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2 Chronicles

2 Chronicles continues the theme that began in 1 Chronicles—that God is faithful. In 2 Chronicles, Solomon’s Temple is much more than a religious building. It is a symbol of how faithful God is to his people. The Temple meant that God lived among his people. It was also a reminder that God worked through the king in Jerusalem. The Temple made the city a holy place in a way that it had not been before.

After Solomon, the kingdom was divided into northern Israel and southern Judah. And God’s people continued to suffer punishment because they failed to be faithful to him. King Rehoboam was not faithful to obey God’s laws. So he was attacked by Shishak, Pharaoh of Egypt. God made King Asa sick because he did not trust in God. Instead, he made an agreement with the king of Aram. King Uzziah did not follow God’s order for Temple worship. So he was punished with a skin disease. The northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed because the people were not faithful to follow God’s commands. And God punished his people in the southern kingdom of Judah. He took the Temple away from them. And he sent many of them away to a foreign land as captives.

But God continued to be faithful and kind. After Rehoboam sinned, he asked God for forgiveness. So God allowed him and his people to survive. After northern Israel was

invaded, King Hezekiah invited the people from Israel to live in Judah. There they could worship God in Jerusalem. So God was faithful to his people during the painful years of war and captivity. At the end of that time, God gave his people someone to rescue them, just as he had always done.

The book of 2 Chronicles retells the stories of...

King Solomon (1:1 – 9:31)

The kings of Judah (10:1 – 36:14)

Going as captives to Babylon and returning (36:15-23)

Solomon Asks for Wisdom

1 Solomon, the son of David, became a very powerful king, because the LORD his God was with him and made him great.

²Solomon spoke to all the people of Israel: the army commanders* and captains†, the judges, the leaders and the heads of the families. ³Then they all went to the place of worship at Gibeon because God’s Meeting Tent was there. The LORD’s servant Moses had made this tent when he was in the desert. ⁴David had carried God’s Box of the Agreement from Kiriath Jearim to Jerusalem where he had set up another tent for it. ⁵But the bronze altar that Bezalel son of Uri, who was the son of Hur, had made was in front of the Holy Tent at Gibeon. So Solomon and the people went there to ask the LORD for advice. ⁶Solomon went up to the bronze altar before the LORD at the Meeting Tent and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it.

⁷That night God appeared to Solomon and said, “Ask me for whatever you want me to give you.”

*1:2 *commanders* Literally, “leaders of 1000 men”.

†1:2 *captains* Literally, “leaders of 100 men”.

⁸ Solomon said to God, “You were very kind to my father David when you allowed me to rule on his throne after him. ⁹Now, LORD God, continue to keep your promise to my father David. You made me king over so many people that they are like the dust of the earth. ¹⁰Now give me wisdom and knowledge so that I can lead these people in the right way. No one could rule this great nation without your help.”

¹¹ God said to Solomon, “This shows that you are not thinking about yourself. You did not ask for more possessions or for riches and fame or the death of your enemies or even a long life for yourself! Instead, you asked for wisdom and knowledge so that you can make good decisions as the king I have chosen to rule my people. ¹²So I will give you the wisdom and knowledge you asked for. But I will also give you more riches, possessions and fame than any king has ever had before you or will ever have after you.”

¹³ Solomon left the Meeting Tent that was at the place of worship in Gibeon and went back to Jerusalem to rule as the king of Israel.

Solomon Strengthens His Army

¹⁴ Solomon started gathering horses and chariots for his army. He had 1400 chariots and 12,000 horses. He kept some in the cities he had built for storing chariots, and he kept the rest of them close to Jerusalem for protection. ¹⁵ King Solomon had brought a lot of wealth into Jerusalem. He had as much silver and gold as there were rocks in the city. And he had as much valuable cedar timber as the wood in all the sycamore trees on the hills of Judah. ¹⁶ Solomon got his horses

from Egypt and Kue.[‡] His traders bought the horses in Kue for a set price. ¹⁷ They also bought chariots from Egypt for 600 pieces[¶] of silver each and horses for 150 pieces of silver each. Then they sold the horses and chariots to the kings of the Hittites and Arameans.

Plans for the Temple and Palace

2 Solomon planned to build a temple to give honour to the LORD’s name. He also planned to build a palace for himself. ² He got 70,000 labourers and 80,000 stonemasons to cut stones in the mountains. He chose 3600 men to supervise the workers.

³ Then Solomon sent this message to King Hiram of Tyre:

“Help me as you helped my father David. You sent him cedar logs so that he could build a palace for himself to live in. ⁴ I will build a temple to honour the name of the LORD my God. At the Temple we will burn incense before him, and we will always put the holy bread on the table. We will offer burnt offerings every morning and evening, on the Sabbath days, during New Moon celebrations, and on the other special meeting days that the LORD our God has commanded us to celebrate. This is a rule for the people of Israel to obey forever.

⁵ “I will build a great temple because our God is greater than all the other gods. ⁶ No one can really build a house to put our God in. The whole sky and the highest heaven cannot contain our God, so I cannot build a temple to put him in. I can only build a place to burn incense to honour him.

[‡]1:16 *Kue* Or “Cilicia”, a country in what is now southern Turkey.

[¶]1:17 *pieces* Literally, “*shekels*”.

⁷“Now I would like you to send me a man who is skilled in working with gold, silver, bronze and iron. He must know how to work with purple, red and blue cloth. He will work here in Judah and Jerusalem with the craftsmen my father chose.

⁸Also send me wood from cedar trees, pine trees and juniper[§] trees from the country of Lebanon. I know your servants are experienced at cutting down trees from Lebanon. My servants will help your servants. ⁹I will need lots of wood because the Temple I am building will be very large and beautiful. ¹⁰This is what I will pay for your servants to cut down the trees for wood. I will give them 2000 tonnes** of wheat for food, 2000 tonnes of barley, 440,000 litres^{††} of wine and 440,000 litres of oil.”

¹¹Then Hiram answered Solomon and sent this message to him:

“Solomon, the LORD loves his people. That is why he chose you to be their king. ¹²Praise the LORD, the God of Israel! He made heaven and earth. He gave a wise son to King David. Solomon, you have wisdom and understanding. You are building a temple for the LORD and a palace for yourself. ¹³I will send you a skilled craftsman named Hiram Abi.^{‡‡} ¹⁴His mother was from the tribe of Dan, and his father was from the city of Tyre. Hiram Abi

has skill in working with gold, silver, bronze, iron, stone and wood. He also has skill in working with purple, blue and red cloth and fine linen. Hiram Abi can design and build anything you tell him. He will work with your craftsmen and with the craftsmen of your father King David.

¹⁵“Now, sir, you offered to give us wheat, barley, oil and wine. Give them to my servants, ¹⁶and we will cut as much wood as you need from Lebanon. We will tie the logs together and float them by sea to the town of Joppa. Then you can take the wood to Jerusalem.”

¹⁷So Solomon counted all the immigrants living in Israel. (This was after the time when his father David counted the people.) They found 153,600 immigrants in the country. ¹⁸Solomon chose 70,000 men to carry the stones, 80,000 men to cut the stone in the mountains and 3600 men to supervise the workers.

Solomon Builds the Temple

3 Solomon built the LORD’s Temple in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to David, his father. The place David prepared for the Temple had been the threshing floor of Araunah^{¶¶} the Jebusite.^{§§} ²His workers began building on the second day of the second month of Solomon’s fourth year as king of Israel.

§2:8 *juniper* Or “sandalwood”. Literally, “algum”.

**2:10 *2000 tonnes* Literally, “20,000 cors”.

††2:10 *440,000 litres* Literally, “20,000 baths”.

‡‡2:13 Or “I will send one of the craftsmen of my father Hiram.”

¶¶3:1 *Araunah* In Hebrew, “Ornan”. See 2 Sam 24:16 for this spelling. Also in verses 18-25,28.

§§3:1 *Jebusite* A person who lived in Jerusalem before the Israelites took the city. “Jebus” was the old name for Jerusalem.

³The foundation Solomon planned for God's Temple was 27 metres* long and 9 metres† wide. ⁴The porch at the front of the Temple was 9 metres across and 9 metres‡ high. The inside of the porch was covered with pure gold. ⁵He had panels made of cypress wood put on the walls of the larger room. These panels were covered with pure gold and decorated with designs of palm trees and chains. ⁶He added precious stones as decorations for the Temple and brought gold from Parvaim. ⁷He used the gold to cover the ceiling beams, doorposts, walls and doors. The workers also carved designs of winged creatures on the walls.

⁸The next part of the building was the Most Holy Place. This room was 9 metres long and 9 metres wide, the same width as the Temple. The inside walls were covered with over 20 tonnes¶ of pure gold. ⁹The nails were made of gold and weighed 575 grammes§ each. He covered the upper rooms with gold. ¹⁰Solomon had the workers make two statues of winged creatures to put in the Most Holy Place. They covered the statues with gold. ¹¹⁻¹³The wings of the statues were spread out to each side and together measured over 4 metres** across. So the wings of both statues placed side by side reached all the way across the 9-metre room. One wing of each statue

touched the wall on each side of the room. And the tips of their other wings touched in the middle of the room. These winged creatures stood facing out towards the main room of the Temple.

¹⁴Across the entrance there was a curtain made from blue, purple and red materials and fine linen. It was decorated with designs of winged creatures.

¹⁵Two pillars 15.5 metres†† tall were made for the front of the Temple. On top of each pillar was a capital 2.2 metres tall. ¹⁶Nets made of chains decorated the tops of the pillars. And a hundred bronze pomegranates decorated the chains. ¹⁷Solomon had the pillars set up in front of the Temple. One pillar stood on the right side. The other pillar stood on the left side. He named the pillar on the right side Jakin. And he named the pillar on the left side Boaz.‡‡

Furniture for the Temple

4 Solomon had Hiram make¶¶ a bronze altar that was 9 metres long, 9 metres wide and 4.5 metres§§ tall. ²Then he melted bronze to make a large round basin called the Sea. It was 4.5 metres across from rim to rim. It was 2 metres deep and 13.5 metres* around. ³Below the rim of the basin were images of bulls in two rows all the way around. They were moulded

*3:3 27 metres Literally, "60 cubits".

†3:3 9 metres Literally, "20 cubits". Also in verses 4,8,11,13 and 4:1.

‡3:4 9 metres This is from some copies of the ancient Greek and Syriac versions. The traditional Hebrew text has "120 cubits".

¶3:8 20 tonnes Literally, "600 talents".

§3:9 575 grammes Literally, "50 shekels".

**3:11-13 4 metres Literally, "5 cubits" (2.2 m) for each wing. Also in verse 15.

††3:15 15.5 metres Literally, "35 cubits".

‡‡3:17 Jakin, Boaz In Hebrew, Jakin seems to mean "he establishes" and Boaz "in him is strength".

¶¶4:1 Solomon ... make Literally, "He made". See verse 11 and 2:13-14.

§§4:1 4.5 metres Literally, "10 cubits".

*4:2 13.5 metres Literally, "30 cubits".

in place as part of the basin, six bulls every 44 centimetres. ⁴The large basin rested on top of twelve large statues of bulls. Three bulls looked towards the north, three towards the west, three towards the south and three towards the east. The large basin was on top of these bulls, which all faced out from the centre. ⁵The side of the basin was 75 millimetres[†] thick. The rim was like the rim of a cup or the flower of a lily. The basin held about 60,000 litres.[‡]

⁶He made ten bowls and put five on each side of the large basin. These ten bowls were for washing the things used for the burnt offerings. But the large basin was for holding the water the priests would use for washing.

⁷He made ten lampstands of gold, following the plans made for them. He put the lampstands in the Temple, five on the south side and five on the north side.

⁸He made ten tables and put them in the Temple, five on the south side and five on the north side. And he used gold to make 100 bowls. ⁹He also made the priests' courtyard, the large courtyard and the doors that open to them. He used bronze to cover these doors. ¹⁰He put the large basin at the south-east corner of the Temple. ¹¹⁻¹⁶He also made the pots, shovels and bowls.

So Hiram finished everything King Solomon wanted him to make for the Temple of God:

2 pillars;

2 bowl-shaped capitals for the top of the pillars;

2 nets made of bronze chains to decorate the capitals;

400 pomegranates to make two rows around each net covering the capitals;

the carts and the bowls on the carts; the large basin with 12 bulls under it; the pots, shovels and bowls.

These were all the things King Solomon wanted Hiram to make for the LORD's Temple. He made them all from polished bronze. ¹⁷King Solomon had the bronze for all these objects poured into clay moulds. The moulds were made in the Jordan Valley between the towns of Succoth and Zeredah. ¹⁸There were so many bronze objects made that no one was ever able to weigh all the bronze used.

¹⁹Solomon also ordered all these furnishings to be made for God's Temple: the golden altar and the tables that held the holy bread offered to God; ²⁰the lamps and lampstands made of pure gold that were put inside the Holy Place in front of the Most Holy Place; ²¹the flowers, lamps and tongs;[¶] ²²the pure gold lamp snuffers, bowls, dishes and pans for carrying coals; the doors for the Temple, the inside doors for the Most Holy Place and the doors for the main hall.

5 When all the work was completed on the LORD's Temple, Solomon brought in everything his father David had set aside for the Temple. Solomon put the silver, the gold and all the utensils into the storerooms in God's Temple.

The Holy Box Carried Into the Temple

²Then Solomon commanded all the leaders of Israel, the leaders of the tribes and the leaders of the families of Israel to meet together in Jerusalem. He did this so that they could bring the Box of the LORD's Agreement up to the Temple from the City of David, that is, Zion.

³All the men of Israel met together be-

[†]4:5 75 millimetres Literally, "1 handbreadth".

[‡]4:5 60,000 litres Literally, "3000 baths".

[¶]4:21 tongs A tool used to hold hot coals.

fore King Solomon during the special festival[§] in the seventh month of the year.

⁴When all the leaders of Israel arrived, the Levites** lifted the Box of the Agreement ⁵and carried it up to the Temple. The priests and the Levites†† also brought the Meeting Tent and all the holy things that were in it to the Temple. ⁶King Solomon and all the Israelites met together before the Box of the Agreement and sacrificed so many sheep and cattle that no one was able to count them all. ⁷Then the priests carried the Box of the LORD's Agreement to its proper place inside the Most Holy Place in the Temple, under the wings of the winged creatures. ⁸The wings of the winged creatures covered the Holy Box and the poles that were used to carry it. ⁹The poles were so long that their ends could not be seen from anywhere outside the Most Holy Place except right in front of the entrance. The poles are still there today. ¹⁰The only things inside the Holy Box are the two tablets that Moses put there at Mount Horeb. This is where the LORD made his agreement with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt.

¹¹The priests from every group had made themselves ready to serve the LORD. They all came out of the Holy Place. ¹²The Levite singers stood at the east side of the altar. All the singing groups of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun were there as well as their sons and relatives. The Levite singers were dressed in white linen and had cymbals, lyres and harps. There were 120 priests there with the Levite singers. The 120 priests blew trumpets. ¹³Those who blew the trumpets and those who sang were like one

person. They made one sound when they praised and thanked the LORD. They made a loud sound with the trumpets, cymbals and musical instruments. They praised the LORD, singing,

“The LORD is good.

His faithful love will continue forever.”

Then the LORD's Temple was filled with a cloud. ¹⁴The priests could not stay there to continue their service because the glory of the LORD that was in the cloud filled the Temple.

6 Then Solomon said, “LORD, you have said that you would live in a dark cloud. ²But I have built a beautiful Temple for you to live in forever.”

Solomon's Speech

³Then King Solomon turned towards the gathering of all the Israelites as they stood there before him and asked God to bless them. He said,

⁴“Praise the LORD, the God of Israel! He has done what he promised my father David. He said, ⁵‘I brought my people out of Egypt long ago. From that time until now, I had not chosen a city from among the tribes of Israel as a place to build a temple where people could honour me. And I had not chosen a man to be the leader over my people Israel. ⁶But now I have chosen Jerusalem to be the city where I will be honoured, and I have chosen David to rule over my people Israel.’

⁷“My father David wanted to build a temple to honour the LORD, the God of Israel. ⁸But the LORD said to my father, ‘It is good that you want to build a temple to hon-

[§]5:3 *the special festival* That is, the Festival of Shelters. See Festival of Shelters in the Word List.

**5:4 *Levites* Or “priests from the tribe of Levi”.

††5:5 *The priests and the Levites* Or “The priests from the tribe of Levi”.

our me. ⁹But you are not the one to build it. Your son will build the Temple to honour me.’ ¹⁰So now the LORD has done what he said he would do. I have taken my father’s place as the king of Israel, as the LORD promised. And I have built this Temple to honour the LORD, the God of Israel. ¹¹And inside the Temple I have put the Holy Box, which holds the Agreement that the LORD made with the people of Israel.”

Solomon’s Prayer

¹²⁻¹³ Solomon had made a bronze platform and placed it in the middle of the outer courtyard. The platform was 2.2 metres long, 2.2 metres wide and 1.3 metres[‡] tall. Solomon stood on the platform and faced the LORD’s altar, with all the Israelites gathered behind him. Then he knelt down and lifted his hands towards heaven ¹⁴and said,

“LORD, God of Israel, there is no god like you in heaven or on earth. You keep the agreement that you made with your people. You are kind and loyal to those who follow you with all their heart. ¹⁵You made a promise to your servant, my father David, and you kept that promise. You made that promise with your own mouth, and with your own hands you made it come true today. ¹⁶Now, LORD, God of Israel, keep the other promises you made to your servant David, my father. You said, ‘David, if your sons carefully obey me as you did, you will always have someone from your family ruling the people of Israel.’ ¹⁷Again, LORD, God of Israel, I ask you to keep the promise you made to your servant David.

¹⁸“But, God, will you really live here on earth with us humans? The whole sky and the highest heaven cannot contain you. Certainly this Temple that I built cannot contain you either. ¹⁹But I beg you to listen to my prayer. I am your servant, and you are the LORD my God. I cry out to you! Hear this prayer that I am praying to you today. ²⁰Please watch over this Temple, night and day, the place you promised to make your home. And listen to my prayer as I turn towards this Temple and pray to you. ²¹And please listen to my prayers and the prayers of your people Israel when we turn towards this place and pray to you. Hear us from heaven where you live. And when you hear our prayers, forgive us.

²²“Those who do wrong to others will be brought to this altar. If they are not guilty, they will make an oath and promise that they are innocent. ²³Please listen from heaven and judge them. If they are guilty, show that they are guilty. And if they are innocent, show that they are not guilty. Give them what they deserve.

²⁴“Sometimes your people Israel will sin against you, and their enemies will defeat them. Then the people will come back to you and praise you. They will pray to you in this Temple. ²⁵Please listen to them from heaven, and forgive your people Israel for their sins. And let them have their land again, the land you gave to their ancestors.

²⁶“Sometimes they will sin against you, and you will stop the rain from falling on their

[‡]6:12-13 1.3 metres Literally, “3 cubits”.

land. Then they will pray towards this place and praise your name. And they will turn from their sins because of your punishment. ²⁷ Then please listen from heaven to their prayers and forgive the sins of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them the right way to live. Then, Lord, please send rain to the land you gave them to be their own.

²⁸ “The land might become too dry to produce food. Or maybe a great sickness will spread among the people. Maybe all the food that is growing will be destroyed by insects. Or your people might be attacked in some of their cities by their enemies. Or many of your people might get sick. ²⁹ When any of these things happen, and people are troubled and feel the need to lift their hands in prayer towards this Temple, ³⁰ please listen to their prayers from your home in heaven. Forgive them and help them. Only you know what people are really thinking, so only you can judge them fairly. ³¹ Then your people will honour you by following your ways all the time that they live in this land you gave to our ancestors.

³² “People from other places will hear about your greatness and your power. They will come from far away to pray at this Temple. ³³ From your home in heaven, please listen to their prayers. Please do everything the people from other places ask you. Then people everywhere will fear and respect you the same as your people Israel. And they will know that this Temple I built is for your honour.

³⁴ “Sometimes you will command your people to go and fight against

their enemies. Then your people will turn towards this city that you have chosen and the Temple that I built in your honour, and they will pray to you. ³⁵ Please listen from heaven to their prayers, and help them.

³⁶ “I know that your people will sin against you, because everyone sins, and you will be angry with your people. You will let their enemies defeat them, and their enemies will take them away as captives to a faraway land. ³⁷ In that faraway land, your people will think about what happened. They will be sorry for their sins, and they will pray to you. They will say, ‘We have sinned and done wrong.’ ³⁸ They will be in that faraway land of their enemies, but they will turn back to you. They will feel sorry for their sins with their whole heart and soul. They will turn towards the land you gave their ancestors. They will look towards the city you chose and towards the Temple I built, and they will pray to you. ³⁹ Please listen from your home in heaven. Accept their prayers when they beg for help, and help them. Forgive your people who have sinned against you. ⁴⁰ Now, my God, please notice what we are doing and listen to the prayers we are praying in this place.

⁴¹ “Now, LORD God, get up and come to your special place,

the Box of the Agreement that shows your strength.

LORD God, may your priests be dressed with salvation,

and may your true followers be happy about these good things.

⁴² LORD God, accept your anointed king. Remember your loyal servant David.”

The Temple Dedicated to the Lord

7 When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from the sky and burned up the burnt offering and the sacrifices. The glory of the LORD filled the Temple. ²The priests could not enter the LORD's Temple because the glory of the LORD filled it. ³When all the Israelites saw the fire come down from heaven and the glory of the LORD on the Temple, they bowed down on the pavement with their faces low to the ground. They worshipped and thanked the LORD, singing, "The LORD is good.

His faithful love will continue forever."

⁴Then King Solomon and all the Israelites offered sacrifices to the LORD.

⁵Solomon offered 22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep. In this way, the king and all the people dedicated the Temple to God. ⁶The priests stood ready to do their work. The Levites stood with the instruments they would use to play music to the LORD. King David had made these instruments to use when they gave thanks to the LORD and sang, "His faithful love will continue forever."

The priests blew their trumpets as they stood across from the Levites. And all the Israelites were standing.

⁷King Solomon also dedicated the middle of the courtyard, the part that is in front of the LORD's Temple. There he offered burnt offerings, grain offerings and the fat from the animals that were used as fellowship offerings. He made these offerings in the courtyard because the bronze altar in front of the LORD's Temple was too small to hold them all.

⁸The next seven days, King Solomon and all the people of Israel celebrated the Festival of Shelters.[¶] People came

from as far away as Hamath Pass in the north and the border of Egypt in the south. This huge crowd of people enjoyed themselves for seven days. ⁹The next day, they had a special gathering to close the celebration. They had spent seven days to dedicate the altar to the LORD. And they had celebrated the festival for seven days. ¹⁰On the twenty-third day of the seventh month, Solomon told the people to go home. They were happy because of all the good things that the LORD had done for David and Solomon and for his people Israel.

The Lord Appears to Solomon

¹¹So Solomon finished building the LORD's Temple and the king's palace. Solomon did everything that he had planned to do in building a house for the LORD and for himself. ¹²Then the LORD appeared to Solomon at night and said to him:

"Solomon, I have heard your prayer, and I have chosen this place for myself to be a house for sacrifices. ¹³There may be times when I will close the sky so that there is no rain. Or I may command locusts to destroy the crops, or I may send diseases to my people. ¹⁴Then, if my people who are called by my name become humble and pray, and look to me for help and turn away from their evil ways, I will hear them from heaven. I will forgive their sin and heal their land. ¹⁵Now, my eyes are open, and my ears will pay attention to the prayers prayed in this place. ¹⁶I have chosen this Temple, and I have made it a holy place. So I will be honoured here forever. I will watch over this place. It will

[¶]**7:8 Festival of Shelters** Literally, "festival". See 1 Kgs 8:2,65. See also Festival of Shelters in the Word List.

always be important to me. ¹⁷You must serve me as your father David did, obeying everything that I commanded you. If you obey my rules and laws, ¹⁸I will make sure that your kingdom continues. That is the agreement I made with your father David when I told him that Israel would always be ruled by one of his descendants.

¹⁹“But that will not happen if you or your people don’t obey the laws and commands I gave you. If you leave me and begin to serve other gods and worship them, ²⁰then I will remove you from this land that I have given you. And I will leave this Temple that I have made holy as a place for me to live. I will make it something for people everywhere to make fun of as a total failure. ²¹This Temple is amazingly beautiful now. But then, everyone who sees it will be shocked at what has happened. They will ask, ‘Why did the LORD do such a terrible thing to this land and to this Temple?’ ²²Other people will answer, ‘This happened because they left the LORD, the God of their ancestors. He brought them out of Egypt, but they decided to follow other gods. They began to worship and to serve those gods. That is why he caused all these bad things to happen to them.’”

The Cities Solomon Built

8 It took 20 years for King Solomon to build the LORD’s Temple and the king’s palace. ²Then Solomon rebuilt the towns that Hiram had given him, and he moved Israelites into those towns to live there. ³After this Solomon went to Hamath of Zobah and captured it. ⁴He also built the town of Tadmor in the desert. He built all the towns in Hamath

for storing grain and supplies. ⁵He rebuilt the towns of Upper Beth Horon and Lower Beth Horon. He made them into strong forts with strong walls, gates and bars on the gates. ⁶He also rebuilt the town of Baalath and all the other towns where he stored supplies. He built all the cities where the chariots and horses were kept. Solomon built whatever he wanted in Jerusalem, Lebanon and in all the country where he was king.

⁷⁻⁸There were many people left in the land who were not Israelites. There were Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. The Israelites had not been able to destroy them, but Solomon forced them to work for him as slaves. They are still slaves today. ⁹Solomon did not force any Israelites to be his slaves. They served as soldiers, army officers, chariot commanders and drivers. ¹⁰There were 250 supervisors over the men working on Solomon’s projects.

¹¹Solomon brought Pharaoh’s daughter up from the City of David to the house he had built for her. He said, “My wife must not live in King David’s palace because the places where the LORD’s Holy Box has been are holy places.”

¹²Then Solomon offered burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar he had built in front of the Temple porch. ¹³Solomon offered sacrifices every day the way Moses had commanded. Sacrifices were to be offered on Sabbath days, during New Moon celebrations and at the three annual festivals. The three festivals were the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Harvest and the Festival of Shelters. ¹⁴Following the instructions he received from his father David, Solomon chose the groups of priests and gave them their duties. He also chose Levites to lead the praise and to help the priests with their daily duties. And he chose the gatekeepers by their

groups to serve at each gate. He did all this in the way that David, the man of God, had ordered. ¹⁵They were always careful to follow exactly all the king's instructions for the priests and Levites, including his instructions for the Temple storerooms.

¹⁶So Solomon completed his work on the LORD's Temple. Work began the day they laid the foundation and continued without stopping until the day the Temple was finished.

¹⁷Then Solomon went to Ezion Geber and to Elath, towns on the shore of the Red Sea in the land of Edom. ¹⁸King Hiram sent ships to Solomon. He sent his own officers to command the ships and also some skilled sailors. They sailed with some of Solomon's own men to Ophir^{§§} and brought back more than 15,000 kilogrammes* of gold to King Solomon.

The Queen of Sheba Visits Solomon

9 The queen of Sheba heard about Solomon, so she came to Jerusalem to test him with hard questions. She had with her a large group of servants. They brought camels carrying spices, jewels and a large amount of gold. She met Solomon and asked him all the questions that she could think of. ²Solomon answered all the questions. Nothing she asked was too hard for him to explain. ³The queen of Sheba saw that Solomon was very wise. She also saw the beautiful

palace he had built. ⁴She saw the food at the king's table. She saw his officials as they were seated. She saw the well-dressed servants—those who served the food and those who served the wine. And she saw all the burnt offerings[†] that Solomon offered in the LORD's Temple. She was so amazed, she could hardly breathe!

⁵Then she said to King Solomon, "Everything I heard in my country about your great works and your wisdom is true. ⁶I did not believe what people told me until I came and saw it with my own eyes. But you have twice as much wisdom as what I had heard. You are much greater than people told me. ⁷Your wives[‡] and those who serve you every day are very fortunate to be where they can hear the wise things you say. ⁸Praise the LORD your God! He was pleased with you and made you his king to rule his people. The LORD your God loves Israel and wants their kingdom to continue forever. That's why he made you their king to make decisions that are right and fair."

⁹Then the queen of Sheba gave King Solomon more than 4000 kilogrammes[¶] of gold, a huge amount of spices and precious stones. She gave Solomon more spices than anyone has ever brought into Israel.

¹⁰Hiram's servants brought gold from Ophir. They also brought jewels and

§§8:18 *Ophir* A place where there was much gold. Today no one knows where Ophir was. Also in 9:10.

*8:18 *15,000 kilogrammes* Literally, "450 talents".

†9:4 *burnt offerings* This follows the ancient Greek, Syriac and Latin Vulgate versions, as well as the traditional Hebrew text for the parallel in 1 Kgs 10:5. The Hebrew text here has "his upper room", which differs in spelling by one letter from "his burnt offerings".

‡9:7 *wives* This is from the ancient Greek version. The traditional Hebrew text has "men".

¶9:9 *4000 kilogrammes* Literally, "120 talents".

juniper wood.[§] ¹¹ King Solomon used this special wood to make steps for the LORD's Temple and the king's palace. Solomon also used the juniper wood to make lyres and harps for the singers. No one had ever seen such beautiful things like those made from the juniper wood in the country of Judah.

¹² King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba everything she asked for. He gave her more than she brought to give him. Then the queen of Sheba and her servants left and went back to their own country.

Solomon's Great Wealth

¹³ Every year Solomon got almost 23,000 kilogrammes** of gold. ¹⁴ In addition to the gold brought in by the travelling merchants and traders, all the kings of Arabia and the governors of the land also brought gold and silver to Solomon.

¹⁵ King Solomon made 200 large shields of hammered gold. He used almost 7 kilogrammes†† of gold for each shield. ¹⁶ He also made 300 smaller shields of hammered gold. He used almost 3 kilogrammes‡‡ of gold for each shield. The king put them in the Forest-of-Lebanon House.^{¶¶}

¹⁷ King Solomon also built a large throne with ivory decorations. It was covered with pure gold. ¹⁸ There were six steps leading up to the throne. The back of the throne was round at the top. There were armrests on both sides of the throne, and there were statues of lions

on the sides of the throne under the armrests. ¹⁹ There were also two lions on each of the six steps, one at each end. There was nothing like it in any other kingdom.

²⁰ All of Solomon's cups and glasses were made of gold. And all the dishes^{§§} in the Forest-of-Lebanon House were made from pure gold. Nothing in the palace was made from silver. There was so much gold that in Solomon's time people did not think silver was important!

²¹ The king also had a fleet of cargo ships* that sailed the sea with crews of King Hiram's sailors. Every three years the ships would return with a load of gold, silver, ivory, monkeys and baboons.

²² King Solomon became the richest and wisest of all the kings on earth. ²³ People everywhere wanted to see King Solomon and listen to the great wisdom that God had given him. ²⁴ Every year people came to see the king and brought gifts. They brought things made from gold and silver, clothes, weapons, spices, horses and mules.

²⁵ Solomon had 4000 stalls for his horses and chariots, and he had 12,000 horses. He kept these in the cities he had built for storing chariots and in Jerusalem. ²⁶ Solomon was the king over all the kings from the Euphrates River all the way to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt. ²⁷ He had brought a lot of wealth into Jerusalem. He had as much silver as there were rocks. And

§9:10 *juniper wood* Or "sandalwood". Literally, "algum wood".

**9:13 *23,000 kilogrammes* Literally, "666 talents".

††9:15 *7 kilogrammes* Literally, "600 shekels".

‡‡9:16 *3 kilogrammes* Literally, "300 shekels".

¶¶9:16 *Forest-of-Lebanon House* The largest of king Solomon's palace buildings. See 1 Kgs 7:2-5.

§§9:20 *dishes* The Hebrew word can mean "dishes", "tools" or "weapons".

*9:21 *cargo ships* Literally, "ships that could sail to Tarshish".

he had as much valuable cedar timber as the wood in all the sycamore trees on the hills of Judah. ²⁸ People brought horses to Solomon from Egypt and from all the other countries.

Solomon's Death

²⁹ Everything else Solomon did while he was king is recorded in the writings of Nathan the Prophet, in *The Prophecy of Ahijah* from Shiloh and in *The Visions of Iddo the Seer*. Iddo was a seer who wrote about Jeroboam son of Nebat. ³⁰ Solomon ruled in Jerusalem over all Israel for 40 years. ³¹ Then he died and was buried in Jerusalem, the city of his father David. Then Solomon's son Rehoboam became the next king.

Rehoboam Acts Foolishly

10 Rehoboam went to Shechem, where all the Israelites had gone to make him king. ² Jeroboam son of Nebat was still in Egypt, where he had gone to escape from Solomon. When he heard about the plans to make Rehoboam king, he returned from Egypt. ³ The people of Israel sent for Jeroboam, and together they went and spoke to Rehoboam. They said, ⁴ "Your father forced us to work very hard. Now, make it easier for us. Stop the heavy work that your father forced us to do, and we will serve you."

⁵ Rehoboam answered, "Come back to me in three days, and I will answer you." So the people left.

⁶ There were some older men who had helped Solomon make decisions when he was alive. So King Rehoboam asked these men what he should do. He said, "How do you think I should answer the people?"

⁷ They answered, "If you will be kind to these people and try to please them by agreeing to do what they want, they will be your servants from now on."

⁸ But Rehoboam did not listen to the advice from the older men. He went to the younger men he had grown up with, who now served him by giving him advice. ⁹ Rehoboam asked them, "What do you think? These people asked me to give them easier work than my father gave them. How do you think I should answer them?"

¹⁰ These young friends of his answered, "Here's how you should answer those people who asked you to give them easier work than your father did. Tell them, 'Compared to me, my father was nothing!'[†] ¹¹ My father forced you to work hard, but I will make you work much harder! My father beat you with whips, but I will use whips with sharp tips that sting."

¹² Three days later, Jeroboam and all the people came back to Rehoboam, just as he had told them to do. ¹³ But the king had cruel things to say to them. He did not follow the advice from the older men. ¹⁴ Instead, he did what his young friends had advised him to do and said, "My father forced you to work hard, but I will make you work much harder! My father beat you with whips, but I will use whips with sharp tips that sting."

¹⁵ So the king did not do what the people wanted. The LORD caused this to happen. He did this in order to keep the promise he had made to Jeroboam son of Nebat when he sent the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh to speak to him.

¹⁶ When the Israelites saw that the king refused to listen to them, they shouted back at him,

[†]**10:10 Compared ... nothing** Literally, "My little finger is thicker than my father's loins."

“David’s family of kings means nothing to us!

We will not get any of his land.

So, people of Israel, let’s go to our homes and let David take care of his own family!”

So the Israelites went home. ¹⁷ But Rehoboam still ruled over the Israelites who lived in the cities of Judah.

¹⁸ A man named Adoniram was one of the men who directed the workers. King Rehoboam sent Adoniram to talk to the people, but the Israelites threw stones at him until he died. King Rehoboam ran to his chariot and escaped to Jerusalem.

¹⁹ So Israel rebelled against the family of David, and this is how things are even today.

11 Rehoboam went back to Jerusalem and gathered an army of 180,000 men from the families of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin. Rehoboam wanted to go and fight against the Israelites and take back his kingdom. ² But the LORD spoke to a man of God named Shemaiah. He said, ³ “Speak to Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the Israelites of Judah and Benjamin. ⁴ Say to them, ‘The LORD says that you must not go to war against your brothers. Everyone, go home! I am the one who made all this happen.’” So all the men in Rehoboam’s army obeyed the LORD and went home. They did not attack Jeroboam.

Rehoboam Strengthens Judah

⁵ Rehoboam lived in Jerusalem and built strong cities in Judah to defend against attacks. ⁶ He repaired the cities of Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, ⁷ Beth Zur, Soco, Adullam, ⁸ Gath, Mareshah, Ziph, ⁹ Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, ¹⁰ Zorah,

Aijalon and Hebron. These cities in Judah and Benjamin were made strong.

¹¹ When Rehoboam made these cities strong, he put commanders in them. He also put supplies of food, oil and wine in them. ¹² He put shields and spears in every city and made the cities very strong. He kept the people and cities of Judah and Benjamin under his control.

¹³ The priests and the Levites from all the territories of Israel agreed with Rehoboam and joined him. ¹⁴ The Levites left their pastures and other property and came to Judah and Jerusalem. The Levites did this because Jeroboam and his sons refused to let them serve as priests to the LORD.

¹⁵ Jeroboam chose his own priests to serve in the places of worship, where he set up the goat and calf idols he had made. ¹⁶ But there were people in all the tribes of Israel who wanted to worship only the LORD, the God of Israel. So when the Levites left Israel, these people went with them to Jerusalem. There they could offer sacrifices to the LORD, the God their ancestors worshipped. ¹⁷ These people made the kingdom of Judah strong, and they supported Solomon’s son Rehoboam for three years. They did this because during that time they lived the way David and Solomon had lived.

Rehoboam’s Family

¹⁸ Rehoboam married Mahalath, the daughter of David’s son Jerimoth. Her mother was Abihail, the daughter of Jesse’s son Eliab. ¹⁹ Mahalath gave Rehoboam these sons: Jeush, Shemariah and Zaham. ²⁰ Then Rehoboam married Maacah. Maacah was Absalom’s granddaughter.[‡] And Maacah gave Rehoboam these children: Abijah, Attai, Ziza and

[‡]11:20 *granddaughter* Literally, “daughter”.

Shelomith. ²¹ Rehoboam loved Maacah more than he loved all his other wives and slave women. Rehoboam had 18 wives and 60 slave women. He was the father of 28 sons and 60 daughters.

²² Rehoboam chose Abijah to be the leader among his own brothers. He did this because he planned to make Abijah king. ²³ Rehoboam acted wisely and put his sons in charge of the strong cities. He sent a son to each of these cities in all the areas of Judah and Benjamin. And Rehoboam gave plenty of supplies to his sons. He also looked for wives for them.

King Shishak of Egypt Attacks Jerusalem

12 Rehoboam became a powerful king and took full control of his kingdom. Then he and all his people, Israel, stopped obeying the law of the LORD.

² During the fifth year that Rehoboam was king, King Shishak of Egypt came to attack Jerusalem. This happened because Rehoboam and the people of Judah rebelled against the LORD. ³ Shishak had 1200 chariots, 60,000 horses and an army that no one could count. In Shishak's large army there were Libyan soldiers, Sukkite soldiers and Ethiopian soldiers. ⁴ Shishak defeated the strong cities of Judah, and then he brought his army to Jerusalem.

⁵ Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and the leaders of Judah. The leaders of Judah had gathered in Jerusalem because they all were afraid of Shishak. Shemaiah said to Rehoboam and the leaders of Judah, "This is what the LORD says: 'Rehoboam, you and the people of Judah have left me and refused to obey my law. So now I will leave you to face Shishak without my help.'"

⁶ Then the leaders of Judah and King Rehoboam were sorry and humbled

themselves. They said, "The LORD is right."

⁷ The LORD saw that the king and the leaders of Judah had humbled themselves. Then the message from the Lord came to Shemaiah. The LORD said, "The king and the leaders humbled themselves, so I will not destroy them. I will save them soon. I will not use Shishak to pour out my anger on Jerusalem. ⁸ But the people of Jerusalem will become Shishak's servants. This will happen so that they will know that serving me is different from serving the kings of other nations."

⁹ Shishak took the treasures from the LORD's Temple and from the king's palace. He also took the gold shields that Solomon had made. ¹⁰ King Rehoboam made more shields to put in their places, but they were made from bronze. He gave them to the guards on duty at the palace gates. ¹¹ Every time the king went to the LORD's Temple, the guards took out the shields and went with him. After they were finished, they put the shields back on the wall in the guardroom.

¹² Rehoboam humbled himself, and the LORD stopped being angry with him and did not completely destroy him. Some good things were happening in Judah.

¹³ King Rehoboam made himself a powerful king in Jerusalem. He was 41 years old when he became king of Judah. Rehoboam ruled for 17 years in Jerusalem, the city the LORD chose for his own. He chose this city from all the other cities of Israel. Rehoboam's mother was Naamah. She was an Ammonite. ¹⁴ Rehoboam did evil because he didn't decide in his heart to obey the LORD.

¹⁵ All the things Rehoboam did while he was king are recorded in the writings of Shemaiah the prophet and in the

writings of Iddo the seer. Those men wrote family histories. Rehoboam and Jeroboam were always at war with each other.¹⁶ Rehoboam died and was buried in the City of David. His son Abijah became the next king after him.

Abijah, King of Judah

13 Abijah became the new king of Judah during the eighteenth year that Jeroboam son of Nebat ruled Israel.² Abijah ruled in Jerusalem for three years. His mother was Maacah, the daughter of Uriel, from the town of Gibeah.

And there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam.³ Abijah's army had 400,000 brave soldiers that he led into battle. Jeroboam's army had 800,000 brave soldiers that were ready for battle.

⁴Then Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim in the hill country of Ephraim and said:

“Jeroboam and all Israel, listen to me!⁵ You should know that the LORD, the God of Israel, made a lasting agreement⁴ with David and his sons, which gave them the right to rule over Israel forever.⁶ Jeroboam son of Nebat was one of the servants of David's son Solomon, but Jeroboam turned against his master.⁷ Then some good-for-nothing friends joined with Jeroboam, and together they turned against Rehoboam, Solomon's son. Rehoboam was young and did not have enough experience to stop them.

⁸“Now, you people think you can defeat the LORD's kingdom—the kingdom that is ruled by David's sons. You have so many people with you and you have the golden calves—the gods that Jeroboam

made for you.⁹ You threw out the LORD's priests, the descendants of Aaron. And you threw out the Levites. Then you chose your own priests, as every other nation on earth does. And now, anyone who will bring a young bull and seven rams can become a priest to serve these ‘no-gods’.

¹⁰“But as for us, the LORD is our God. We people of Judah have not refused to obey God. We have not left him. The priests who serve the LORD are Aaron's sons, and the Levites help the priests in their work.¹¹ They offer burnt offerings and burn incense of spices to the LORD every morning and every evening. They put the holy bread in rows on the table in the Temple. And they take care of the lamps on the gold lampstand so that it shines bright every evening. We very carefully serve the LORD our God, but you people have abandoned him.¹² That's why God is with us. He is our leader, and it is his priests who will lead us into battle against you with the sound of their trumpets. So, people of Israel, give up! Don't try to fight against the LORD, the God your ancestors worshipped, because you will not win!”

¹³But while Abijah was speaking, Jeroboam sent some of his troops behind Abijah's army of Judeans. The rest of his troops attacked the Judeans from the front.¹⁴ The Judeans looked around and saw that Jeroboam's troops were attacking from the front and the rear. They cried out to the LORD for help, and the priests blew the trumpets.¹⁵ Then the Judeans began to shout. When the men of Judah shouted and followed Abijah

⁴13:5 *lasting agreement* Literally, “agreement of salt”.

into battle, God defeated Jeroboam and the whole army of Israel before them. ¹⁶The Israelites ran away from the men of Judah, and God let the Judeans capture them all. ¹⁷Abijah's army defeated the army of Israel so badly that 500,000 of the best troops of Israel were killed. ¹⁸So at that time the Israelites were defeated, and the people of Judah won. The army from Judah won because they depended on the LORD, the God their ancestors worshipped.

¹⁹Abijah's army chased Jeroboam's army, and they captured the towns of Bethel, Jeshanah and Ephron from Jeroboam. They captured the towns and the small villages near them.

²⁰Jeroboam never became strong again while Abijah was alive. The LORD killed Jeroboam, ²¹but Abijah became more powerful. He married 14 women and was the father of 22 sons and 16 daughters. ²²Everything else Abijah did is recorded in the books of the prophet Iddo.

14 When Abijah died, he was buried in the City of David. His son Asa became the new king after him. There was peace in the country for ten years during Asa's time.

Asa, King of Judah

²Asa did what the LORD his God said was good and right. ³He took away the foreign altars and the places of worship. He also smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. ⁴He commanded the people of Judah to follow the LORD, the God their ancestors worshipped, and to obey his laws and commands. ⁵He also removed the places of worship and incense altars from every town in Judah. So the kingdom had peace when Asa was king. ⁶Asa built strong cities in Judah while there was

peace there. He had no war in these years because the LORD gave him peace.

⁷Asa said to the people of Judah, "Let's build these towns and make walls around them. Let's make towers, gates and bars on the gates. This country is still ours because we have followed the LORD our God. He has given us peace all around us." So they built the towns and had success.

⁸Asa had an army of 300,000 men from the tribe of Judah and 280,000 men from the tribe of Benjamin. The men from Judah carried large shields and spears. The men from Benjamin carried small shields and shot arrows from bows. All of them were strong and brave soldiers.

⁹Then Zerah from Ethiopia came out to fight against Asa's army. He had 1,000,000 men and 300 chariots in his army. His army went as far as the town of Mareshah. ¹⁰Asa went out to fight against Zerah. Asa's army prepared for battle in the Valley of Zephathah at Mareshah.

¹¹Asa called out to the LORD his God and said, "LORD, only you can help weak people against those who are strong! Help us, LORD our God! We depend on you. We fight against this large army in your name. LORD, you are our God! Don't let anyone defeat you!"

¹²Then the LORD used Asa's army from Judah to defeat the Ethiopian army. And the army ran away. ¹³Asa's army chased the Ethiopian army all the way to the town of Gerar. The Ethiopian troops were totally defeated—crushed by the LORD and his army. And the soldiers of Judah carried many valuable things away from the enemy. ¹⁴Asa and his army defeated all the towns around Gerar because the people who lived there were now afraid of the LORD. Those towns were full of valuable

things that Asa's army took away. ¹⁵His army also attacked the camps where the shepherds lived and took many sheep and camels. Then they went back to Jerusalem.

Asa's Changes

15 The Spirit of God came on Azariah son of Oded. ²Azariah went to meet Asa and said, "Listen to me, Asa and all you people of Judah and Benjamin. The LORD will be with you as long as you stay with him. If you look for him, you will find him. But if you leave him, he will leave you. ³For a long time Israel was without the true God. And they were without a priest to teach them and without the law. ⁴But when the Israelites had trouble, they turned again to the LORD, the God of Israel. They looked for him and found him. ⁵In those times of trouble, no one could travel safely. There was great trouble in all the nations. ⁶One nation would destroy another nation, and one city would destroy another city. This was happening because God gave them all kinds of trouble. ⁷But Asa, you and the people of Judah and Benjamin, be strong. Don't be weak and don't give up, because you will get a reward for your good work!"

⁸Asa felt encouraged when he heard these words and the message from Azariah son of [§]Oded the prophet. Then he removed the disgusting idols from the whole area of Judah and Benjamin. He also removed the hated idols from the towns he had captured in the hill country of Ephraim. And he repaired the LORD's altar that was in front of the porch of the LORD's Temple.

⁹Then Asa gathered all the people from Judah and Benjamin and the peo-

ple from the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon who had moved from the land of Israel to live in the country of Judah. A great many of these people came to Judah because they saw that the LORD, Asa's God, was with him.

¹⁰Asa and these people gathered in Jerusalem on the third month in the fifteenth year of Asa's rule. ¹¹At that time they sacrificed 700 bulls and 7000 sheep and goats to the LORD. Asa's army had taken the animals and other valuable things from their enemies. ¹²Then they made an agreement to serve the LORD with all their heart and with all their soul. He is the God their ancestors served. ¹³Anyone who refused to serve the LORD God of Israel was to be killed. It did not matter if that person was important or not or if that person was a man or woman. ¹⁴Then Asa and the people made an oath to the LORD. They shouted it out loudly and blew their trumpets and horns. ¹⁵All the people of Judah were happy about the oath, because they had promised with all their heart to follow God. They looked for God and found him, so the LORD gave them peace in all the country.

¹⁶King Asa also took away the right of his grandmother Maacah to be queen. He did this because she had set up one of those disgusting poles to honour the goddess Asherah. Asa cut down that Asherah pole, smashed it into small pieces and burned the pieces in the Kidron Valley. ¹⁷Asa did not destroy the places of worship, even though he was faithful to God all his life.

¹⁸Asa and his father had given some special gifts to God. Asa put these gifts of gold, silver and other things into the

§15:8 Azariah son of This is from the ancient Syriac version. Also, the Latin Vulgate. These words are missing from the traditional Hebrew text. See 15:1.

Temple. ¹⁹There was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's rule. ^{**}

Asa's Last Years

16 In Asa's thirty-sixth year as king, ^{††} King Baasha sent his army into Judah and captured the town of Ramah. He made it a military headquarters to keep anyone from leaving or entering King Asa's territory in Judah. ²So Asa took gold and silver from the treasuries of the LORD's Temple and the king's palace. He gave it to his officials and sent them to King Ben-Hadad of Aram. Ben-Hadad was the son of Tabrimmon. Tabrimmon was the son of Hezion. Damascus was Ben-Hadad's capital city. ³Asa sent this message: "My father and your father had a peace agreement. Now I want to make a peace agreement with you. I am sending you this gift of gold and silver. Please break your treaty with King Baasha of Israel and make him leave us alone."

⁴King Ben-Hadad made that agreement with King Asa and sent his army to fight against the Israelite towns of Ijon, Dan, Abel Maim and the cities in Naphthali where supplies were stored. ⁵When Baasha heard about these attacks, he stopped building up Ramah and went back to Tirzah. He stopped all the work he was doing. ⁶Then King Asa gave an order that required everyone in Judah to help. They had to go to Ramah and remove all the stone and wood that Baasha had used to make the town stronger. They took it all to Geba, a town in the

territory of Benjamin, and to Mizpah. They used it to make those two cities stronger.

⁷At that time Hanani the seer came to King Asa of Judah and said to him, "Asa, you depended on the king of Aram to help you instead of the LORD your God. That's why the king's army has escaped from you. ⁸Remember what happened when you fought the Ethiopians and the Libyans who also had a powerful army with many chariots and horses? You depended on the LORD to help you then, and he let you defeat them. ⁹The LORD is always watching to find people anywhere on earth who are faithful to him so that he can give them strength. Asa, you did a foolish thing, and now you will always be at war."

¹⁰Asa was angry with Hanani because of what he said. He was so angry that he put Hanani in prison. And that's when he began to do cruel things to some of his people.

¹¹Everything else Asa did while he was king is recorded in the book, *The History of the Kings of Judah and Israel*. ¹²Asa's feet became infected in his thirty-ninth year as king. ^{‡‡}The infection was very serious, but Asa did not go to the LORD for help. He went to the doctors instead. ¹³Asa died in his forty-first year as king. ^{¶¶} ¹⁴He was buried in the tomb that he had ordered to be cut out of rock in the City of David. They laid him on a bed covered with spices and a mixture of perfumes, and they lit a huge fire to honour him. ^{§§}

^{**}15:19 *thirty-fifth year of Asa's rule* About the year 880 BC.

^{††}16:1 *thirty-sixth year as king* About the year 879 BC.

^{‡‡}16:12 *thirty-ninth year as king* About the year 875 BC.

^{¶¶}16:13 *forty-first year as king* About the year 873 BC.

^{§§}16:14 This probably means the people burned spices in honour of Asa, but it could also mean they burned his body.

Jehoshaphat, King of Judah

17 Asa's son Jehoshaphat became the new king after him. Jehoshaphat made Judah strong so that they could fight against Israel. ²He put troops of soldiers in all the towns of Judah that were made into fortresses. He built fortresses in Judah and in the towns of Ephraim that his father Asa had captured.

³The LORD was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the example of his father.* He did not follow the Baal idols. ⁴He followed the God his father had worshipped. He obeyed God's commands and did not do the evil things the Israelites were doing. ⁵The LORD made Jehoshaphat a powerful king over Judah. All the people of Judah brought him gifts, so he became very wealthy and honoured. ⁶He wanted more than anything else to follow the LORD. He removed the places of worship and the Asherah poles from the country of Judah.

⁷During the third year of Jehoshaphat's rule,† he sent his leaders to teach in the towns of Judah. These leaders were Ben Hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel and Micaiah. ⁸Jehoshaphat also sent Levites with these leaders. These Levites were Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah and Tobijah. He also sent the priests Elishama and Jehoram. ⁹These leaders, Levites and priests taught the people in Judah. They had the *Book of the Law of the LORD* with them. They

went through all the towns of Judah and taught the people.

¹⁰The nations near Judah were afraid of the LORD, so they did not start a war against Jehoshaphat. ¹¹Some of the Philistines brought silver and other gifts to Jehoshaphat. Some Arabs brought flocks to Jehoshaphat. They brought 7700 rams and 7700 goats to him.

¹²Jehoshaphat became more and more powerful. He built fortresses and towns for storing supplies in Judah, ¹³and he kept many supplies in these cities.

Jehoshaphat kept an army of trained soldiers in Jerusalem. ¹⁴These soldiers were from two tribes, and they are listed here by families:

From the tribe of Judah,

Adnah was the commander of 300,000 soldiers.

¹⁵Jehohanan was the commander of 280,000 soldiers.

¹⁶Amasiah son of Zicri was the commander of 200,000 soldiers. He had volunteered to serve the LORD in this way.

¹⁷From the tribe of Benjamin,

Eliada, a war hero, was the commander of 200,000 soldiers who used bows, arrows and shields,

¹⁸and Jehozabad was the commander of 180,000 men armed for battle.

¹⁹All these soldiers served King Jehoshaphat. The king also had other men in the fortresses throughout the country of Judah.

Micaiah Warns King Ahab

18 Jehoshaphat became very rich and famous. He made an agreement with King Ahab through marriage.‡

*17:3 *his father* Some Hebrew copies have "his father David".

†17:7 *third year of Jehoshaphat's rule* About the year 871 BC.

‡18:1 Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, married Athaliah, Ahab's daughter. See 2 Chr. 21:6.

²A few years later, Jehoshaphat visited Ahab in the city of Samaria. Ahab sacrificed many sheep and cattle for Jehoshaphat and the people with him. Ahab encouraged Jehoshaphat to join in an attack on the city of Ramoth Gilead. ³King Ahab of Israel said to King Jehoshaphat of Judah, “Will you go with me to attack Ramoth Gilead?” Jehoshaphat answered, “Yes, you and I will be as one—my men will be as yours. We will be with you in battle. ⁴But first let’s ask the LORD for advice.”

⁵So Ahab called a meeting of the prophets. There were about 400 prophets at that time. Ahab asked the prophets, “Should we go and attack Ramoth Gilead or not?”

The prophets answered Ahab, “Yes, because God will let you defeat Ramoth Gilead.”

⁶But Jehoshaphat said, “Doesn’t the LORD have another prophet here? Let’s ask him.”

⁷King Ahab answered, “Yes, there is another prophet. His name is Micaiah son of Imlah. But I hate him because his message from the LORD is never good news for me. He always says that something bad is going to happen.”

Jehoshaphat said, “As king, you should not say things like that!”

⁸So King Ahab told one of his officers to go and find Micaiah.

⁹At that time the two kings were sitting on their thrones with their royal robes on. They were at the judgement place near the gates of Samaria. All the prophets were standing before them, prophesying. ¹⁰One of the prophets was named Zedekiah son of Kenaanah. Zedekiah made some iron horns^f and said to Ahab, “This is what the LORD says, ‘You will use these iron horns to

fight against the army of Aram. You will defeat them and destroy them.’” ¹¹All the other prophets agreed with Zedekiah and said, “Your army should march now to go and fight against the Arameans at Ramoth Gilead. You will win the battle. The LORD will let you defeat them.”

¹²While this was happening, the officer went to find Micaiah. When he found him, the officer told him, “All the other prophets have said that the king will succeed, so you should say the same thing.”

¹³But Micaiah answered, “As surely as the LORD lives, I can say only what my God says.”

¹⁴Micaiah went and stood before King Ahab. The king asked him, “Micaiah, should we go and attack the Arameans at Ramoth Gilead or not?”

Micaiah answered, “Yes, go and win the battle! You will defeat them.”

¹⁵But Ahab answered, “How many times do I have to tell you? Tell me the truth. What does the LORD say?”

¹⁶So Micaiah answered, “I can see the army of Israel scattered all over the hills, like sheep with no one to lead them. This is what the LORD says: These men have no leaders. Let them go home in peace.”

¹⁷Then Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, “See, I told you! This prophet never has a good message for me. He always says that something bad is going to happen.”

¹⁸Micaiah said, “Listen to this message from the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne. All of heaven’s army was standing around him, some on his left side and some on his right side.

¹⁹The LORD said, ‘Which of you will go and trick King Ahab of Israel into attacking the Arameans at Ramoth Gilead so that he will be killed?’ The angels discussed many different plans. ^{20–21}Then a spirit went and stood before the LORD

^f18:10 *iron horns* These were a symbol of great strength.

and said, 'I will trick him!' The LORD asked, 'How will you do it?' The spirit replied, 'I will go to Ahab's prophets and cause them to speak lies.' So the Lord said, 'Yes, that will trick him. Go out and do it!'

²² "So that is what has happened here. The LORD made your prophets lie to you. The LORD himself decided to bring this disaster to you."

²³ Then the prophet Zedekiah went over to Micaiah and slapped him on the face. Zedekiah said, "How is it that the Spirit of the LORD left me and went to speak to you?"

²⁴ Micaiah answered, "Listen! You will see that what I said will happen. And you will be hiding in the most secret place you can find!"

²⁵ Then King Ahab ordered one of his officers to arrest Micaiah. Ahab said, "Arrest him and take him back to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son. ²⁶ Tell them to put Micaiah in prison. Give him nothing but bread and water to eat. Keep him there until I come home safely from the battle."

²⁷ Micaiah said to King Ahab, "If you come back alive from the battle, it will mean that what I told you was not from the LORD." Then he said to the others there, "Remember what I said, everyone!"

The Battle at Ramoth Gilead

²⁸ King Ahab of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah went to fight the Arameans at Ramoth Gilead. ²⁹ Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "When we go into battle, I will dress differently so that no one will recognize me. But you wear your royal uniform." So the king of Israel went into battle dressed like an ordinary soldier.

³⁰ The king of Aram had 32 chariot commanders. He gave them this com-

mand, "Don't go after anyone except the king of Israel, no matter how important they are." ³¹ When the chariot commanders saw King Jehoshaphat, they thought he was the king of Israel, and they went to attack him. Jehoshaphat started shouting, and the LORD helped him. God made the chariot commanders turn away from him. ³² When the commanders saw that he was not the king of Israel, they stopped chasing him.

³³ Then an Aramean soldier pulled back on his bow and shot an arrow into the air without aiming. The arrow happened to hit the king of Israel where two parts of his armour came together. King Ahab said to his chariot driver, "I've been hit! Turn the chariot around and take me off the battlefield!"

³⁴ The battle continued all that day. King Ahab leaned against the side of his chariot to hold himself up as he looked out towards the Arameans. He watched until evening. Then, just as the sun was setting, he died.

19 King Jehoshaphat of Judah came back safely to his house in Jerusalem. ² The prophet Jehu son of Hanani went out to meet the king. Jehu said to him, "Why did you help those who are wicked? Why do you love those who hate the LORD? That's the reason the LORD is angry with you now. ³ But you did some good things in your life. You removed the Asherah poles from this country, and you decided to ask God for his advice."

Jehoshaphat Chooses Judges

⁴ Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem, but he would go out among the people throughout Judah, from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim. He helped the people turn back to the LORD, the God their ancestors worshipped. ⁵ Jehoshaphat went from town to town

and appointed judges in each of the fortresses of Judah. ⁶ He told the judges, “Be careful in what you are doing, because you are not judging for people, but for the LORD. He will be with you when you make decisions. ⁷ You must honour the LORD. Protect justice and do what is right because the LORD our God is fair. He does not treat some people as if they are more important than others, and he does not accept bribes to change his judgements.”

⁸ In Jerusalem, Jehoshaphat chose some of the Levites, priests and heads of the families of Israel to be judges. These men lived in Jerusalem and used the law of the LORD to settle problems among the people. ⁹ Jehoshaphat commanded them, “You must serve faithfully with all your heart, honouring the LORD. ¹⁰ People from cities around the country will bring their problems to you. You will listen to cases where people have broken a law or a command or maybe have killed someone. In all these cases you must warn the people not to sin against the LORD so that he will not get angry and punish you and your people.

¹¹ “Amariah is the high priest, so he will make the final decision about the people’s responsibilities to the LORD. Zebadiah son of Ishmael is the leader of the tribe of Judah, so he will make the final decision about the people’s responsibilities to the king. The Levites will serve as scribes for you. Be brave and do what is right! May the LORD be with those of you who are good judges.”

Jehoshaphat Faces War

20 Later, the Moabites, the Ammonites and some Meunites[§]

came to start a war with Jehoshaphat. ² Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, “There is a large army coming against you from Edom. They are coming from the other side of the Dead Sea. They are already in Hazazon Tamar!” (Hazazon Tamar is also called En Gedi.) ³ Jehoshaphat became afraid, and he decided to ask the LORD what to do. He announced a time of fasting for everyone in Judah. ⁴ The people of Judah came together to ask the LORD for help. They came from all the towns of Judah to ask for the LORD’s help. ⁵ Jehoshaphat was in the new courtyard of the LORD’s Temple. He stood up in the meeting of the people from Judah and Jerusalem ⁶ and said:

“LORD God of our ancestors, you are the God in heaven. You rule over all the kingdoms in all the nations. You have power and strength. No one can stand against you. ⁷ You are our God! You forced the people living in this land to leave. You did this before your people Israel came here. Abraham was your friend, and you gave this land to his descendants forever. ⁸ His descendants lived in this land and built a Temple for your name. ⁹ They said, ‘If trouble comes to us—the sword, punishment, diseases or famine—we will stand in front of this Temple and in front of you. Your name is on this Temple. We will shout to you when we are in trouble. Then you will hear and save us.’

¹⁰ “But now, here are men from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir. You would not let the Israelites enter their lands when they came

[§]**20:1 Meunites** This is found in some copies of the ancient Greek version. The traditional Hebrew text has “Ammonites”.

out of Egypt.** So the Israelites turned away and didn't destroy them. ¹¹But see how they reward those people for not destroying them. They have come to force us out of your land that you gave to us. ¹²Our God, punish those people. We don't have the strength to stop this large army that is coming against us. We don't know what to do! We are looking to you for help."^{††}

¹³All the men of Judah stood before the LORD with their wives, babies and children. ¹⁴During the meeting, the Spirit of the LORD came on Jahaziel son of Zechariah. (Zechariah was the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah.) Jahaziel was a Levite from the family of Asaph. ¹⁵He said, "Listen to me King Jehoshaphat and everyone living in Judah and Jerusalem! The LORD says this to you: 'Don't be afraid or worry about this large army, because the battle is not your battle. It is God's battle! ¹⁶Tomorrow, they will come up through the Ziz Pass. You must go down to them. You will find them at the end of the valley on the other side of the desert of Jeruel. ¹⁷You will not have to fight this battle. Just stand there and watch the LORD save you. Judah and Jerusalem, don't be afraid. Don't worry, because the LORD is with you. So go out to stand against those people tomorrow.'"

¹⁸Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground. And all the people of Judah and Jerusalem bowed down before the LORD and worshipped him. ¹⁹The Levites from the Kohath family groups and the Korah family stood up to praise the LORD, the God of Israel. They sang very loudly.

²⁰Early the next morning, Jehoshaphat's army went out into the desert of Tekoa. As they marched out, Jehoshaphat stood there saying, "Listen to me, men of Judah and Jerusalem. Have faith in the LORD your God, and you will stand strong! Have faith in his prophets, and you will succeed!"

²¹Jehoshaphat encouraged the men and gave them instructions. Then he had the Temple singers stand up in their special clothes to praise the LORD. They marched in front of the army and sang, "Give thanks to the LORD!

His faithful love will continue forever."

²²As they began to sing and to praise God, the LORD set an ambush for the army from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir who had come to attack Judah. And the enemy was defeated! ²³The Ammonites and the Moabites started to fight the men from Mount Seir. After they had killed them, the Ammonites and Moabites turned on themselves and killed each other.

²⁴The men from Judah arrived at the lookout point in the desert. They looked for the enemy, but what they saw was a huge army of dead bodies on the ground. Not a single enemy soldier had escaped. ²⁵Jehoshaphat and his army came to take things from the dead bodies. They found many cattle and large amounts of supplies, clothes, and other valuable things. It was more than Jehoshaphat and his men could carry away. There was so much that they spent three days taking everything from the dead bodies.

²⁶On the fourth day Jehoshaphat and his army met in the Valley of Beracah.^{‡‡} They praised the LORD. That is why peo-

**20:10 *You would not let ... Egypt* See Deut. 2:4-9,19.

††20:12 *We are ... help* Literally, "But our eyes are on you!"

‡‡20:26 *Beracah* This word means "blessing" or "praise".

ple still call that place, “The Valley of Beracah”.

²⁷All the men from Judah and Jerusalem were very happy as they marched back to Jerusalem with Jehoshaphat leading them. The LORD made them very happy when he defeated their enemy. ²⁸They entered Jerusalem with lyres, harps and trumpets and went to the Temple of the LORD.

²⁹People in all the surrounding kingdoms became afraid of God when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. ³⁰That is why there was peace for Jehoshaphat’s kingdom—his God brought him rest from the enemies that were all around him.

Summary of Jehoshaphat’s Rule

³¹Jehoshaphat ruled over the country of Judah. He was 35 years old when he became king, and he ruled for 25 years in Jerusalem. His mother was Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi. ³²Like his father Asa, Jehoshaphat was a good king and continued to do what the LORD says is right. ³³But he did not destroy the places where people went to worship false gods. And the people never gave themselves completely to follow the God their ancestors had worshipped.

³⁴Everything else Jehoshaphat did while he was king is recorded in *The Official Records of Jehu Son of Hanani*. It was copied and included in the book, *The History of the Kings of Israel*.

³⁵Later on, King Jehoshaphat of Judah made an agreement with Ahaziah, an evil king of Israel. ³⁶Jehoshaphat joined with Ahaziah to build some cargo

ships[¶] at Ezion Geber. ³⁷There was a man from the town of Mareshah named Eliezer son of Dodavahu. He spoke against Jehoshaphat and said, “Jehoshaphat, since you have joined with Ahaziah, the LORD will destroy what you have built.” The ships were wrecked and never sailed.

21 Jehoshaphat died and was buried in the tombs of his family in Jerusalem, the city of his ancestor David. Then his son Jehoram became the next king. ²Jehoram’s brothers were Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah, Michael and Shephatiah. They were the sons of King Jehoshaphat of Judah.^{§§} ³Jehoshaphat gave his sons many gifts of silver, gold and other valuable things. He also gave them strong fortresses in Judah. But Jehoshaphat gave the kingdom to Jehoram because he was his oldest son.

Jehoram, King of Judah

⁴Jehoram took over his father’s kingdom and became a powerful king. Then he ordered that all his brothers and some of the leaders of Israel be killed. ⁵Jehoram was 32 years old when he began to rule. He ruled eight years in Jerusalem. ⁶He was a wicked king and did the same evil things that the other kings of Israel had done. He was as wicked as King Ahab and his family. In fact, Jehoram married one of Ahab’s daughters. He did what the LORD says is evil. ⁷But because of the agreement he had made with David, the LORD would not destroy David’s family. He had promised that someone from David’s family would always rule as king.*

⁸In Jehoram’s time, Edom broke away from Judah’s rule. The people of Edom

[¶]20:36 *cargo ships* Literally, “ships that could sail to Tarshish”.

^{§§}21:2 *Judah* Literally, “Israel”.

*21:7 *that someone ... as king* Literally, “to give a lamp to him and his sons forever”.

chose a king for themselves. ⁹ So Jehoram went with all his commanders and chariots to attack Edom. The Edomite army surrounded them. But during the night, Jehoram attacked the Edomites and escaped. ¹⁰ Since that time, the Edomites have been free from Judah's rule. At about that same time, Libnah also broke away from Judah. This all happened because Jehoram left the LORD, the God Jehoram's ancestors had worshipped. ¹¹ Jehoram also built places of worship on the hills in Judah. He led the people of Jerusalem and all of Judah away from the LORD by causing them to worship other gods.

¹² Jehoram received this message from Elijah the prophet:

"This is what the LORD, the God your father David worshipped, says: Jehoram, you have not lived the way your father Jehoshaphat lived. You have not lived the way King Asa of Judah lived. ¹³ But you have lived the way the kings of Israel lived. You have caused the people of Judah and Jerusalem to stop doing what God wants. That is what Ahab and his family did. They were unfaithful to God. You have killed your brothers, and they were better than you. ¹⁴ So now, the LORD will soon punish your people with terrible suffering. He will punish your children, your wives and all your property. ¹⁵ You will have a painful disease in your intestines that will get worse and worse. Your intestines will finally come out."

¹⁶ The LORD caused the Philistines and the Arabs living near the Ethiopians to be angry with Jehoram. ¹⁷ They

attacked Judah and carried away all the riches in the king's palace. They also took Jehoram's sons and wives. Only Jehoram's youngest son, Ahaziah,[†] was left.

¹⁸ After this happened, the LORD made Jehoram sick with a disease in his intestines that could not be cured. ¹⁹ His intestines fell out two years later because of his disease. He died in great pain. The people did not make a large fire to honour Jehoram as they had done for his father. ²⁰ Jehoram was 32 years old when he became king. He ruled eight years in Jerusalem. No one was sad when he died. The people buried Jehoram in the City of David, but not in the graves where the kings are buried.

Ahaziah, King of Judah

22 The people of Jerusalem chose Ahaziah to be the new king in Jehoram's place. Ahaziah was Jehoram's youngest son. The people who came with the Arabs to attack Jehoram's camp killed all of Jehoram's older sons. So Ahaziah began to rule in Judah. ² He was 22 years old when he began to rule.[‡] He ruled for one year in Jerusalem. His mother was Athaliah, the granddaughter of Omri. ³ Ahaziah also lived the way Ahab's family lived because his mother encouraged him to do wrong. ⁴ Ahaziah did what the LORD says is evil. That is also what Ahab's family had done. And Ahab's family gave advice to Ahaziah after his father died, and their bad advice led to his death. ⁵⁻⁶ Ahaziah followed the advice of Ahab's family and joined King Joram to fight against King Hazael from Aram. They fought near the town of Ramoth in Gilead. Joram, the son of

[†]21:17 *Ahaziah* Literally, "Jehoahaz".

[‡]22:2 *He was ... rule* The traditional Hebrew text has "42 years old". 2 Kgs 8:26 says Ahaziah was 22 years old when he began to rule.

King Ahab of Israel, was wounded in the battle. He went to the town of Jezreel to heal from his wounds. King Ahaziah^f went there later to visit him.

⁷God caused Ahaziah's death when he went to visit Joram. When Ahaziah arrived, he went out with Joram to meet Jehu son of Nimshi. The LORD chose Jehu to destroy Ahab's family.

⁸While Jehu was punishing Ahab's family, he found the leaders of Judah and Ahaziah's relatives who served Ahaziah. He killed all of them. ⁹Then Jehu looked for Ahaziah. Jehu's men caught him when he tried to hide in the city of Samaria. They brought him to Jehu, who said to kill him. They buried him to show respect because the people said, "Ahaziah was a descendant of Jehoshaphat, who followed the LORD with all his heart." Ahaziah's family had no power to hold the kingdom of Judah together.

Queen Athaliah

¹⁰When Athaliah, the mother of King Ahaziah, heard that her son had been killed, she made plans to kill anyone in his family who might become the next king of Judah. ¹¹But one of Ahaziah's baby sons named Joash was kept alive by his aunt Jehosheba, who was Ahaziah's sister. Their father was King Jehoram. Jehosheba was also the wife of a priest named Jehoiada. When Ahaziah's children were about to be killed, Jehosheba took Joash and hid him in a bedroom^g with his nurse. Athaliah never knew that he was there, so Joash was not killed. ¹²Joash stayed hidden at God's Temple for six years.

During that time, Athaliah ruled as queen over the land of Judah.

Priest Jehoiada and King Joash

23 But in the seventh year, Jehoiada the priest had the courage to take action. He made an agreement with five captains of the army. These were Azariah son of Jeroham, Ishmael son of Jehohanan, Azariah son of Obed, Maa-seiah son of Adaiah and Elishaphat son of Zicri. ²They went around and gathered the Levites from all the towns of Judah. They also gathered the leaders of the families of Israel. They all came to Jerusalem ³and gathered at God's Temple, where all these leaders promised their loyalty to Joash as king.

Jehoiada said to them, "Here is the son of King Ahaziah. He will now begin his rule as the new king. This agrees with what the LORD promised David's descendants—that they would always rule his people. ⁴Now, this is what you must do: one-third of you priests and Levites who are on duty on the Sabbath must guard the doors. ⁵And one-third of you will be at the king's palace, and one-third of you will be at the Foundation Gate. But all the other people will stay in the courtyards of the LORD's Temple. ⁶Only the priests and Levites who serve in the LORD's Temple are permitted to enter it. They are the only ones who have been made holy. Don't let anyone else enter. All the others must do only the work the LORD has given them. ⁷You Levites must surround the king and stay with him wherever he goes. Keep your swords ready to kill anyone who tries to enter the Temple."

^f22:5-6 *Ahaziah* Literally, "Azariah".

^g22:11 *bedroom* Verse 12 shows that this room was in the Temple area, where only the priests and their families could go. As the wife of a priest, Jehosheba could use this room to hide Joash.

⁸The Levites and all the people of Judah did everything that Jehoiada the priest commanded. This included his order that the men were not allowed to go home when they finished their service on the Sabbath. So each captain had all his men together. As the men in each group came off duty, they stayed to join those who were coming on duty. ⁹Jehoiada gave the captains the spears and the large and small shields that had belonged to King David and were kept in God's Temple. ¹⁰He placed all the men in a line around the Temple and the altar from the right side to the left side. Every man had his weapon in his hand, ready to protect the king. ¹¹Then Jehoiada and his sons brought out the king's son Joash and put the crown on his head. They gave him authority to rule** and announced that he was the new king. Jehoiada and his sons anointed Joash, and everyone shouted, "Long live the king!"

¹²Athaliah heard the noise of the people running to the Temple and praising the king. So she went to the LORD's Temple where they were. ¹³There she saw the king standing by the royal pillar at the front entrance. The captains and trumpeters were standing beside the king. And all the people were shouting for joy and blowing trumpets. The singers were playing on musical instruments and leading the people in singing praises. When Athaliah saw all this, she tore her clothes to show how upset she was. Then she shouted, "Treason! Treason!"††

¹⁴Jehoiada the priest called out the army captains and said to them, "Take Athaliah away and kill her. Surround her with soldiers and kill anyone who fol-

lows her." He had said that she must not be killed in the LORD's Temple. ¹⁵The men grabbed Athaliah when she came to the entrance of the Horse Gate at the king's palace and killed her there.

¹⁶Jehoiada had the king and the people make an agreement promising that they would be the LORD's people. ¹⁷Then all the people went to the temple of Baal. They destroyed the statue of Baal and his altars. They broke them into many pieces. They also killed Baal's priest, Mattan, in front of the altars.

¹⁸Jehoiada put the Levite priests in charge of the LORD's Temple. David had given them the jobs they were supposed to do there. They were to offer the burnt offerings to the LORD, as the Law of Moses commanded. And they were to do this with great joy and singing, just as David had ordered. ¹⁹Jehoiada put guards at the gates of the LORD's Temple to prevent any unclean person from entering the Temple.

²⁰The army captains, the leaders, the rulers of the people and all the people of the land went with Jehoiada and led the king out of the LORD's Temple. They went through the Upper Gate to the king's palace and seated the king on the royal throne. ²¹All the people of Judah were happy. And Jerusalem was now at peace because Queen Athaliah had been killed.

Joash Rebuilds the Temple

24 Joash was seven years old when he became king. He ruled for 40 years in Jerusalem. His mother Zibiah was from the town of Beersheba. ²During the whole time that Jehoiada the priest was living, Joash did what was

****23:11 authority to rule** Literally, "testimony". This could be a copy of the Law of Moses (see Deut 17:18) or another symbol of authority.

††**23:13 Treason** Turning against the government. Here, Athaliah was blaming the people for turning against her government.

pleasing to the LORD. ³ Jehoiada chose two wives for Joash, and he had sons and daughters.

⁴ Then later on, Joash decided to rebuild the LORD's Temple. ⁵ Joash called the priests and the Levites together. He said to them, "Go out to the towns of Judah and gather the money the Israelites pay every year. Use that money to rebuild your God's Temple. Hurry and do this." But the Levites didn't hurry.

⁶ So King Joash called Jehoiada the high priest. The king said, "Jehoiada, why haven't you made the Levites bring in the tax money from Judah and Jerusalem? The LORD's servant Moses and the Israelites used that tax money for the Tent of the Agreement."

⁷ In the past Athaliah's sons broke into God's Temple and used the holy things in the LORD's Temple for their worship of the Baal gods. Athaliah was a very wicked woman.

⁸ King Joash gave a command for a box to be made and put outside the gate at the LORD's Temple. ⁹ Then the Levites made an announcement in Judah and Jerusalem. They told the people to bring in the tax money for the LORD. That tax money is what Moses the servant of God had required the Israelites to give while they were in the desert. ¹⁰ All the leaders and the people were happy. They brought their money and filled the box with it. ¹¹ Whenever the box was full, the Levites took the box to the king's officials. Then the king's secretary and an official of the high priest would come and empty the box and return it to the Temple. They did this often and gathered a large amount of money. ¹² Then King Joash and Jehoiada gave the money to the men who were in charge of the work on the LORD's Temple. And they hired stoneworkers, carpenters and others skilled in work-

ing with iron and bronze to rebuild the LORD's Temple.

¹³ They all worked hard, and the repair work went well. They rebuilt God's Temple the way it had been before and made it strong. ¹⁴ When the workers finished, they brought the money that remained to King Joash and Jehoiada. They used this money to make things the priests would use in the LORD's Temple for the worship and the offerings. These were bowls and other utensils made from gold and silver. The priests offered burnt offerings in the LORD's Temple every day while Jehoiada was alive.

¹⁵ Jehoiada had a very long life. He was 130 years old when he died. ¹⁶ The people buried Jehoiada among the kings in the City of David. They honoured him in this way because he had done so much good in Israel for God and for God's Temple.

¹⁷ After Jehoiada died, the leaders of Judah came and bowed to King Joash. The king listened to the leaders. ¹⁸ They all stopped worshipping at the Temple of the LORD, the God their ancestors worshipped. Instead, they started worshipping Asherah poles and other idols. Because of this sin, God was angry with the people of Judah and Jerusalem. ¹⁹ God sent prophets to the people to bring them back to the LORD. The prophets warned them, but they refused to listen.

²⁰ The Spirit of God filled Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest, and he stood in front of the people and said, "This is what God says: 'Why do you people refuse to obey the LORD's commands? You will not be successful. You have left the LORD, so he has also left you!'"

²¹ But the people made plans to kill Zechariah. The king commanded them to kill him with stones in the courtyard of the LORD's Temple. ²² King Joash had

forgotten how kind Zechariah's father Jehoiada had been to him. And Joash gave the order for Zechariah to be killed. As Zechariah was dying, he said, "May the LORD see what you are doing and punish you!"

²³ At the end of the year, the Aramean army came against Joash. They attacked Judah and Jerusalem and killed all the leaders of the people. They sent all the valuable things to the king of Damascus.

²⁴ The Aramean army came with only a small group of men, but the LORD let them defeat the much larger army of Judah. This was a punishment for Joash because the people of Judah had left the LORD, the God their ancestors worshipped. ²⁵ When the Arameans left Joash, he was badly wounded. His own servants made plans against him because he had killed Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest. They killed Joash on his own bed. After he died, the people buried him in the City of David, but not in the place where the kings are buried. ²⁶ One of the servants who agreed to kill Joash was Zabad, son of Shimeath, a woman from Ammon. The other was Jehozabad, son of Shimrith, a woman from Moab.

²⁷ The story about Joash's sons, the great prophecies against him and how he rebuilt God's Temple are recorded in the book, *Commentary on the Kings*. Joash's son Amaziah became the new king after him.

Amaziah, King of Judah

25 Amaziah was 25 years old when he became king. He ruled for 29 years in Jerusalem. His mother Jehoaddin was from Jerusalem. ² Amaziah did what the LORD wanted him to do, but not with all his heart. ³ As soon as

he had strong control of the kingdom, he killed the officers who had killed his father. ⁴ But Amaziah obeyed the law written in the *Book of Moses* and did not kill their children. The LORD commanded, "Parents must not be put to death for something their children did, and children must not be put to death for something their parents did. People should only be punished for what they themselves did."[‡]

⁵ Amaziah gathered the army of Judah together. He grouped them by families, and he put commanders and captains in charge of these groups. The leaders were in charge of all the soldiers from Judah and Benjamin. All the men who were chosen to be soldiers were 20 years old and older. In all, there were 300,000 skilled soldiers ready to fight with spears and shields. ⁶ Amaziah also hired 100,000 soldiers from Israel. He paid 3400 kilogrammes[¶] of silver to hire these soldiers. ⁷ But a man of God came to Amaziah and said, "King, don't let the army of Israel go with you. The LORD is not with Israel or the people of Ephraim.

⁸ Maybe you will make yourself strong and ready for battle, but God is the one who can help you win or help you lose."

⁹ Amaziah said to the man of God, "But what about the money I already paid to the Israelite army?" The man of God answered, "The LORD has plenty. He can give you much more than that."

¹⁰ So Amaziah sent the Israelite army back home to Ephraim. This upset the Israelites, and they went back home full of anger at the people of Judah.

¹¹ Then Amaziah became very brave and led his army to the Salt Valley in the country of Edom. There his army

[‡]25:4 *Parents ... did* Quote from Deut 24:16.

[¶]25:6 *3400 kilogrammes* Literally, "100 talents".

killed 10,000 men from Seir.^{§§} ¹²They also captured 10,000 other men from Seir and took them to the top of a cliff. Then the army of Judah threw them from the top of the cliff while they were still alive, and their bodies were broken on the rocks below.

¹³Meanwhile, the Israelite army was attacking towns in Judah. They attacked the towns from Beth Horon all the way to Samaria. They killed 3000 people and took many valuable things. They were angry because Amaziah did not let them join him in the war.

¹⁴Amaziah came home after he defeated the Edomites. He brought the idols that the people of Seir worshipped, and he started to worship them. He bowed down in front of them and burned incense to them. ¹⁵The LORD was very angry with Amaziah, so he sent a prophet to him. The prophet said, "Amaziah, why have you worshipped the gods those people worship? Those gods could not even save their own people from you!"

¹⁶When the prophet spoke, Amaziah said to the prophet, "We never made you an adviser to the king. Be quiet! If you don't be quiet, you will be killed." The prophet became quiet, but then said, "God has decided to destroy you because you did this and didn't listen to my advice."

¹⁷King Amaziah of Judah talked with his advisers. Then he sent messengers to Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, son of King Jehu of Israel. His message was, "Come on, let's meet together face to face and fight."

¹⁸King Jehoash of Israel sent an answer to King Amaziah of Judah. Jehoash said, "One time, in the mountains of

Lebanon, a little thorn bush sent a message to a big cedar tree. It said, 'Give your daughter for my son to marry.' But a wild animal of Lebanon passed by and trampled down the thorn bush. ¹⁹You think you are so great because you defeated Edom! Well, you can brag about that, but now I advise you to stay home! Why ask for trouble? If you start a war with me, you and the people of Judah will be destroyed."

²⁰But Amaziah refused to listen to Jehoash's warning. And this is what God had planned. God wanted to let Israel defeat the people of Judah as punishment for following the Edomite gods. ²¹So King Jehoash of Israel went to war against King Amaziah of Judah. They faced each other in battle at the town of Beth Shemesh in Judah. ²²Israel defeated Judah. Every soldier of Judah ran away to his home. ²³At Beth Shemesh, King Jehoash of Israel captured King Amaziah of Judah. He took Amaziah son of Joash, the son of Ahaziah, to Jerusalem. Jehoash broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate, a section about 200 metres^{*} long. ²⁴Then Jehoash took all the gold and silver and all the utensils in the LORD's Temple that Obed-Edom was responsible for. He also took important people as hostages. Then he went back to Samaria.

²⁵King Amaziah son of Joash of Judah lived 15 years after the death of King Jehoash son of Jehoahaz of Israel. ²⁶Everything else Amaziah did while he was king is recorded in the book, *The History of the Kings of Judah and Israel*. ²⁷When Amaziah stopped obeying the LORD, some people in Jerusalem began making plans to kill him. So he ran away

§§25:11 *Seir* Or "Edom", a country east of Judah.

*25:23 *200 metres* Literally, "400 cubits".

to the town of Lachish. But his enemies sent men to Lachish, and they killed Amaziah there. ²⁸His body was brought back to Jerusalem on a horse. And he was buried among his ancestors in the City of David.

Uzziah, King of Judah

26 Then the people of Judah chose Uzziah to be the new king after his father Amaziah. Uzziah was 16 years old when he became king. ²After Amaziah died, Uzziah rebuilt the town of Elath and gave it back to Judah.

³Uzziah was 16 years old when he became king. He ruled for 52 years in Jerusalem. His mother was Jecoliah from Jerusalem. ⁴Uzziah did what the LORD wanted him to do. He obeyed God the same as his father Amaziah had done. ⁵Uzziah followed God during Zechariah's life. Zechariah taught Uzziah how to respect and obey God. When Uzziah was obeying the LORD, God gave him success.

⁶Uzziah fought a war against the Philistines. He tore down the walls around the towns of Gath, Jabneh and Ashdod. Uzziah built towns near the town of Ashdod and in other places among the Philistines. ⁷God helped Uzziah fight the Philistines, the Arabs living in the town of Gur Baal and the Meunites. ⁸The Ammonites paid taxes to Uzziah. His name became famous all the way to the border of Egypt because he was very powerful.

⁹Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate and at the place where the wall turned. He made them strong. ¹⁰He built towers in the desert. He also dug many wells. He had large herds of cattle in the hill country and in the flat lands. He loved farming. So he had workers who took care of

his crops and vineyards in the hills and in the fertile valleys.

¹¹Uzziah had an army of well-trained soldiers ready for battle. They were divided into groups by Jeiel, the secretary of the army and another officer named Maaseiah. These two officers were under the command of Hananiah, one of the king's officials. ¹²There were 2600 leaders over the soldiers. ¹³These family leaders were in charge of an army of 307,500 men who fought with great power. These soldiers helped the king against the enemy. ¹⁴Uzziah gave the army shields, spears, helmets, armour, bows and stones for the slings. ¹⁵In Jerusalem, Uzziah had skilled workers who built large weapons that could shoot arrows and throw large stones from the towers and corners of the city walls. Uzziah became famous, even in faraway places. With all the great help he received, he became a powerful king.

¹⁶But Uzziah's power caused him to be proud, and his pride led to his ruin. He disobeyed the LORD his God by going into the LORD's Temple to burn incense on the altar for incense. ¹⁷Azariah the priest and 80 brave priests who served the LORD followed Uzziah into the Temple. ¹⁸They told him to stop what he was doing. They said, "Uzziah, it is not right for you to burn incense to the LORD. That is only for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, to do. They are the ones who have been prepared for the holy work of burning incense. Leave this holy place! You have done wrong, and the LORD God will not honour you for this."

¹⁹Uzziah was still standing beside the incense altar holding the pan for burning the incense. He became very angry at the priests and began shouting at them. Suddenly, there in the LORD's Temple as the priests watched, a dreaded skin disease began to break out on Uzziah's fore-

head.²⁰ Azariah the high priest and all the other priests could see the disease on his forehead. They immediately forced him to leave the Temple. And Uzziah himself was eager to get out, because the LORD had punished him.²¹ So Uzziah the king had this skin disease the rest of his life. He could not enter the LORD's Temple. His son Jotham controlled the king's palace and became governor for the people.

²² Everything else Uzziah did while he was king is recorded by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz.²³ Uzziah died and was buried near his ancestors in a burial field owned by the kings. This was because of the skin disease he had. His son Jotham became the new king after him.

Jotham, King of Judah

27 Jotham was 25 years old when he became king. He ruled for 16 years in Jerusalem. His mother was Jerusha daughter of Zadok.² Jotham did what was pleasing to the LORD. He followed the example of his father Uzziah, except for one thing. He did not sin as his father did by entering the LORD's Temple. But the people continued doing wrong.³ Jotham rebuilt the Upper Gate of the LORD's Temple. He did a lot of work on the wall at the place named Ophel.⁴ He also built towns in the hill country of Judah. He built fortresses and towers in the forests.⁵ Jotham also fought against the king of the Ammonites and his army and defeated them. So each year for three years the Ammonites gave Jotham 3400 kilogrammes[†] of silver, 1000 tonnes[‡] of wheat and 1000 tonnes of barley.

⁶ Jotham became powerful because he faithfully obeyed the LORD his God.⁷ Everything else Jotham did and all his wars are recorded in the book, *The History of the Kings of Israel and Judah*.⁸ Jotham was 25 years old when he became king. He ruled for 16 years in Jerusalem.⁹ When Jotham died, he was buried in the City of David. His son Ahaz became the new king after him.

Ahaz, King of Judah

28 Ahaz was 20 years old when he became king. He ruled for 16 years in Jerusalem. Unlike his ancestor David, Ahaz did not do what the LORD said was right.² He lived the evil way that so many other kings of Israel had lived. He used moulds to make idols to worship the Baal gods.³ He burned incense in the Valley of Ben Hinnom⁴ and sacrificed his own sons by burning them in the fire. He did the same disgusting sins that the people living in that land did. The LORD had forced them out when the Israelites entered that land.⁴ Ahaz offered sacrifices and burned incense in the places of worship, on the hills and under every green tree.

⁵⁻⁶ Because Ahaz did these things, the LORD his God let the king of Aram defeat him. The king and his army defeated Ahaz and took many people of Judah as captives to the city of Damascus. Ahaz also suffered a terrible defeat by the king of Israel, Pekah son of Remaliah. Pekah and his army killed 120,000 of the bravest soldiers in Judah in one day. All this happened because the people of Judah had turned away from the LORD, the God their ancestors worshipped.⁷ Zi-

[†]27:5 3400 kilogrammes Literally, "100 talents".

[‡]27:5 1000 tonnes Literally, "10,000 cors".

⁴28:3 Valley of Ben Hinnom Later, called "Gehenna". This valley was west and south of Jerusalem. Many babies and young children were sacrificed to false gods in this valley.

cri, a brave soldier from Ephraim, killed the king's son Maaseiah. He also killed Azrikam, the officer in charge of the king's palace, and Elkanah, who was second in command to the king.

⁸The Israelite army captured 200,000 of their own relatives living in Judah. They took women, children and many valuable things from Judah and carried them back to Samaria. ⁹But one of the LORD's prophets named Oded was there, and he met the Israelite army that came back to Samaria. He said to them, "The LORD, the God your ancestors worshipped, let you defeat the people of Judah because he was angry with them. But now he is angry with you, because he has seen how cruel you were when you killed them. ¹⁰And now you plan to keep the people of Judah and Jerusalem as slaves. But you are as guilty as they are for sinning against the LORD your God. ¹¹Now listen to me. Send back all those you captured, your own brothers and sisters, because the LORD's terrible anger is against you."

¹²Then some of the leaders in Ephraim saw the Israelite soldiers coming home from war. They met the Israelite soldiers and warned them. The leaders were Azariah son of Jehohanan, Berekiah son of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah son of Shalum and Amasa son of Hadlai. ¹³They said to the Israelite soldiers, "Don't bring the prisoners from Judah here. If you do that, it will add to our sin against the LORD. It will make our sin and guilt before him even worse than it is now, and he is already very angry with Israel!"

¹⁴So the soldiers gave the prisoners and valuable things to the leaders and to the people. ¹⁵The leaders (Azariah, Berekiah, Jehizkiah and Amasa) stood up and helped the prisoners. These four men got the clothes that the Israelite army had taken and gave them to the

people who were naked. The leaders also gave them sandals. They gave the prisoners from Judah something to eat and drink. They rubbed oil on them to soften and heal their wounds. Then the leaders from Ephraim put the weak prisoners on donkeys and took them back home to their families in Jericho, the city of palm trees. Then the four leaders went back home to Samaria.

¹⁶⁻¹⁷At that same time, the people from Edom came again and defeated the people of Judah. The Edomites captured people and took them away as captives. So King Ahaz asked the king of Assyria to help him. ¹⁸The Philistines also attacked the towns in the hills and in south Judah. The Philistines captured the towns of Beth Shemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, Soco, Timnah and Gimzo. They also captured the villages near these towns. Then the Philistines lived in them. ¹⁹The LORD was punishing Judah with these troubles because of their king. King Ahaz had encouraged the people of Judah to sin. He was completely unfaithful to the LORD. ²⁰King Tiglath Pileser of Assyria would not give Ahaz support. Instead, he came and attacked Ahaz. ²¹Ahaz gathered treasures from the LORD's Temple and from the king's palace and the homes of his officials. He offered them as gifts to the king of Assyria, but nothing he did won the king's support.

²²Even with all these troubles, Ahaz became more and more unfaithful to the LORD. ²³He offered sacrifices to the gods that the people of Damascus worshipped. The people of Damascus had defeated Ahaz. So he thought to himself, "These gods helped the kings of Aram. So if I offer sacrifices to them, maybe they will help me also." But with this sin, Ahaz brought ruin to himself and to the people of Israel.

²⁴ Ahaz gathered the things from God's Temple and broke them to pieces. Then he closed the doors of the LORD's Temple. He made altars and put them on every street corner in Jerusalem. ²⁵ In every town in Judah, Ahaz made places of worship for burning offerings to other gods. Ahaz made the LORD, the God his ancestors obeyed, very angry.

²⁶ Everything else Ahaz did while he was king is recorded in the book, *The History of the Kings of Judah and Israel*. ²⁷ When Ahaz died, he was buried in Jerusalem, but not in the tombs of the kings of Israel. His son Hezekiah became the new king after him.

Hezekiah, King of Judah

29 Hezekiah became king when he was 25 years old. He ruled for 29 years in Jerusalem. His mother was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. ² Hezekiah did what the LORD says is right, just as David his ancestor had done.

³ Hezekiah repaired the doors of the LORD's Temple and made them strong. He opened the Temple again. He did this in the first month of the first year after he became king. ⁴⁻⁵ Hezekiah brought the priests and Levites together in the courtyard on the east side of the Temple. Hezekiah said to them:

"Listen to me, Levites! Make yourselves ready for holy service. Make the Temple of the LORD ready for holy service. He is the God your ancestors obeyed. Take away the things from the Temple that don't belong there. These things make the Temple unclean. ⁶ Our ancestors

were not faithful and did what the LORD says is evil. They stopped following him. They no longer paid any attention to the LORD's house[§] and turned their backs on him.

⁷ They shut the doors of the porch of the Temple and let the fire go out in the lamps. They stopped burning incense and offering burnt offerings in the Holy Place to the God of Israel. ⁸ So the LORD became very angry with the people of Judah and Jerusalem. He punished them so badly that it shocks and scares people to hear about it. But then they just laugh and shout their own insults against Judah. You know this is true. You have seen it happen.

⁹ That is why our ancestors were killed in battle. Our sons, daughters and wives have been taken away as captives. ¹⁰ So now I, Hezekiah, have decided to make an agreement with the LORD, the God of Israel. Then he will not be angry with us any more. ¹¹ So my sons,** don't be lazy or waste any more time. The LORD chose you to serve him and to offer sacrifices."

¹²⁻¹⁴ This is a list of the Levites who started to work:

From the Kohath family there were Mahath son of Amasai and Joel son of Azariah.

From the Merari family there were Kish son of Abdi and Azariah son of Jehallelel.

From the Gershon family there were Joah son of Zimmah and Eden son of Joab.

§**29:6 house** Literally, "tent". This may be the Holy Tent, which some think was set up inside the Temple in Jerusalem. (See 1 Kgs 8:4.) Or it may refer to the Temple itself.

****29:11 my sons** Here, Hezekiah is speaking to the priests like a father to his sons. They are not really his children.

From Elizaphan's descendants there were Shimri and Jeiel.

From Asaph's descendants there were Zechariah and Mattaniah.

From Heman's descendants there were Jehiel and Shimei.

From Jeduthun's descendants there were Shemaiah and Uzziel.

¹⁵ Then these men gathered the other Levites together and made themselves ready for holy service in the Temple. They obeyed the king's command that came from the LORD. They went into the LORD's Temple to purify it. ¹⁶ The priests went into the inside part of the LORD's Temple to purify it. They took out all the unclean things they found there. They put them in the courtyard of the LORD's Temple, and then the Levites took these things out to the Kidron Valley. ¹⁷ On the first day of the first month, the Levites began to make the Temple ready for holy service. By the eighth day, they had finished purifying all the area up to the porch of the LORD's Temple. For eight more days they purified the LORD's Temple itself to make it ready for holy use. They finished on the sixteenth day of the first month.

¹⁸ Then they went to King Hezekiah and said to him, "King Hezekiah, we purified all the LORD's Temple and the altar for burnt offerings and all the things in the Temple. We purified the table for the rows of bread with all the things used for that table. ¹⁹ During the time that Ahaz was king, he rebelled against God. He threw away many of the things that were in the Temple. But we repaired all those things and made them ready for their special use. They are now in front of the LORD's altar."

²⁰ King Hezekiah gathered the city officials and went up to the Temple of the LORD early the next morning. ²¹ They brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven

lambs and seven young male goats. These animals were for a sin offering for the kingdom and the people of Judah and for the Holy Place to make it pure. King Hezekiah commanded the priests who were descendants of Aaron to offer these animals on the LORD's altar. ²² So the priests killed the bulls and kept the blood. Then they splashed the bulls' blood on the altar. Then they killed the rams and splashed the rams' blood on the altar. Then they killed the lambs and splashed the lambs' blood on the altar. ²³⁻²⁴ Then the priests brought the male goats before the king, and the people came together. The goats were the sin offering. The king and the people put their hands on the goats, and then the priests killed the goats. They made a sin offering with the goats' blood on the altar. They did this so that God would forgive the sins of all the people of Israel. The king said that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all the people of Israel.

²⁵ King Hezekiah put the Levites in the LORD's Temple with cymbals, harps and lyres as David, Gad the king's seer, and the prophet Nathan had commanded. This command came from the LORD through his prophets. ²⁶ So the Levites stood ready with David's instruments of music, and the priests stood ready with their trumpets. ²⁷ Then Hezekiah gave the order to sacrifice the burnt offering on the altar. When the burnt offering began, singing to the LORD also began. The trumpets were blown, and the instruments of King David of Israel were played. ²⁸ All the people bowed down, the musicians sang and the trumpet players blew their trumpets until the burnt offering was finished.

²⁹ After the sacrifices were finished, King Hezekiah and all the people with him bowed down and worshipped.

³⁰King Hezekiah and his officials ordered the Levites to give praise to the LORD. They sang the songs that David and Asaph the seer had written. They joyfully sang these songs of praise and bowed down in worship to God. ³¹Hezekiah said, “Now you people of Judah have given yourselves to the LORD. Come near and bring sacrifices and offerings of thanksgiving to the LORD’s Temple.” So the people brought sacrifices and offerings of thanksgiving, and those who wanted to offer more also brought burnt offerings. ³²These are the offerings the people brought: 70 bulls, 100 rams and 200 lambs. All these animals were sacrificed as burnt offerings to the LORD. ³³There were also 600 bulls and 3000 sheep and goats that were sacrificed as holy offerings. ³⁴But there were not enough priests to skin and cut up all the animals for the burnt offerings. So their relatives, the Levites, helped them until the work was finished and until other priests could make themselves ready for holy service. The Levites had been more serious than the priests about making themselves ready to serve. ³⁵There were many burnt offerings and the fat of fellowship offerings and drink offerings. So the service in the LORD’s Temple began again. ³⁶Hezekiah and the people were very happy about what God had helped them do because it all happened so quickly.

Hezekiah Celebrates Passover

30 King Hezekiah sent messages to all the people of Israel and Judah. He wrote letters to the people of Ephraim and Manasseh^{††} also. He invited all of them to come to the LORD’s

Temple in Jerusalem so that they all could celebrate Passover for the LORD, the God of Israel. ²King Hezekiah agreed with all his officials and all the people in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover in the second month. ³They could not celebrate the Passover festival at the regular time. There were not enough priests who had made themselves ready for holy service. And the people had not gathered in Jerusalem. ⁴The agreement satisfied King Hezekiah and all the people. ⁵So they sent the announcement throughout Israel, from the town of Beersheba in the far south to the town of Dan in the far north. They told the people to come to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover for the LORD, the God of Israel. Not many people had been celebrating Passover as it was described in the law. ⁶So the messengers took the king’s letters all through Israel and Judah. This is what the letters said:

“People of Israel, turn back to the LORD, the God who Abraham, Isaac and Israel^{‡‡} obeyed. Then God will come back to you who are still alive and have escaped from the kings of Assyria. ⁷Don’t be like your fathers or your brothers. The LORD was their God, but they turned against him. So he made people hate them and speak evil about them. You can see with your own eyes that this is true. ⁸Don’t be stubborn as your ancestors were. But obey the LORD with a willing heart. Come to the Temple that he has made to be holy forever. Serve the LORD your God. Then his fearful anger will turn away from you. ⁹If you come back and obey the LORD, your relatives

^{††}**30:1 Ephraim and Manasseh** Joseph’s sons. Since these were the largest tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh sometimes means the whole northern kingdom of Israel.

^{‡‡}**30:6 Israel** Another name for Jacob. See Gen 32:24-28.

and your children will find mercy from the people who captured them. And your relatives and your children will come back to this land. The LORD your God is kind and merciful. He will not turn away from you if you come back to him.”

¹⁰ The messengers went to every town in the area of Ephraim and Manasseh. They went all the way to the area of Zebulun, but the people laughed at the messengers and made fun of them. ¹¹ But, some men from the areas of Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and went to Jerusalem. ¹² Also, in Judah God’s power united the people so that they would obey the king and his officials concerning the word of the LORD.

¹³ A huge crowd of people came together in Jerusalem in the second month to celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread. ¹⁴ The people took away all the altars in Jerusalem that had been used for offering sacrifices and burning incense to worship false gods. They threw them into the Kidron Valley. ¹⁵ Then they killed the Passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the second month. The priests and the Levites were ashamed that they had not done all the necessary preparations. So they did what they needed to do to make themselves pure. Then they brought burnt offerings into the LORD’s Temple. ¹⁶ They took their regular places in the Temple as described in the Law of Moses, the man of God. The Levites gave the blood from the sacrifices to the priests. Then the priests splashed the blood on the altar. ¹⁷ Many of the people had not made themselves pure, so the Levites had to kill the Passover lambs for everyone who

was not pure. The Levites made each lamb holy for the LORD.

^{18–19} Most of the people from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun had not prepared themselves in the right way for the Passover festival. These people were allowed to eat the Passover meal, but they could not do it the way the Law of Moses commands. But Hezekiah prayed this prayer for them: “LORD, you are good. These people sincerely wanted to worship the LORD, the God their ancestors worshipped, but they did not make themselves pure by the rules of this holy place. Please forgive them.” ²⁰ The LORD listened to King Hezekiah’s prayer and forgave the people. ²¹ The people of Israel who were in Jerusalem celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread with great joy for seven days. And the Levites and priests praised the LORD every day with all their might. ²² King Hezekiah praised the Levites for the skilful way they handled their duties in the service of the LORD. The people celebrated the festival for seven days and offered fellowship offerings. They gave thanks and praise to the LORD, the God of their ancestors.

²³ Then all the people agreed to stay seven more days. They were joyful as they celebrated the festival for seven more days. ²⁴ King Hezekiah of Judah gave 1000 bulls and 7000 sheep to the people to kill and eat. The leaders gave 1000 bulls and 10,000 sheep to the people. Many priests prepared themselves for holy service. ²⁵ All the people who had gathered were very happy—the people of Judah, the priests, the Levites, the people from Israel and the immigrants who were living in Israel and Judah. ²⁶ So there was great joy in Jerusalem. It was the biggest celebration there since

[¶]30:21 *with all their might* Or “with loud instruments of the LORD”.

the time of King Solomon son of David.
²⁷The priests and the Levites stood up and asked the LORD to bless the people. And God heard their prayer from heaven, where he lives.

King Hezekiah Makes Improvements

31 When the Passover festival was finished, all the people of a united Israel, who were in Jerusalem for the festival, went out to the towns of Judah. In every town they smashed the stone idols of false gods and cut down the poles that were used for worshipping the goddess Asherah. They went to all the towns in Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim and Manasseh and destroyed the places of worship and altars that were used for worshipping false gods. Then they all went back home to their own towns.

²King Hezekiah divided the priests and Levites into groups for their different duties. These duties included offering the burnt offerings and the fellowship offerings, serving in the Temple, and singing and praising God by the gates of the LORD's Temple.^{§§}

³Hezekiah gave some of his own animals to be offered as the burnt offerings. These animals were used for the daily burnt offerings that were given each morning and each evening. They were offered on the Sabbath days, during New Moon celebrations and on the other special meeting days, as the Law of the LORD commands.

⁴All the people were supposed to support the priests and Levites so that they could spend their time on the duties given to them in the Law of the LORD. So Hezekiah ordered the people living in Jerusalem to give their share of the offer-

ing. ⁵When the Israelites heard this order, they brought the first part of their harvest of grain, grapes, oil, honey and all the things their fields produced. They brought a large amount, a tenth of everything. ⁶The people from all over Judah and others who had moved there from Israel brought one-tenth of their cattle and sheep. They also brought all the other things they had promised to give to the LORD their God. They brought all these things and stacked them in piles.

⁷The people began to bring these things in the third month and they finished bringing everything in the seventh month. ⁸When Hezekiah and the leaders came, they saw the piles of things that were collected. They praised the LORD and his people, the Israelites.

⁹Then Hezekiah asked the priests and the Levites about the piles of things.

¹⁰Azariah the high priest from Zadok's family said to Hezekiah, "From the time that the people started bringing their gifts into the LORD's house, we have had plenty to eat. We have eaten until we are full, and there is still plenty left over! The LORD has really blessed his people. That is why we have so much left over."

¹¹Then Hezekiah commanded the priests to make storerooms ready in the LORD's Temple. So they prepared the rooms ¹²and brought in the gifts, the offerings of one-tenth* and the other things that the people had promised to God. All these things were collected and put in the storerooms in the Temple. Conaniah the Levite was in charge of everything that was collected. His brother Shimei was second in charge of these things. ¹³Ten supervisors were chosen to work under Conaniah and his

§§**31:2 LORD's Temple** Or "LORD's Camp", that is, the courtyard of the Temple in Jerusalem.

***31:12 offerings of one-tenth** Literally, "tithes". A tithe was one-tenth of a person's crops or animals.

brother. The supervisors were Jehiel, Azaziah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismakiah, Mahath and Benaiah. They were chosen by King Hezekiah and Azariah the official in charge of God's Temple.

¹⁴Kore son of Imnah, who usually served as a guard at the East Gate, was put in charge of the gifts that the people had freely given to God. He decided how to divide up the gifts and all the other things that had been promised to the LORD. ¹⁵⁻¹⁶He had six dependable assistants who helped him divide up the gifts among the priests and Levites. These were Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah and Shecaniah.

With the help of some of the priests,[†] these men gave shares of the gifts to all the priests who performed their daily duties in the Temple. They passed out the gifts to these priests in their different groups. They gave the same amount to young and old priests alike. They also provided shares for all other males three years old and older whose names were recorded in the family histories of the priests. ¹⁷So that is how they divided the collection among all the priests who were listed in the records of their family groups.

Also, the Levites who were 20 years old and older were given their part of the collection. The Levites were listed in groups together with the others who had the same duties. ¹⁸These Levites were included with their families on the list of those to receive shares of the collection. This included their babies, wives, sons and daughters because they were all faithful in keeping themselves holy and ready for service.

¹⁹Some of Aaron's descendants, the priests, lived in other towns or on farms near these towns. Men were chosen by name in each of these towns to give part of the collection to these priests and also to the Levites. All the males from the families of the priests and all the Levites and their families who were included on the lists received part of the collection.

²⁰So these are the things King Hezekiah did all through Judah. He did what the LORD his God saw as good and right and faithful. ²¹Hezekiah was a very successful king because he obeyed God with all his heart. So he was able to lead his people to honour God's Temple again and to obey God's law and commands.

The King of Assyria Attacks Judah

32 After Hezekiah had faithfully done everything the LORD commanded, King Sennacherib of Assyria came to attack the country of Judah. Sennacherib camped with his army outside the walled cities, planning to take them for himself. ²When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come, he knew that he would attack Jerusalem. ³So he talked with his officials and army officers. They agreed on a plan to stop the water that flowed from the springs just outside the city. ⁴They gathered a large crew to do the work of stopping the flow of water from the springs. This would stop the water from filling the stream that flowed through the fields outside the city. They said, "We must stop the king of Assyria from having all the water he needs when he comes here to attack us!" ⁵Hezekiah began working to make Jerusalem stronger. He rebuilt all the parts of the wall that were broken

[†]31:15-16 *With ... priests* This is from the ancient Greek version. The traditional Hebrew text has "In the cities of the priests".

down. He also built towers on the wall and a second wall outside the first wall. He rebuilt the strong places on the east side of the old part of Jerusalem. He had many more weapons and shields made. ⁶⁻⁷ Hezekiah chose army officers to be in charge of the people. He met with these officers at the open place near the city gate. He talked to the officers and encouraged them. He said, "Be strong and brave. Don't be afraid or worry about the king of Assyria or the large army with him. There is a greater power with us than the king of Assyria has with him!" ⁸ All he has is a human army, but we have the LORD our God to help us! He will fight our battles for us!" These words from King Hezekiah greatly encouraged the army of Judah.

⁹ King Sennacherib of Assyria and all his army were camped near the town of Lachish so that they could defeat it. Then Sennacherib sent his officers to King Hezekiah of Judah and to the people of Judah in Jerusalem. His officers had a message for Hezekiah and all the people in Jerusalem.

¹⁰ "This is what King Sennacherib of Assyria says: What do you trust in that makes you stay under attack in Jerusalem?" ¹¹ Hezekiah is fooling you. You are being tricked into staying in Jerusalem so that you will die from hunger and thirst. Hezekiah says to you, "The LORD our God will save us from the king of Assyria."

¹² But Hezekiah himself took away the places of worship and altars where people honoured the LORD. He told you people of Judah and Jerusalem that you must worship and make offerings at only one altar. ¹³ Of course, you know what my ancestors and I have done to all the peoples in other countries. The gods of the other countries could not save

their people. Those gods could not stop me from destroying their people. ¹⁴ My ancestors destroyed those countries. There is no god that can stop me from destroying his people. So you think your god can save you from me? ¹⁵ Don't let Hezekiah fool you or trick you. Don't believe him because no god of any nation or kingdom has ever been able to keep his people safe from me or my ancestors. Don't think your god can stop me from destroying you."

¹⁶ The officers of the king of Assyria said worse things against the LORD God and against Hezekiah, God's servant. ¹⁷ The king of Assyria also wrote letters that insulted the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what the king of Assyria said in those letters: "The gods of the other nations could not stop me from destroying their people. And Hezekiah's god will not be able to stop me from destroying his people." ¹⁸ Then the Assyrian officers shouted loudly to the people of Jerusalem who were on the city wall. They spoke in the language of Judah so that the people on the wall would understand and be frightened enough that the Assyrians could then capture the city of Jerusalem. ¹⁹ They insulted the God of Jerusalem just as they had insulted all the gods of the people from other nations—even though those gods are only things people made with their hands.

²⁰ King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz prayed about this. They cried out to the LORD for help. ²¹ And the LORD sent an angel to the camp of the king of Assyria. The angel killed all the soldiers, leaders and officers in the Assyrian army. So the king of Assyria went back home to his own country, and his people were ashamed of him. He went into the tem-

ple of his god, and some of his own sons killed him there with a sword.²² So the LORD saved Hezekiah and the people in Jerusalem from King Sennacherib of Assyria and from all their other enemies. He cared for Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem.²³ Many people brought gifts for the LORD to Jerusalem. They brought valuable things to King Hezekiah of Judah. From that time on, all the nations respected Hezekiah.

²⁴ At that time Hezekiah became sick and almost died. He prayed to the LORD, who spoke to Hezekiah and gave him a sign.[‡]²⁵ But Hezekiah's heart was proud, so he did not thank God for his kindness. This is why God was angry with Hezekiah and with the people of Judah and Jerusalem.²⁶ But Hezekiah and the people living in Jerusalem changed their hearts and lives. They became humble and stopped being proud. So the LORD's anger didn't come on them while Hezekiah was alive.

²⁷ Hezekiah became very wealthy and was greatly honoured. He made places to keep silver, gold, valuable jewels, spices, shields and other valuable things.²⁸ Hezekiah had storehouses for the grain, new wine and oil that people sent to him. He had stalls for all the cattle and pens for the sheep.²⁹ Hezekiah also built many towns and owned large flocks of sheep and herds of cattle. God gave him great wealth.³⁰ It was Hezekiah who stopped up the upper source of the waters of the Gihon Spring in Jerusalem and made the waters flow straight down on the west side of the City of David. And he was successful in everything he did.

³¹ One time the leaders of Babylon sent messengers to Hezekiah. The messengers asked him about a strange sign that had happened in the nations.[†] When they came, God left Hezekiah alone to test him and to know everything that was in Hezekiah's heart.[§]

³² Everything else Hezekiah did as king and the ways he served God faithfully are recorded in the book, *The Vision of the Prophet Isaiah Son of Amoz* and in the book, *The History of the Kings of Judah and Israel*.³³ When Hezekiah died, he was buried among the tombs of King David's most respected ancestors. All the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem honoured Hezekiah when he died. His son Manasseh became the new king after him.

Manasseh, King of Judah

33 Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king of Judah. He was king for 55 years in Jerusalem.² Manasseh did what the LORD says in evil. He committed the same disgusting sins as the nations that the LORD had forced to leave the land when the Israelites came in.³ Manasseh rebuilt the places for worshipping false gods that his father Hezekiah had destroyed. He also built altars for the Baal gods and put up Asherah poles. He worshipped and served the stars in the sky as gods.⁴ Manasseh built altars to honour false gods in the LORD's Temple, the place in Jerusalem where the LORD said he would be honoured forever.⁵ There in both courtyards of the LORD's Temple, he built altars to honour all the stars in the sky as gods.⁶ He burned his own son

[‡]32:24 *who spoke ... sign* See Isa. 38:1-8 for the story about Hezekiah and how the LORD gave him 15 more years to live.

[†]32:31 *a strange sign ... nations* See Isa. 38:1-8.

[§]32:31 *in Hezekiah's heart* See 2 Kgs 20:12-19.

as a sacrifice in the Valley of Ben Hinnom.** He used witchcraft and fortune-tellers and other evil ways of trying to know the future. He even tried to contact ghosts and spirits of the dead for advice and secret knowledge. He made the LORD angry by doing many things the LORD says are evil.⁷ Manasseh also made a statue of an idol and put it in God's Temple. This was the same Temple God was talking about when he spoke to David and his son Solomon. He said, "I will live in this house and in Jerusalem, the city I have chosen from all the cities belonging to the tribes of Israel. And I will be honoured there forever!"⁸ I will not continue to keep the Israelites off the land that I chose to give to their ancestors. But they must obey everything I commanded them. The Israelites must obey all the laws, rules and commands that I gave Moses to give to them."

⁹Manasseh led the people of Judah and the people living in Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed when the Israelites came in to take their land.

¹⁰The LORD spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they refused to listen.¹¹ So the LORD brought commanders from the king of Assyria's army to attack Judah. They captured Manasseh, put hooks in his nose and brass chains on his hands, and took him away to Babylon.

¹²When these troubles came to him, Manasseh begged for help from the LORD his God. He humbled himself before the God of his ancestors.¹³ Manasseh prayed to God and begged him for help. God heard his begging and felt

sorry for him, so he let Manasseh return to Jerusalem and to his throne. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was the true God.

¹⁴After that happened, Manasseh built an outer wall for the City of David. This wall went to the west of Gihon Spring in Kidron Valley, to the entrance of the Fish Gate and around the hill of Ophel.^{††} He made the wall very tall. Then he put officers in all the fortresses in Judah.¹⁵ Manasseh took away the strange idol gods, and he took the idol out of the LORD's Temple. He took away all the altars he had built on the Temple hill and in Jerusalem. Manasseh threw all the altars out of the city of Jerusalem.¹⁶ Then he set up the LORD's altar and sacrificed fellowship offerings and offerings of thanksgiving on it. He gave a command for all the people of Judah to serve the LORD, the God of Israel.¹⁷ The people continued to offer sacrifices at the places of worship, but their sacrifices were only to the LORD their God.

¹⁸Everything else Manasseh did, his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, are all recorded in the book, *The Official Records of the Kings of Israel*.¹⁹ Manasseh's prayer and how God listened and felt sorry for him are recorded in *The Book of the Seers*. And all his sins, the wrongs he did before he humbled himself, and where he built places for worshipping false gods and set up Asherah poles and idols are recorded in *The Book of the Seers*.²⁰ When Manasseh died, he was buried at his own palace. His son Amon became the new king after him.

**33:6 *Valley of Ben Hinnom* Later, called "Gehenna". This valley was west and south of Jerusalem. Many babies and young children were sacrificed to false gods in this valley.

††33:14 *Ophel* The upper part of the City of David, just south of the Temple area.

Amon, King of Judah

²¹ Amon was 22 years old when he became king of Judah. He was king for two years in Jerusalem. ²² Amon did what the LORD says is evil, just as his father Manasseh had done. Amon offered sacrifices to the carved idols and statues that his father Manasseh had made. Amon worshipped those idols. ²³ Manasseh was sorry for what he had done. But Amon was not like his father. He refused to obey the LORD. So Amon sinned more and more. ²⁴ His own servants made plans to kill him. And they killed Amon in his own house. ²⁵ The people of Judah killed all the officers who had made plans against King Amon. Then the people made Amon's son Josiah the new king after him.

Josiah, King of Judah

34 Josiah was eight years old when he began to rule. He ruled for 31 years in Jerusalem. ² He lived in a way that pleased the LORD, always doing what was right, as his ancestor David had done. Josiah never changed this way of life. ³ When Josiah was in his eighth year as king, he began to follow the God worshipped by David his ancestor. He was still young then. When he was in his twelfth year as king, he began to destroy the places for idol worship, the Asherah poles, the carved idols and the idols that were made from moulds. ⁴ As Josiah watched, the people broke down the altars for the Baal gods. Then he cut down the incense altars that stood high above the people. He broke the idols that were carved and the idols that were made from moulds. He beat the idols into powder and sprinkled the powder on the graves of the people who had of-

fered sacrifices to the Baal gods. ⁵ Josiah even burned the bones of the priests who had served the Baal gods on their own altars. This is how he destroyed idols and idol worship from Judah and Jerusalem. ⁶ Josiah did the same for the towns in the areas of Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon and as far as Naphtali. He did the same for the ruins near all these towns.†† ⁷ Josiah broke down the altars and the Asherah poles and beat the idols into powder. He cut down all the incense altars used for Baal worship throughout the land of Israel. Then he went back to Jerusalem.

⁸ When Josiah was in his eighteenth year as king of Judah, he continued his work of purifying the land and the Temple. He sent Shaphan, Maaseiah and Joah to rebuild and repair the Temple of the LORD his God. Shaphan was the son of Azaliah. Maaseiah was the city leader. Joah, who was the son of Joahaz, wrote about what happened.

⁹ These men came to Hilkiah the high priest. They gave him the money that the people gave for God's Temple. This is the money that the Levite doorkeepers collected from the people of Manasseh, Ephraim and from all the Israelites who were left. They also collected this money from the people living in Judah, Benjamin and Jerusalem. ¹⁰ Then the Levites paid the men who were in charge of the work on the LORD's Temple. And these men paid the workers who repaired the Temple. ¹¹ They gave the money to carpenters and builders to buy large rocks that were already cut, and to buy wood. The wood was used to rebuild the buildings and to make beams for the buildings. In the past the kings of Judah did not take care of the Temple buildings. The buildings had become old and ruined. ¹²⁻¹³ The men worked faithfully.

††34:6 *ruins near all these towns* The Hebrew text is not clear.

Their supervisors were Jahath and Obadiah. Jahath and Obadiah were Levites, and they were descendants of Merari. Other supervisors were Zechariah and Meshullam. They were descendants of Kohath. The Levites who were skilled in playing instruments of music also supervised the labourers and all the other workers. Some Levites worked as secretaries, officials and gatekeepers.

The Book of the Law Found

¹⁴The Levites began bringing out the money that the people had brought to the LORD's Temple. Before they finished, Hilkiah the priest found the *Book of the Law of the LORD* that was given through Moses. ¹⁵Hilkiah said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the *Book of the Law* in the LORD's Temple." Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan. ¹⁶Shaphan brought the book to King Josiah. Shaphan reported to the king, "Your servants are doing everything you told them to do. ¹⁷They got the money that was in the LORD's Temple and are paying the supervisors and the workers." ¹⁸Then Shaphan said to King Josiah, "Here's a book that Hilkiah the priest gave me." Then Shaphan read from the book in front of the king. ¹⁹When King Josiah heard the words of the law being read, he showed how upset he was by tearing his clothes. ²⁰Then the king gave a command to Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Abdon son of Micah, Shaphan the secretary and Asaiah the servant. ²¹The king said, "Go and ask the LORD what we should do. Ask for me and for the people who are left in Israel and in Judah. Ask about the words in the book that was found. The LORD is very angry with us because our ancestors did not obey the LORD's word. They did not do everything this book says to do."

²²Hilkiah and the others the king sent went to the newer part of Jerusalem to talk about what had happened with a woman named Huldah, who was a prophet. She was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, son of Harhas. Shallum was in charge of the Temple robes. ²³Huldah said to them, "This is what the LORD God of Israel says: Tell the man who sent you that ²⁴this message is from the LORD: 'I will bring disaster on this place and the people living here. I will bring all the terrible troubles that are described in the book that was read to the king of Judah. ²⁵I will do this because the people have left me and burned incense to other gods. They made me angry because of all the idols they have made. So my anger will come down on this place like a fire—a fire that cannot be put out!'

²⁶"Go back to King Josiah of Judah, who sent you to ask what the LORD wants. Tell him, "This is what the LORD God of Israel says about the words you heard being read: ²⁷Josiah, when you heard my words that apply to this city and its people, you were sorry and humbled yourself before me. You even tore your clothes to show your sorrow and cried before me. Because your heart was tender, I the LORD, have heard you. ²⁸So I will let you die and be buried in peace. You will not have to see any of the trouble that I will bring on this place and on the people living here.'" This was the message that Hilkiah and the king's servants brought back to King Josiah.

²⁹Then King Josiah called for all the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem to come and meet with him. ³⁰The king went up to the LORD's Temple. All the people from Judah, the people living in Jerusalem, the priests, the Levites and all the people, both important and not important, were with Josiah. He read

to them all the words in the *Book of the Agreement*. That book was found in the LORD's Temple. ³¹Then the king stood up in his place. He made an agreement with the LORD. He agreed to follow the LORD and to obey his commands, laws and rules. He agreed to obey with all his heart and soul the words of the agreement written in this book. ³²Then Josiah made all the people in Jerusalem and Benjamin promise to accept the agreement. The people of Jerusalem obeyed the agreement of God, the God their ancestors obeyed. ³³In all the areas that belonged to the Israelites, Josiah removed the disgusting idols they had worshipped. He led all the people in Israel to serve the LORD their God. And for as long as Josiah lived, the people continued to serve the LORD, the God of their ancestors.

Josiah Celebrates Passover

35 King Josiah celebrated the Passover festival to honour the LORD in Jerusalem. The Passover lamb was killed on the fourteenth day of the first month. ²Josiah chose the priests to do their duties and encouraged them while they were serving in the LORD's Temple. ³He spoke to the Levites who taught the Israelites and who were made holy for service to the LORD. He said to them, "Put the Holy Box in the Temple that was built by King Solomon son of David of Israel. Don't carry the Holy Box from place to place on your shoulders again. Now serve the LORD your God and his people Israel. ⁴Make yourselves ready for service in the Temple together with your own family groups that share the same duties. Do the jobs that King David and his son King Solomon gave you to do. ⁵The people who come to the Temple will need directions from the Levites in their

own family group. So be ready in the Holy Place to help those families you are responsible for. ⁶Kill the Passover lambs and make yourselves holy to the Lord. Get ready to help your fellow Israelites. Do everything the LORD commanded us in the laws he gave to Moses."

⁷Josiah gave the Israelites 30,000 sheep and goats to kill for the Passover sacrifices. He also gave 3000 cattle to the people. All these animals were from King Josiah's own animals. ⁸Josiah's officials also freely gave animals to the people and to the priests and Levites to use for Passover. Hilkiah the high priest, Zechariah and Jehiel were the officials in charge of the Temple. They gave the priests 2600 lambs and goats and 300 bulls for Passover sacrifices. ⁹Also Conaniah with Shemaiah and Nethanel, his brothers, and Hashabiah, Jeiel and Jozabad gave 500 sheep and goats and 500 bulls for Passover sacrifices to the Levites. These men were leaders of the Levites.

¹⁰When everything was ready for the Passover service to begin, the priests and Levites went to their places. This is what the king commanded. ¹¹The Passover lambs were killed. Then the Levites skinned the animals and gave the blood to the priests. The priests splashed the blood on the altar. ¹²Then they gave the animals to be used for burnt offerings to the different tribes. This was done so that the burnt offerings could be offered to the LORD the way the Law of Moses taught. And they did the same with the bulls. ¹³The Levites roasted the Passover sacrifices over the fire in the way they were commanded. And they boiled the holy offerings in pots, kettles and pans. Then they quickly gave the meat to the people. ¹⁴After this was finished, the Levites got meat for them-

selves and for the priests who were descendants of Aaron. These priests were kept very busy, working until it got dark. They worked hard burning the burnt offerings and the fat of the sacrifices. ¹⁵The Levite singers were descendants of Asaph. They took their places, following the instructions from King David, Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun the king's prophet. The gatekeepers at each gate did not have to leave their places because the other Levites made everything ready for them for Passover.

¹⁶So everything was done that day for the worship of the LORD as King Josiah commanded. Passover was celebrated and the burnt offerings were offered on the LORD's altar. ¹⁷The Israelites who were there celebrated Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days. ¹⁸There had not been a Passover like this since the time of Samuel the prophet! None of the other kings of Israel had ever celebrated a Passover like this one that was ordered by King Josiah. It included all the priests and Levites, the people of Jerusalem, and all the people who were there from Judah and Israel. ¹⁹They celebrated this Passover in Josiah's eighteenth year as king.

The Death of Josiah

²⁰Josiah did all these good things for the Temple. Later, King Neco of Egypt led an army to fight against the town of Carchemish on the Euphrates River. King Josiah went out to fight against Neco. ²¹But Neco sent messengers to Josiah. This is what they said:

“King Josiah, this war is not your problem. I didn't come to fight against you. I came to fight my enemies, and God told me to hurry. God is on my side. So if you fight against

me, you will be fighting against God, and he will destroy you!”

²²But Josiah did not listen to the warning Neco had received from God. He did not turn back. Instead, he put on different clothes to hide who he was and went into battle against King Neco on the plain of Megiddo. ²³And during the battle, enemy archers shot King Josiah with their arrows. He told his servants, “Take me away! I am badly wounded!”

²⁴So the servants took Josiah out of his chariot and put him in another chariot he had brought with him to the battle. Then they took Josiah to Jerusalem. He died there and was buried in the tombs of his ancestors. All the people of Judah and Jerusalem were very sad because Josiah was dead. ²⁵Jeremiah wrote and sang some funeral songs for Josiah. And the men and women singers still sing these sad songs today. It became something the people of Israel always do—they sing a sad song for Josiah. These songs are found in the book, *Funeral Songs*.

^{26–27}Everything else Josiah did while he was king is recorded in the book, *The History of the Kings of Israel and Judah*. The book tells about the way he served God faithfully by obeying the Law of the LORD.

Jehoahaz, King of Judah

36 The people of Judah chose Jehoahaz to be the new king in Jerusalem. Jehoahaz was Josiah's son. ²He was 23 years old when he became king of Judah. He was king in Jerusalem for three months. ³Then King Neco from Egypt made Jehoahaz a prisoner. Neco forced the people of Judah to pay 3400 kilogrammes[¶] of silver and 34 kilo-

[¶]36:3 3400 kilogrammes Literally, “100 talents”.

grammes^{§§} of gold as a fine. ⁴Neco chose Jehoahaz's brother Eliakim to be the new king of Judah and Jerusalem. Neco changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. And Neco took Jehoahaz away to Egypt.

Jehoiakim, King of Judah

⁵Jehoiakim was 25 years old when he became the new king of Judah. He was king in Jerusalem for eleven years. Jehoiakim did not obey God. He did what the LORD his God says is evil.

⁶King Nebuchadnezzar from Babylon attacked Judah. He made Jehoiakim a prisoner and put bronze chains on him. Then Nebuchadnezzar took King Jehoiakim to Babylon. ⁷Nebuchadnezzar took some of the things from the LORD's Temple. He carried them to Babylon and put them in his own house. ⁸All the other things Jehoiakim did, including his disgusting sins and everything else he was guilty of doing, are recorded in the book, *The History of the Kings of Israel and Judah*. His son Jehoiachin became the new king after him.

Jehoiachin, King of Judah

⁹Jehoiachin was 18 years old when he became king of Judah. He was king in Jerusalem for three months and ten days. He did not obey God. He did what the LORD says is evil. ¹⁰In the spring, King Nebuchadnezzar sent some servants to get Jehoiachin. They brought Jehoiachin and some valuable treasures from the LORD's Temple to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar chose Zedekiah to be the new king of Judah and Jerusalem. Zedekiah was one of Jehoiachin's relatives.

Zedekiah, King of Judah

¹¹Zedekiah was 21 years old when he became king of Judah. He was king in Jerusalem for eleven years. ¹²Zedekiah did what the LORD says is evil. And when the prophet Jeremiah spoke to him from the LORD, Zedekiah was too proud to listen.

Jerusalem Is Destroyed

¹³Zedekiah turned against King Nebuchadnezzar. In the past Nebuchadnezzar had forced Zedekiah to promise with an oath in God's name to be faithful to him. But Zedekiah was stubborn and refused to obey the LORD, the God of Israel. ¹⁴And all the leading priests and the people of Judah became more and more unfaithful to the Lord. They committed the same disgusting sins of the other nations. They ruined the Temple that the LORD had made holy in Jerusalem. ¹⁵The LORD, the God of their ancestors, sent prophets again and again to warn his people. He did this because he felt sorry for them and for his Temple. He didn't want to destroy them or his Temple. ¹⁶But they made fun of God's prophets and laughed at their messages from God. They kept on insulting his prophets until the LORD became so angry with his people that there was nothing they could do to stop it. ¹⁷So God brought the king of Babylon to attack them.* His army even went into the Temple and killed the young men serving there. The king of Babylon had no mercy on anyone in Judah and Jerusalem. He killed men and women, young and old. God let him do whatever he wanted with the people. ¹⁸Nebuchadnezzar car-

§§36:3 34 kilogrammes Literally, "1 talent".

*36:17 to attack them This happened in the year 586 BC, when Jerusalem was finally destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

ried away to Babylon all the things, large and small, that were used in God's Temple. And he took all the valuable things from the treasuries of the LORD's Temple, from the king and from the king's officials. ¹⁹ Nebuchadnezzar and his army burned the Temple. They broke down Jerusalem's wall and burned all the houses that belonged to the king and his officials. They took or destroyed every valuable thing in Jerusalem. ²⁰ Nebuchadnezzar took the people who were still alive back to Babylon and forced them to be slaves. They stayed in Babylon as slaves until the Persian kingdom defeated the kingdom of Babylon. ²¹ The land of Judah became an empty desert and stayed that way for 70 years. All this time the land rested to make up for the Sabbath rests[†] that the people had not kept. This is just what the LORD had said

would happen in the warning he gave through the prophet Jeremiah.[‡]

²² In the first year that Cyrus king of Persia began to rule,[¶] the LORD caused him to make a special announcement. He did this so that what the LORD had promised through Jeremiah the prophet would really happen. Cyrus sent messengers every place in his kingdom with this message:

²³ "This is what King Cyrus of Persia says:

"The LORD, the God of heaven, made me king over the whole earth. He gave me the responsibility of building a Temple for him in Jerusalem. Now, all of you who are his people are free to go to Jerusalem. And may the LORD your God be with you."

[†]**36:21 Sabbath rests** The Law said that every seventh year the land was not to be farmed. See Lev. 25:1-7.

[‡]**36:21 warning ... Jeremiah** See Jer. 25:11; 29:10.

[¶]**36:22 began to rule** Probably meaning when Cyrus, after capturing Babylonia, became ruler of a great empire about 538 BC.