the mountain across the valley from Saul’s camp. David and Saul’s camp were far apart. ¹⁴David shouted to the army and to Abner son of Ner, “Answer me, Abner!”

Abner answered, “Who are you? Why are you calling the king?”

¹⁵David said, “You are a man, aren’t you? And you are better than any other man in Israel. Is that right? Then why didn’t you guard your master, the king? An ordinary man came into your camp to kill your master, the king. ¹⁶You made a big mistake! As sure as the Lord is alive, you and your men should die. Why? Because you didn’t protect your master, the Lord’s chosen king. Look for the king’s spear and the water jug that was near Saul’s head! Where are they?”

¹⁷Saul knew David’s voice. Saul said, “Is that your voice, David my son?”

David answered, “Yes, it is my voice, my master and king.” ¹⁸David also said, “Sir, why are you chasing me? What wrong have I done? What am I guilty of? ¹⁹My master and king, listen to me! If the Lord caused you to

be angry at me, then let him accept an offering. But if men caused you to be angry at me, then let the Lord cause bad things to happen to them. Men have forced me to leave the land the Lord gave me. Men have told me, ‘Go live with the foreigners.’ Go and serve other gods.’ ²⁰Now don’t make me die far away from the Lord’s presence. The king of Israel has come out looking for a flea. You are like a man hunting partridges in the mountains!”*

²¹Then Saul said, “I have sinned. Come back, David my son. Today you showed me that my life is important to you. So I will not try to hurt you. I have acted foolishly. I have made a big mistake.”

²²David answered, “Here is the king’s spear. Let one of your young men come here and get it. ²³The Lord pays every man for the things he does—he rewards him if he does right, and he punishes him if he does wrong. The Lord let me defeat you today, but I wouldn’t hurt the Lord’s chosen king. ²⁴Today I showed you that your life is important to me! In the same way, the Lord will show that my life is important to him! The Lord will save me from every trouble.”

²⁵Then Saul said to David, “God bless you, David my son. You will do great things and you will win.”

David went on his way, and Saul went back home.

David Lives with the Philistines

27 But David thought to himself, “Saul will catch me some day. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up looking for me in Israel. That way I will escape from Saul.”

²So David and his 600 men left Israel. They went to Achish son of Maach. Achish was king of Gath. ³David, his men, and their families lived in Gath with Achish. David had

hunting partridges in the mountains People hunted these birds until the birds became too tired to go on. Then they killed the birds. Saul was chasing David the same way. This is also a word play. The Hebrew word for “partridge” is like the word for “calling” in verse 14.

his two wives with him. They were Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel. Abigail was the widow* of Nabal. ⁴People told Saul that David had run away to Gath. So Saul stopped looking for him.

⁵David said to Achish, “If you are pleased with me, then give me a place in one of the country towns. I am only your servant. I should live there, not here with you in this royal city.”

⁶That day Achish gave David the town of Ziklag. And Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah ever since. ⁷David lived with the Philistines one year and four months.

David Fools King Achish

⁸David and his men went to fight the Amalekites and Geshurites who lived in the area from Telem near Shur all the way to Egypt. David’s men defeated them and took their wealth. ⁹David defeated the people in that area. David took all their sheep, cattle, donkeys, camels and clothes and brought them back to Achish. But David didn’t let any of those people live.

¹⁰David did this many times. Each time Achish asked David where he fought and took those things. David said, “I fought against the southern part of Judah,” or “I fought against the southern part of Jerahmeel,” or “I fought against the southern part of the Kenizzites.”* ¹¹David never brought a man or woman alive to Gath. David thought, “If we let any person live, that person might tell Achish what I really did!”

David did this all the time he lived in the Philistine land. ¹²Achish began to trust David. Achish said to himself, “Now David’s own people hate him. The Israelites hate David very much. Now David will serve me forever.”

The Philistines Prepare for War

28 Later the Philistines gathered their armies to fight against Israel. Achish

said to David, “Do you understand that you and your men must go with me to fight against Israel?”

²David answered, “Certainly! Then you can see for yourself what I can do!”

Achish said, “Fine, I’ll make you my bodyguard. You will protect me forever.”

Saul and the Woman at Endor

³After Samuel died, all the people of Israel showed their sadness. Then they buried Samuel in Ramah, his home town.

Saul had removed the mediums* and fortune tellers from Israel.

⁴The Philistines prepared for war. They came to Shunem and made their camp at that place. Saul gathered all the Israelites and made his camp at Gilboa. ⁵Saul saw the Philistine army, and he was scared. His heart pounded with fear. ⁶Saul prayed to the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him. God did not talk to Saul in dreams. God did not use the Urim* to give him an answer. And God did not use prophets to speak to Saul. ⁷Finally, Saul said to his officers, “Find me a woman who is a medium.* Then I can go ask her what will happen in this war.”

His officers answered, “There is a medium* at Endor.”

⁸Saul put on different clothes so no one would know who he was. That night Saul and two of his men went to see the woman. Saul said to the woman, “I want you to bring up a ghost who can tell me what will happen in the future. You must call for the ghost of the person I name.”

⁹But the woman said to Saul, “You know what Saul did! He has forced all of the mediums* and fortune tellers to leave the land of Israel. You are trying to trap me and kill me.”

¹⁰Saul used the Lord’s name to make a promise to the woman. He said, “As surely as the Lord lives, you will not be punished for doing this.”

widow A woman whose husband has died.

I fought ... Judah, Jerahmeel, Kenizzites All these places belonged to Israel. David made Achish think he had fought against his own people, the Israelites.

medium(s) A person who tries to communicate with the spirits of dead people.

Urim Priests used these stones to get answers from God. See Num. 27:20–22.

¹¹The woman asked, “Who do you want me to bring up for you?”

Saul answered, “Bring up Samuel.”

¹²And it happened! The woman saw Samuel and screamed loudly. She said to Saul, “You tricked me! You are Saul.”

¹³The king said to the woman, “Don’t be afraid! What do you see?”

The woman said, “I see a spirit coming up out of the ground.*”

¹⁴Saul asked, “What does he look like?”

The woman answered, “He looks like an old man wearing a special robe.”

Then Saul knew it was Samuel. Saul bowed down. His face touched the ground. ¹⁵Samuel said to Saul, “Why did you bother me? Why did you bring me up?”

Saul answered, “I am in trouble! The Philistines have come to fight against me, and God left me. God won’t answer me any more. He won’t use prophets or dreams to answer me. That’s why I called you. I want you to tell me what to do!”

¹⁶Samuel said, “The Lord left you. Now he is with your neighbor (*David*). So why are you bothering me? ¹⁷The Lord used me to tell you what he would do. And now the Lord is doing what he said he would do! The Lord is pulling the kingdom from your hands. And he is giving the kingdom to one of your neighbors. That neighbor is David. ¹⁸You did not obey the Lord. You did not destroy the Amalekites and show them how angry the Lord was at them. That is why the Lord is doing this to you today. ¹⁹The Lord will let the Philistines defeat you and the army of Israel today. And tomorrow, you and your sons will be here with me!”

²⁰Saul quickly fell to the ground and lay there. Saul was afraid because of the things Samuel said. Saul was also very weak because he did not eat any food all that day and night.

²¹The woman came to Saul. She saw Saul was really scared. She said, “Look, I am your servant. I have obeyed you. I risked my life and did what you told me to do. ²²Now please listen to me. Let me give you some food. You must eat. Then you will have enough strength to go on your way.”

ground Or, “Sheol, the place of death.”

²³But Saul refused. He said, “I won’t eat.”

Saul’s officers joined the woman and begged him to eat. Finally, Saul listened to them. He got up from the ground and sat on the bed. ²⁴The woman had a fat calf at the house. She quickly killed the calf. She took some flour and pressed it with her hands. Then she baked some bread without yeast. ²⁵The woman put the food before Saul and his officers. Saul and his officers ate. Then that same night they got up and left.

“David Can’t Come With Us!”

29 The Philistines gathered all their soldiers at Aphek. The Israelites camped by the spring at Jezreel. ²The Philistine rulers were marching with their groups of 100 men and 1,000 men. David and his men were marching at the back with Achish.

³The Philistine captains asked, “What are these Hebrews doing here?”

Achish told the Philistine captains, “This is David. David was one of Saul’s officers. David has been with me for a long time. I found nothing wrong in David since the time he left Saul and came to me.”

⁴But the Philistine captains were angry with Achish. They said, “Send David back! David must go back to the city you gave him. He can’t go with us into battle. [If he is here] we will have an enemy in our own camp. He would make his king happy by killing our men. ⁵David is the same person the Israelites sing and dance about when they sing this song:

Saul has killed thousands of enemies.

But David has killed tens of thousands!

⁶So Achish called David and said, “As sure as the Lord lives, you are loyal to me. I would be pleased to have you serve in my army. Since the day you came to me, I have found nothing wrong in you. Also, the [Philistine] rulers think you are a good man.* ⁷Go back in peace. Don’t do anything against the Philistine rulers.”

the Philistine rulers ... man The Philistine rulers are pleased with David. It is the Philistine commanders of the army who are against him.

⁸David asked, “What have I done wrong? Have you found anything wrong with me since the day I came to you? [No!] Why won’t you let me go to fight the enemies of my lord the king?”

⁹Achish answered, “I believe that you are a good man. You are like an angel from God. But the Philistine captains still say, ‘David can’t go with us into battle.’ ¹⁰Early in the morning, you and your men should go back to the city I gave you. Don’t pay attention to the bad things the captains say about you. You are a good man. So leave as soon as the sun comes up.”

¹¹So David and his men got up early in the morning and went back to the country of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

The Amalekites Attack Ziklag

30 On the third day, David and his men arrived at Ziklag. They saw that the Amalekites had attacked Ziklag. The Amalekites invaded the Negev area. They attacked Ziklag and burned the city. ²They took the women in Ziklag as prisoners. They took all the people, both young and old. They did not kill any of the people. They only took them away.

³When David and his men came to Ziklag, they found the city burning. Their wives, sons, and daughters were all gone. The Amalekites had taken them. ⁴David and the other men in his army cried loudly until they were too weak to cry any more. ⁵The Amalekites had taken David’s two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow* of Nabal from Carmel.

⁶All the men in the army were sad and angry because their sons and daughters were taken as prisoners. The men were talking about killing David with stones. This made David very upset. But David found strength in the Lord his God. ⁷David said to Abiathar the priest, “Bring the ephod.”*

widow A woman whose husband has died.

ephod A special coat a man wore to show that he was a priest or a priest’s helper. The priest wore an ephod when he went to ask the Lord for advice.

⁸Then David prayed to the Lord. “Should I chase the people who took our families? Will I catch them?”

The Lord answered, “Chase them. You will catch them. You will save your families.”

David Finds an Egyptian Slave

^{9–10}David took the 600 men with him and went to Besor Ravine. About 200 of his men stayed at this place. They stayed there because they were too weak and tired to continue. So David and 400 men continued to chase the Amalekites.

¹¹David’s men found an Egyptian in a field. They took the Egyptian to David. They gave the Egyptian some water to drink and some food to eat. ¹²They gave the Egyptian a piece of fig cake and two clusters of raisins. He felt better after eating. He had not had any food or water for three days and nights.

¹³David asked the Egyptian, “Who is your master? Where do you come from?”

The Egyptian answered, “I am an Egyptian. I am the slave of an Amalekite. Three days ago I became sick and my master left me. ¹⁴We had attacked the Negev area where the Kerethites* live. We attacked the land of Judah, and in the Negev area where Caleb’s people live. We also burned Ziklag.”

¹⁵David asked the Egyptian, “Will you lead me to the people who took our families?”

The Egyptian answered, “If you make a special promise before God, then I will help you find them. But you must promise that you won’t kill me or give me back to my master.”

David Defeats The Amalekites

¹⁶The Egyptian led David to the Amalekites. They were lying around on the ground, eating and drinking. They were celebrating with the many things they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from Judah. ¹⁷David attacked them and killed them. They fought from sunrise until the evening of the next day. None of the Amalekites escaped, except 400 young men who jumped onto their camels and rode away.

Kerethites Or “people from Crete.” This is probably the Philistines, but some of David’s best soldiers were Kerethites.

¹⁸David got back everything the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives. ¹⁹Nothing was missing. They found all the children and old people. They found all their sons and daughters. And they found all their valuable things. They got back everything the Amalekites had taken. David brought everything back. ²⁰David took all the sheep and cattle. David's men made these animals go in front. David's men said, "They are David's prize."

All Men Will Share Equally

²¹David came to the 200 men who had stayed at Besor Ravine. These were the men who were too weak and tired to follow David. These men came out to meet David and the soldiers that went with him. The men at the Besor Ravine greeted David and his army as they came near. ²²There were some bad men who were trouble-makers in the group that went with David. Those trouble-makers said, "These 200 men didn't go with us. So we won't give them any of the things we took. These men get only their own wives and children."

²³David answered, "No, my brothers. Don't do that! Think about what the Lord gave us! The Lord let us defeat the enemy that attacked us. ²⁴No one will listen to what you say! The share will be the same for the man who stayed with the supplies and for the man who went into battle. Everyone will share alike." ²⁵David made this an order and rule for Israel. This rule continues even today.

²⁶David arrived in Ziklag. Then he sent some of the things he took [from the Amalekites] to his friends, the leaders of Judah. David said, "Here is a present for you. [We took these things from] the Lord's enemies."

²⁷David sent some of those things from the Amalekites to the leaders in Bethel, Ramoth in the Negev, Jattir, ²⁸Aroer, Siphmoth, Eshtemoa, ²⁹Racal, the cities of the Jerahmeelites and the cities of the Kenites, ³⁰Hormah, Bor Ashan, Athach, ³¹and Hebron. David sent some of those things to the leaders in all the other places where David and his men had been.

The Death of Saul

31 The Philistines fought against Israel, and the Israelites ran away from the Philistines. Many Israelites were killed at Mount Gilboa. ²The Philistines fought hard against Saul and his sons. The Philistines killed Saul's sons Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malki Shua.

³The battle became worse and worse against Saul. The archers* shot arrows at Saul, and Saul was hurt very badly. ⁴Saul said to the servant that carried his armor, "Take your sword and kill me. Then those foreigners can't hurt me and make fun of me." But Saul's helper was scared and refused to kill him.

So Saul took his own sword and killed himself. ⁵The helper saw that Saul was dead, so he used his own sword and killed himself. He died there with Saul. ⁶So Saul, his three sons, and the boy who carried his armor all died together that day.

The Philistines Rejoice At Saul's Death

⁷The Israelites [that lived] on the other side of the valley saw the Israelite army running away. They saw that Saul and his sons were dead. So those Israelites left their cities and ran away. Then the Philistines came and lived in those cities.

⁸The next day, the Philistines went back to take things from the dead bodies. They found Saul and his three sons dead on Mount Gilboa. ⁹The Philistines cut off Saul's head and took all his armor. They carried the news to the Philistine people and to all the temples of their idols.* ¹⁰They put Saul's armor in the temple of Ashtoreth.* The Philistines also hung Saul's body on the wall of Beth Shan.*

¹¹The people living in Jabesh Gilead heard about the things that the Philistines did to Saul. ¹²So all the soldiers of Jabesh went to Beth Shan.* They marched all

archers Soldiers that used bows and arrows.

idols Statues of false gods.

Ashtoreth The Canaanite people thought that this false goddess could make people able to have babies. She was their goddess of love and war.

Beth Shan Or possibly, "Beth Shean."

night! Then they took Saul's body off the wall at Beth Shan. They also took down the bodies of Saul's sons. Then they took those bodies to Jabesh. There the people of Jabesh burned the bodies of Saul and his three sons.

¹³Then these people took the bones of Saul and his three sons and buried them under the big tree in Jabesh. Then the people of Jabesh showed their sadness—they did not eat for seven days.