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## 2 Samuel

In this book, King David faces many challenges. Samuel is not there to advise him. But Saul is not there to chase him. 2 Samuel tells about David's time as king. While David was building his kingdom, he had many successes and many failures. When David obeyed God, his kingdom was successful. In fact, God made a promise to King David. He told him that his kingdom would never end.

When God made this promise, he was looking forward to the eternal kingdom he would set up through one of David's descendants. This was to be Jesus of Nazareth, God's Chosen King (the Messiah or Christ). King David reminds us of King Jesus because he included people of different races in his kingdom. Neither kingdom was limited to one nation. David expanded his kingdom by conquering most of the nations around Israel. He also made treaties with other, more powerful nations. This is one reason why Israel became so powerful.

David did not begin his rule as the king of all the Israelite tribes. The tribe of Judah in the south supported David. But the northern Israelite tribes were still loyal to Saul and his family. In fact, after Saul's death, the northern tribes chose their own king. He was Saul's son Ishbosheth. But Ishbosheth was king in the north for only two years. After many struggles between the northern and southern tribes, David finally became king over all Israel.

But in doing this, David killed a lot of people. So when David wanted to build the Temple, God did not allow it because he had killed so many people.

Even though he was a great warrior, King David could not stop the terrible things that happened in his kingdom. In fact, he caused many of the problems. David made God very angry when he had sex with another man's wife. Then David had that man killed to cover up his sin. David's son Amnon forced his own half-sister to have sex with him. And one of David's other sons, Absalom, did not want his father to be king. Finally, David and his army fought against Absalom. It was a sad and difficult time for David. 2 Samuel ends with the last years of David's life.

In the book of 2 Samuel, we see that... David becomes king over the whole nation of Israel (1:1 – 5:5)

David's kingdom will last forever (5:6 – 10:19)

David's bad choices put his family and kingdom in danger (11:1 – 20:26)

David understands that the Lord is the true king of Israel (21:1 – 24:25)

### David Learns About Saul's Death

**1** After David defeated the Amalekites, he went back to Ziklag. This was just after Saul had been killed. David had been there for two days. <sup>2</sup>Then, on the third day, a man from Saul's camp came to Ziklag. His clothes were torn, and he had dirt on his head.\* He came to David and bowed down with his face to the ground.

<sup>3</sup>David asked him, "Where have you come from?"

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\*1:2 *clothes ... head* This showed that the man was very sad.

The man answered, “I have just come from the Israelite camp.”

<sup>4</sup>David said, “Who won the battle? Tell me!”

The man answered, “Our army ran away from the battle. Many of them were killed in the battle. Even Saul and his son Jonathan are dead.”

<sup>5</sup>David said to this young soldier, “How do you know Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?”

<sup>6</sup>The young soldier said, “I happened to be on Mount Gilboa, and I saw Saul leaning on his spear. The Philistine chariots and horsemen were coming closer and closer to Saul. <sup>7</sup>Saul looked back and saw me. He called to me, and I answered him. <sup>8</sup>Then Saul asked me who I was. I told him that I was an Amalekite. <sup>9</sup>Then Saul said, ‘Please kill me. I am hurt badly. And I am about to die anyway.’ <sup>10</sup>He was hurt so badly that I knew he wouldn’t live, so I stopped and killed him. Then I took the crown from his head and the bracelet from his arm and brought them here to you, my lord.”

<sup>11</sup>Then David tore his clothes to show his great sorrow. All the men with him did the same thing. <sup>12</sup>They mourned, cried loudly and did not eat anything all that day. They were sad because Saul and his son Jonathan were dead. And they were sad for all the LORD’s people, the descendants of Israel, who had been killed in battle.

### David Orders the Amalekite Killed

<sup>13</sup>Then David talked with the young soldier who had told him about Saul’s

death. David asked, “Where are you from?”

The young soldier answered, “I am the son of an immigrant. I am an Amalekite.”

<sup>14</sup>David said to the young soldier, “Why were you not afraid to kill the LORD’s chosen king?”<sup>†</sup>

<sup>15–16</sup>Then David told the Amalekite, “You are responsible for your own death. You said you killed the LORD’s chosen king, so your own words prove you are guilty.” Then David called one of his young servants and told him to kill the Amalekite. So the young Israelite killed him.

### David’s Song About Saul and Jonathan

<sup>17</sup>David sang a funeral song about Saul and his son Jonathan. <sup>18</sup>David told his men to teach the song to the people of Judah. This song is called “The Bow”, and it is included in the *Book of Jashar*.<sup>‡</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Israel, your glorious leaders lie dead in the hill country.

Oh, how bravely those heroes died!

<sup>20</sup>Don’t tell the news in Gath.<sup>¶</sup>

Don’t announce it in the streets of Ashkelon.<sup>§</sup>

I don’t want the Philistine women to be happy

or the daughters of those foreigners<sup>\*\*</sup> to be glad.

<sup>21</sup>May no rain or dew fall on you, mountains of Gilboa.

May there be no offerings coming from your fields.

That’s where the shields of the heroes were disgraced.

<sup>†</sup>1:14 *chosen king* Literally, “anointed one”.

<sup>‡</sup>1:18 *Book of Jashar* An ancient book about the wars of Israel.

<sup>¶</sup>1:20 *Gath* The Philistine capital city.

<sup>§</sup>1:20 *Ashkelon* One of the five most important Philistine cities.

<sup>\*\*</sup>1:20 *foreigners* Literally, “uncircumcised”. This shows that the Philistines had not shared in Israel’s agreement with God. See circumcise, circumcision in the Word List.

Saul's shield has no one to care for it.<sup>††</sup>  
<sup>22</sup> Jonathan was fearless with his bow.  
 With its arrows he spilled enemy blood!  
 Saul was skilful with the sword.  
 He swung it, and mighty men fell  
 wounded.  
<sup>23</sup> Saul and Jonathan—how dear they  
 were to us!  
 In life they loved being together,  
 and even death did not separate them!  
 They were faster than eagles  
 and stronger than lions.  
<sup>24</sup> Daughters of Israel, cry for Saul!  
 Saul gave you beautiful red dresses  
 and covered them with gold jewellery!  
<sup>25</sup> The brave heroes have fallen in battle!  
 Jonathan lies dead in the hills.  
<sup>26</sup> Jonathan, my brother, I miss you so  
 much!  
 You were very dear to me.  
 Your love for me was amazing,  
 more faithful than the love of a woman  
 for her husband.  
<sup>27</sup> The brave heroes have fallen in battle.  
 Their weapons of war are lost.

### David Is Anointed King of Judah

**2** After this, David asked the LORD for  
 advice. David said, "Should I take  
 control<sup>‡‡</sup> of any of the cities of Judah?"  
 The LORD said to David, "Yes."  
 David asked, "Where should I go?"  
 The Lord answered, "To Hebron."  
<sup>2</sup> So David and his two wives moved to  
 Hebron. (His wives were Ahinoam from  
 Jezreel and Abigail, who had been the

wife of Nabal from Carmel.)<sup>3</sup> David also  
 brought his men and their families. All  
 of them made their homes in Hebron and  
 the towns nearby.

<sup>4</sup> The men of Judah came to Hebron  
 and anointed David to be the king of Ju-  
 dah. Then they told David, "The men of  
 Jabesh Gilead buried Saul."

<sup>5</sup> David sent messengers to the men  
 of Jabesh Gilead. These messengers told  
 the men in Jabesh: "The LORD bless  
 you, because you have shown kindness  
 to your lord Saul by burying him."<sup>¶¶</sup> <sup>6</sup> The  
 LORD will be kind and true to you, and  
 so will I. <sup>7</sup> Now be strong and brave.  
 Your lord, Saul, is dead, but the tribe of  
 Judah has anointed me to be their king."

### Ishbosheth Becomes King

<sup>8</sup> Abner son of Ner was the commander  
 of Saul's army. Abner took Saul's son Ish-  
 bosheth<sup>§§</sup> to Mahanaim <sup>9</sup> and made him  
 king of Gilead, Asher, Jezreel, Ephraim,  
 Benjamin and all Israel.\*

<sup>10</sup> Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was 40 years  
 old when he began to rule over Israel.  
 He ruled Israel two years, but the tribe  
 of Judah followed David. <sup>11</sup> David ruled  
 over the tribe of Judah from Hebron for  
 seven years and six months.

### The Deadly Contest

<sup>12</sup> Abner and the soldiers of Ishbosheth  
 left Mahanaim and went to Gibeon.  
<sup>13</sup> Joab, Zeruiah's son, also went to  
 Gibeon with David's soldiers. They met

<sup>††</sup>1:21 Literally, "is no longer rubbed with oil". The leather shields had to be rubbed with oil to keep them from cracking.

<sup>‡‡</sup>2:1 *take control* Literally, "go up against".

<sup>¶¶</sup>2:5 *burying him* The bodies of both Saul and Jonathan were burned and their bones were buried. See 1 Sam. 31:12.

<sup>§§</sup>2:8 *Ishbosheth* In the ancient Greek version and 1 Chr. 8:33; 9:39, his name is Ish Baal or Eshbaal. Later Hebrew scribes substituted Bosheth ("shame") for Baal ("Lord"), because Baal was also the name for a Canaanite god.

\*2:9 *Israel* Sometimes this means the whole country, Judah and Israel. Here, it means only the tribes that were not united with Judah.

Abner and the soldiers of Ishbosheth at the pool of Gibeon. Abner's men sat on one side of the pool. Joab's men sat on the other side.

<sup>14</sup> Abner said to Joab, "Let's watch some of these young soldiers fight each other!"

Joab said, "Yes, let's have a contest."

<sup>15</sup> So they chose twelve men from each side—twelve from the tribe of Benjamin to fight for Ishbosheth against twelve of David's men. <sup>16</sup> Each man grabbed his enemy's head and stuck his sword into the other man's side, and they both fell down dead. That is why this place in Gibeon is called "Field of Swords".<sup>†</sup> <sup>17</sup> This started a violent battle, and David's men defeated Abner and the Israelites that day.

### Abner Kills Asahel

<sup>18</sup> Zeruah's three sons were there that day: Joab, Abishai and Asahel. Asahel was a fast runner, as fast as a wild deer. <sup>19</sup> Asahel ran straight towards Abner and began chasing him. <sup>20</sup> Abner looked back and asked, "Is that you, Asahel?"

Asahel said, "Yes, it's me."

<sup>21</sup> Abner didn't want to hurt Asahel, so he said to Asahel, "Stop chasing me—go after one of the young soldiers. You could easily take his armour for yourself." But Asahel refused to stop chasing Abner.

<sup>22</sup> Abner again said to Asahel, "Stop chasing me, or I will have to kill you. Then I will not be able to look your brother Joab in the face again."

<sup>23</sup> But Asahel refused to stop chasing Abner. So Abner used the back end of his spear and pushed it into Asahel's stomach. The spear went deep into Asahel's

stomach and came out of his back. Asahel died right there.

### Joab and Abishai Chase Abner

Asahel's body lay on the ground. Everyone who came that way stopped to look at Asahel, <sup>24</sup> but Joab and Abishai<sup>‡</sup> continued chasing Abner. The sun was just going down when they came to Ammah Hill, which is in front of Giah on the way to the desert of Gibeon. <sup>25</sup> The men from the tribe of Benjamin gathered around Abner at the top of the hill.

<sup>26</sup> Abner shouted to Joab and said, "Must we fight and kill each other forever? Surely you know that this will only end in sadness. Tell the men to stop chasing their own brothers."

<sup>27</sup> Then Joab said, "As surely as God lives, if you had not said something, my men would still be chasing their brothers in the morning." <sup>28</sup> So Joab blew a trumpet, and his men stopped chasing the Israelites. They did not try to fight the Israelites any more.

<sup>29</sup> Abner and his men marched all night through the Jordan Valley. They crossed the Jordan River and then marched all day until they came to Mahanaim.

<sup>30</sup> Joab stopped chasing Abner and turned back. Joab had gathered his men and found that 19 of David's men were missing, not counting Asahel. <sup>31</sup> But David's men had killed 360 of Abner's men from the tribe of Benjamin. <sup>32</sup> David's men took Asahel and buried him in the tomb of his father at Bethlehem.

Joab and his men marched all night. The sun came up just as they reached Hebron.

<sup>†</sup>**2:16 Field of Swords** Or "Field of Knives". Hebrew, "Helkath Hazzurim". An ancient Greek version has "Place of Enemies".

<sup>‡</sup>**2:24 Joab and Abishai** Brothers of Asahel, the man who Abner killed. See verse 18.

### War Between Israel and Judah

**3** There was war for a long time between Saul's family and David's family. David became stronger and stronger, but Saul's family became weaker and weaker.

### David's Six Sons Born at Hebron

<sup>2</sup>These are David's sons who were born at Hebron:

The first was Amnon, whose mother was Ahinoam from Jezreel.

<sup>3</sup>The second son was Kileab, whose mother was Abigail. She had been the wife of Nabal from Carmel.

The third son was Absalom, whose mother was Maacah, the daughter of King Talmai of Geshur.

<sup>4</sup>The fourth son was Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith.

The fifth son was Shephatiah, whose mother was Abital.

<sup>5</sup>The sixth son was Ithream, whose mother was David's wife Eglah. These sons were all born at Hebron.

### Abner Decides to Join David

<sup>6</sup>As the families of Saul and David fought each other, Abner became more and more powerful in Saul's army.

<sup>7</sup>Saul had a slave woman named Rizpah daughter of Aiah. Ishbosheth said to Abner, "Why did you have sex with my father's servant woman?"

<sup>8</sup>This made Abner very angry. He said, "Do you think I'm like a dog out of control? Today, I have kept my promise to your father Saul and to his family and friends. I did not let you fall into David's control. And now, on this same day, you

accuse me of doing something bad with this woman. <sup>9-10</sup>The LORD promised with an oath that he would take the kingdom away from Saul's family and give it to David. And I swear, I will make sure that happens. God will make David king of Judah and Israel. He will rule from Dan to Beersheba."<sup>¶</sup> <sup>11</sup>Ishbosheth was too afraid of Abner to say anything in response.

<sup>12</sup>Abner sent messengers to David and said, "Who do you think should rule this country? Make an agreement with me, and I will help you become the ruler of all the people of Israel."

<sup>13</sup>David answered, "Good! I will make an agreement with you. But I ask you only one thing: I will not meet with you until you bring Saul's daughter Michal to me."

<sup>14</sup>David then sent messengers to Saul's son Ishbosheth. David said, "Give me my wife Michal. She was promised to me. I killed 100 Philistines to get her."<sup>§</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Then Ishbosheth told the men to go and take Michal away from her husband Paltiel son of Laish. <sup>16</sup>Her husband followed her, crying all the way to Bahurim. Finally Abner said to him, "Go back home." So Paltiel went back home.

<sup>17</sup>Abner sent this message to the leaders of Israel. He said, "For a long time you have wanted to make David your king. <sup>18</sup>Now do it! The LORD was talking about David when he said, 'I will save my people, the Israelites, from the Philistines and all their other enemies. I will do this through my servant David.'"

<sup>19</sup>Abner also talked to the people of Benjamin's tribe. Then he went to Hebron so that he could tell David what

<sup>¶</sup>**3:9-10 Dan to Beersheba** This means the whole nation of Israel, north and south. Dan was a town in the northern part of Israel and Beersheba was in the southern part of Judah.

<sup>§</sup>**3:14 I killed ... to get her** Literally, "I paid for her with 100 Philistine foreskins." See 1 Sam. 18:20-30; 25:44.

Israel and the tribe of Benjamin had agreed to.

<sup>20</sup> When Abner came to David at Hebron with 20 soldiers, David gave a party for them.

<sup>21</sup> Abner said to David, “My lord and king, let me go and bring all the Israelites to you. Then they will make an agreement with you, and you will rule over all Israel, as you wanted.”

So David let Abner leave in peace.

### Abner’s Death

<sup>22</sup> Joab and some of David’s soldiers were on their way back from a raid on a village. They had many valuable things that they had taken from the enemy. David had just let Abner leave in peace. So he was not there in Hebron with David. <sup>23</sup> Joab and all his army arrived at Hebron. The army said to Joab, “Abner came to King David, and David let him leave in peace.”

<sup>24</sup> Joab came to the king and said, “What have you done? Abner came to you, but you sent him away! Why did you let him go free? <sup>25</sup> You know that he came to spy on you. He came to find out everything you are doing.”

<sup>26</sup> Joab left David and sent messengers to get Abner at the well of Sirah. The messengers brought Abner back, but David did not know this. <sup>27</sup> When Abner arrived at Hebron, Joab met him in the gateway. He pulled him aside to talk in private and then stabbed him in the stomach. So he got his revenge against Abner. Joab killed Abner because Abner had killed Joab’s brother Asahel.

### David Cries for Abner

<sup>28</sup> Later David heard the news and said, “With the LORD as my witness, I tell you that my kingdom and I are innocent of the death of Abner son of Ner. <sup>29</sup> Joab and his family are responsible for

this, so I pray that they will be cursed. May there always be someone in his family who suffers from sores or other skin disease, or is lamed, killed in war, or does not have enough food to eat!”

<sup>30</sup> Joab and his brother Abishai killed Abner because Abner had killed their brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon.

<sup>31–32</sup> David told Joab and all the people with him to show their sorrow: “Tear your clothes and put on rags. Cry for Abner.” They buried Abner in Hebron. David went to the funeral. He and all the people cried at Abner’s grave.

<sup>33</sup> King David sang this sad song at Abner’s funeral:

“Why did Abner die like some foolish criminal?”

<sup>34</sup> Abner, your hands were not tied. Your feet were not put in chains. No, Abner, you were killed by evil men!”

Then all the people cried again for Abner. <sup>35</sup> All day long people came to encourage David to eat food. But David had made a special promise. He said, “May God punish me and give me many troubles if I eat bread or any other food before the sun goes down.” <sup>36</sup> All the people saw what happened, and they were pleased with what King David did.

<sup>37</sup> Now all the people of Judah and Israel understood that King David had not killed Abner son of Ner.

<sup>38</sup> King David said to his officers, “You know that a very important leader died today in Israel. <sup>39</sup> It is true that I am God’s chosen king. But I am not able to deal with these troublesome sons of Zeruiah. May the LORD give them the punishment they deserve.”

### Troubles Come to Saul’s Family

**4** Saul’s son Ishbosheth heard that Abner had died at Hebron. Ishbosheth and all his people became very afraid. <sup>2</sup> Two men went to see to Saul’s son.

These two men were captains in the army. They were Recab and Baanah, the sons of Rimmon from Beeroth. (They were Benjamites because the town Beeroth belonged to the tribe of Benjamin.)<sup>3</sup> But all the people in Beeroth ran away to Gittaim, and they are still living there today.)

<sup>4</sup> Saul's son Jonathan had a son named Mephibosheth. He was five years old when the news came from Jezreel that Saul and Jonathan had been killed. The woman who cared for Mephibosheth picked him up and ran away. But while running away, she dropped the boy, and he became lame in both feet.

<sup>5</sup> Recab and Baanah, sons of Rimmon from Beeroth, went to Ishbosheth's house at noon. Ishbosheth was resting because it was hot.<sup>6-7</sup> Recab and Baanah came into the house as if they were going to get some wheat. Ishbosheth was lying on his bed in his bedroom, and they stabbed and killed him. Then they cut off his head and took it with them. They travelled all night on the road through the Jordan Valley.<sup>8</sup> When they arrived at Hebron, they gave Ishbosheth's head to David.

Recab and Baanah said to King David, "Here is the head of your enemy, Ishbosheth son of Saul. He tried to kill you, but the LORD has punished Saul and his family for you today."

<sup>9</sup> But David told Recab and his brother Baanah, "As surely as the LORD lives, he is the one who has rescued me from all my troubles!<sup>10</sup> Once before, a man thought he was bringing me good news. He told me, 'Look! Saul is dead.' He thought I would reward him for bring-

ing me the news. But I grabbed this man and killed him at Ziklag.<sup>11</sup> I will kill you too and remove this evil from our land because you evil men killed a good man sleeping on his own bed, in his own house."

<sup>12</sup> So David commanded his young helpers\*\* to kill Recab and Baanah. The young men cut off the hands and feet of Recab and Baanah and hanged them by the pool of Hebron. Then they took the head of Ishbosheth and buried it where Abner was buried at Hebron.

### The Israelites Make David King

**5** All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron. They said to David, "Look, we are one family!<sup>††</sup><sup>2</sup> Even when Saul was our king, you were the one who led us into battle. And you were the one who brought Israel back home from war. The LORD himself told you, 'You will be the shepherd of my people, the Israelites. You will be the ruler over Israel.'"

<sup>3</sup> So all the leaders of Israel came to meet with King David at Hebron. He made an agreement with them in Hebron in front of the LORD, and they anointed David to be the king of Israel.

<sup>4</sup> David was 30 years old when he began to rule. He was king for 40 years.<sup>5</sup> In Hebron he ruled over Judah for 7 years and 6 months, and in Jerusalem he ruled over all Israel and Judah for 33 years.

### David Captures Jerusalem

<sup>6</sup> The king and his men went to Jerusalem to fight against the Jebusites, who had long controlled that territory. The Jebusites said to David, "You will never enter our city!<sup>‡‡</sup> Even our blind

\*\*4:12 *young helpers* Young men who carried a soldier's weapons into battle but were not yet soldiers themselves.

††5:1 *one family* Literally, "your bone and flesh".

‡‡5:6 *You ... city* Their city was built on a hill. It had high walls around it, making it hard to capture.

and lame people could stop you.” They thought there was no way for David to take their city.<sup>7</sup> But David captured the fortress of Zion, which became the City of David.

<sup>8</sup>That day David said to his men, “To attack the Jebusites, you must go up through the water tunnel. That is the only way to reach my lame and blind enemies.” That is why people now say, “The lame and blind are not allowed in the palace.”<sup>¶</sup>

<sup>9</sup>David made the fortress his home and called it “The City of David”. He built up the city around the fortress, beginning from the lowest part of the hill that had to be built up and filled in.<sup>10</sup> David’s power increased more and more because the LORD All-Powerful was with him.

<sup>11</sup>King Hiram of Tyre sent messengers to David. He also sent cedar trees, carpenters and stonemasons. They built a house for David.<sup>12</sup> Then David knew that the LORD had really made him king of Israel and had made him ruler over his kingdom for the good of his people Israel.

<sup>13</sup>David moved from Hebron to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, he married more women, some as slaves and some as wives. So David had more children who were born in Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup> These are the names of David’s children born in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon,<sup>15</sup> Ibhaz, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia,<sup>16</sup> Elishama, Eliada and Eliphelet.

### David Fights Against the Philistines

<sup>17</sup>When the Philistines heard that the Israelites had anointed David to be the

king of Israel, they sent their whole army up to capture him. David heard about this and went down to the fortress.<sup>§§</sup>

<sup>18</sup>The Philistines came and camped all around the Rephaim Valley.

<sup>19</sup>David asked the LORD, “Should I go and fight the Philistines? Will you help me defeat them?”

The LORD answered, “Go! I will make sure you defeat the Philistines!”

<sup>20</sup>Then David went to Baal Perazim and defeated the Philistines there. He said, “The LORD broke through my enemies like water breaking through a dam.” David named that place Baal Perazim because it means, “The LORD breaks through.”<sup>21</sup> The Philistines left their idols behind at Baal Perazim, so David and his men took them away.

### Another Victory Over the Philistines

<sup>22</sup>Once again the Philistines came and camped all around the Rephaim Valley.

<sup>23</sup>David prayed to the LORD again and got this answer: “Don’t go up the valley. Go around behind and attack them from the balsam trees.”<sup>24</sup> When you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the trees, you must act quickly. That is the sign that the LORD has gone out in front of you to defeat the Philistines.”

<sup>25</sup>David did what the LORD commanded him to do, and he defeated the Philistines. He chased them from Gibeon to Gezer, killing them all along the way.

### God’s Holy Box Is Moved to Jerusalem

**6** David again gathered all the best soldiers in Israel. There were 30,000 men.<sup>2</sup> Then David and all his men went

<sup>¶</sup>5:8 *palace* Or “temple”. Literally, “house”.

<sup>§§</sup>5:17 *fortress* This may refer to the fortress in Jerusalem (verse 7). But the words “he went down” may mean that it was another fortress, perhaps the “cave of Adullam”, which is called a “fortress” or “hideout” in 1Sa 22:1,4,5.

to Baalah in Judah\* to take God's Holy Box from there. People go there to call on the name of the LORD All-Powerful, who sits as king above the winged creatures that are on that Box. <sup>3</sup>David's men brought the Holy Box out of Abinadab's house on the hill. They put it on a new cart. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the cart, <sup>4</sup> which now carried the Holy Box. Ahio was walking in front of it. <sup>5</sup>David and all the Israelites were dancing with all their might to please the LORD. They were singing and playing all kinds of musical instruments: lyres, harps, drums, rattles and cymbals. <sup>6</sup>When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah reached out and took hold of God's Holy Box to keep it from falling. <sup>7</sup>But the LORD became angry with Uzzah and struck him dead. So Uzzah died there in front of God. <sup>†</sup> <sup>8</sup>David was angry because the LORD had killed Uzzah in anger. David called that place "Perez Uzzah",<sup>‡</sup> and that's what people still call it.

<sup>9</sup>David began to feel afraid of the LORD that day and said, "I don't think I should be the one to take care of God's Holy Box." <sup>10</sup>So David decided not to move the LORD's Holy Box into Jerusalem. He took it to the house of Obed-Edom, who was from Gath.<sup>¶</sup> <sup>11</sup>The LORD's Holy Box stayed at the house of Obed-Edom for three months, and the LORD blessed Obed-Edom and all his family.

<sup>12</sup>Later some people told David, "The LORD has blessed the family of Obed-Edom and everything he owns, because God's Holy Box is there." So David said to himself, "I will bring blessings back to my own house!"<sup>§</sup> David was very happy and excited as he brought God's Holy Box from Obed-Edom's house. <sup>13</sup>When the men who carried the LORD's Holy Box had walked six steps, they stopped and David sacrificed a bull and a fat calf. <sup>14</sup>David was dancing in front of the LORD. He was wearing a linen ephod.

<sup>15</sup>David and all the Israelites were excited—they shouted and blew trumpets as they brought the LORD's Holy Box into the city. <sup>16</sup>Saul's daughter Michal was looking out the window as the LORD's Holy Box was being carried into the city. When she saw David jumping and dancing before the LORD, she felt disgusted with him.

<sup>17</sup>They brought the LORD's Holy Box and put it in its place in the middle of the tent that David had set up for it. Then David offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the LORD.

<sup>18</sup>After David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD All-Powerful. <sup>19</sup>Then he gave food to the whole Israelite crowd. He gave a loaf of bread, a lump of dates and a lump of raisins to every man and woman there. Then all the people went home.

\***6:2 Baalah in Judah** Another name for Kiriath Jearim. See 1 Chr. 13:6.

†**6:7** These sentences are from a Hebrew scroll from Qumran and the parallel passage in 1 Chr. 13:10. The traditional Hebrew text here is longer: "The LORD became angry with Uzzah, and God struck him dead there because of this error. And so he died there beside God's Holy Box."

‡**6:8 Perez Uzzah** This name means "The Outburst at Uzzah".

¶**6:10 Obed-Edom, who was from Gath** A man from the tribe of Levi who lived near Jerusalem.

§**6:12 So David said ... house** These words are from some copies of ancient Greek and Latin translations. They are not found in the traditional Hebrew text.

### David Responds to Michal's Complaint

<sup>20</sup> David went back to bless his house, but Saul's daughter Michal came out to meet him. She said, "The king of Israel did not honour himself today! You looked like a worthless fool out there, taking off your clothes without shame in front of the servant girls!"

<sup>21</sup> Then David said to Michal, "The LORD chose me, not your father or anyone from his family. The LORD chose me to be leader of his people, the Israelites. So I will continue dancing and celebrating in front of the LORD. <sup>22</sup>I might do things that are even more embarrassing! Maybe you will not respect me, but the girls you are talking about are proud of me!"

<sup>23</sup> Saul's daughter Michal lived her whole life without having any children.

### David Wants to Build a Temple

**7** After King David moved into his new house, the LORD gave him some relief from all his enemies around him.

<sup>2</sup> King David said to Nathan the prophet, "Look, I am living in a beautiful palace made of cedar, but God's Holy Box is still kept in a tent!"

<sup>3</sup> Nathan said to King David, "You must have a plan in mind. Go ahead and do it. The LORD will be with you."

<sup>4</sup> But that night, the LORD spoke to Nathan:

<sup>5</sup> "Go and tell my servant David that this is what the LORD says: 'You are not the one to build a house for me to live in. <sup>6</sup>From the time I brought Israel out of Egypt until now, I have not lived in a house. I

have moved from one place to another in a tent. <sup>7</sup>But in all my travels with the Israelites, I have never complained to any of the leaders that I commanded to care for my people Israel. I have never said anything to any of them about building me a house made of cedar.'

<sup>8</sup> "Now, tell my servant David that this is what the LORD All-Powerful says: 'I took you from the fields and from taking care of the sheep. I made you the leader of my people Israel. <sup>9</sup>I have been with you every place you have gone. I have defeated your enemies for you. I will make you one of the most famous people on earth. <sup>10</sup>I have chosen a place for my people, the Israelites, and have settled them there. I have given them their own place to live so that they will not have to move from place to place any more. Evil people will not trouble them, as they did <sup>11</sup>from the time that I chose leaders to rule my people Israel. I am giving you relief from all your enemies.

"Now this is what the LORD says to you: 'I promise that I will make your family a family of kings.\*\*

<sup>12</sup>When your life is finished, you will be buried with your ancestors. But then I will choose someone from your family, one of your own sons, to be the new king. And I will make his kingdom strong. <sup>13</sup>He will be the one to build a house for me, and I will make sure that his kingdom continues forever. <sup>14</sup>I will be his father, and he will be my son.†† When he sins, I will use other people to punish him. They will be my whips.

\*\*7:11 *make ... family of kings* Literally, "make a house for you".

††7:14 *father ... son* God "adopted" the kings from David's family, and they became his "sons". See Ps 2:7.

<sup>15</sup> But I will never take away my love and support from him, as I did from Saul. I removed him to make a place for you. <sup>16</sup> With my blessing, your family and your kingdom will continue forever! Your family of kings will never end!”

<sup>17</sup> Nathan told David about that vision. He told David everything God had said.

### David Prays to God

<sup>18</sup> Then King David went in and sat in front of the LORD. David said:

“Lord GOD, why am I so important to you? Why have you blessed my family so much? We are not worthy of all that you have done for us. <sup>19</sup> This would be more than enough, Lord GOD, but you have already said that you want to do much more for me, your servant! You have spoken about a great future for my family. Lord GOD, you talk about me as if I am a very important person. <sup>20</sup> What can I say? Lord GOD, you honour me, your servant. <sup>21</sup> You will do all these wonderful things because you said you would do them and because you want to do them. And you decided to let me know about them.

<sup>22</sup> “Lord GOD, this is why you are so great! There is no one like you. You are the only true God, as we know from all that we have heard about you. <sup>23</sup> And there is no nation on earth like your people Israel. They were slaves, but you took them out of Egypt and made them free. You made them your people. You did great and wonderful things for them and for your land. You forced

other nations and their gods out of the land to make way for your people. These are the same people you freed from Egypt to be yours. <sup>24</sup> You made the people of Israel your very own people forever, and you, LORD, became their God.

<sup>25</sup> “Now, LORD God, never forget these promises you have made about me and my family. Please do what you have promised! <sup>26</sup> Then your name will be honoured forever. People will say, ‘The LORD All-Powerful is the God who rules Israel!’ And with your blessing, the family of your servant David will continue to rule forever.”

<sup>27</sup> “You, LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, have let me know what you have planned. You said, ‘I will make your family a family of kings.’ That is why I, your servant, have the courage to pray this prayer to you. <sup>28</sup> Lord GOD, you are God, and I can trust what you say. And you have promised to do these good things for me, your servant. <sup>29</sup> Now, please bless my family. Let them stand before you and serve you forever. Lord GOD, you yourself said these things. You have blessed my family with a blessing that will continue forever.”

### David Wins Many Wars

**8** Later David defeated the Philistines and took control of a large area of land around Gath.<sup>f</sup> <sup>2</sup> He also defeated the Moabites. He forced them to lie on the ground in a long row. He measured with a piece of rope to divide them into three groups. He killed two of the groups

<sup>††</sup>7:19 *you ... person* Or “you don’t usually treat people this way, do you?”

<sup>¶¶</sup>8:1 *area of land around Gath* Literally, “Metheg-Ammah” or “one-cubit bridle”. The meaning is unclear but could be something like “villages controlled by the mother city”. See 1 Chr. 18:1.

and let the remaining group live. These Moabites were forced to accept David as their ruler and pay taxes to him.

<sup>3</sup>David went to an area near the Euphrates River to set up a monument for himself.<sup>§§</sup> There he defeated the king of Zobah, Hadadezer son of Rehob. <sup>4</sup>David captured 1700 chariot drivers<sup>†</sup> and 20,000 foot soldiers from Hadadezer. He crippled all but 100 of the chariot horses.<sup>†</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Arameans from Damascus came to help King Hadadezer of Zobah, but David killed 22,000 of them. <sup>6</sup>Then David put his soldiers in Damascus, and the Arameans were forced to accept David as their ruler and pay taxes to him. The LORD gave victory to David wherever he went.

<sup>7</sup>David took the gold shields from Hadadezer's army leaders and brought them to Jerusalem. <sup>8</sup>David also took many things made of bronze from Tebah<sup>‡</sup> and Berothai. (Tebah and Berothai were cities that had belonged to Hadadezer.)

<sup>9</sup>King Toi of Hamath heard that David had defeated Hadadezer's whole army. <sup>10</sup>Hadadezer had fought against Toi in the past, so Toi sent his son Joram to King David. Joram greeted him and blessed him because David had fought against Hadadezer and defeated

him. Joram brought gifts of silver, gold and bronze. <sup>11</sup>David took these things and dedicated them to the LORD, as he had always done when he defeated other nations, like <sup>12</sup>Edom,<sup>¶</sup> Moab, Ammon, Philistia and Amalek. He also defeated Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah. <sup>13</sup>And David really became famous when he returned home after killing 18,000 Edomites in Salt Valley. <sup>14</sup>He put teams of soldiers throughout Edom, and the whole nation was forced to accept him as their ruler. The LORD gave victory to David wherever he went.

### David's Officials

<sup>15</sup>David ruled over all Israel, and he made good and fair decisions for all his people. <sup>16</sup>Joab son of Zeruiah was the commander over the army. Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the historian. <sup>17</sup>Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were priests. Seraiah was the secretary. <sup>18</sup>Benaiah son of Jehoiada was in charge of the Kerethites and Pelethites,<sup>§</sup> and David's sons were priests.<sup>\*\*</sup>

### David Is Kind to Saul's Family

**9** David asked, "Is there anyone still left in Saul's family? I want to show kindness to that person. I want to do it for Jonathan."

<sup>§§</sup>8:3 *David went ... for himself* Or "David went to take control of the area near the Euphrates River."

<sup>\*</sup>8:4 *1700 chariot drivers* The ancient Greek version and a Hebrew scroll from Qumran have "1000 chariots, 7000 horses (or chariot drivers)".

<sup>†</sup>8:4 *He crippled ... horses* Or "He destroyed all but 100 chariots."

<sup>‡</sup>8:8 *Tebah* This is found in some ancient Greek copies. The traditional Hebrew text has "Betah". See 1 Chr. 18:8.

<sup>¶</sup>8:12 *Edom* This is found in the ancient Greek and Syriac versions and a few Hebrew copies. The traditional Hebrew text has "Aram". The same is true for "Edomites" in verse 13.

<sup>§</sup>8:18 *Kerethites and Pelethites* These were David's special bodyguards. An ancient Aramaic version has "the archers and stone throwers". This would mean these men were specially trained in using bows and arrows and slings.

<sup>\*\*</sup>8:18 *priests* Or "important leaders".

<sup>2</sup>There was a servant named Ziba from Saul's family. David's servants called Ziba to David. King David said to him, "Are you Ziba?"

Ziba said, "Yes, I am your servant Ziba."

<sup>3</sup>The king said, "Is there anyone left in Saul's family? I want to show God's kindness to that person."

Ziba said to King David, "Jonathan has a son still living. He is lame in both feet."

<sup>4</sup>The king said to Ziba, "Where is this son?"

Ziba said to the king, "He is at the house of Makir son of Ammiel in Lo Debar."

<sup>5</sup>Then King David sent some of his officers to Lo Debar to bring Jonathan's son from the house of Makir son of Ammiel. <sup>6</sup>Jonathan's son Mephibosheth came to David and bowed with his face low to the floor.

David said, "Mephibosheth?"

Mephibosheth said, "Yes, sir. I am your servant Mephibosheth."

<sup>7</sup>David said to Mephibosheth, "Don't be afraid. I will be kind to you because of your father Jonathan. I will give back to you all the land of your grandfather Saul. And you will always be able to eat at my table."

<sup>8</sup>Mephibosheth bowed to David again and said, "I am no better than a dead dog, but you are being very kind to me."

<sup>9</sup>Then King David called Saul's servant Ziba and said, "Mephibosheth is your master's grandson. So I have given him everything that Saul and his family owned. <sup>10</sup>You and your sons and servants will farm the land for Mephibosheth. You will harvest the crops. Then your master's grandson will have plenty of food to eat, but Mephibosheth will always be allowed to eat at my table."

Ziba had 15 sons and 20 servants.

<sup>11</sup>He said to King David, "I am your servant. I will do everything that my lord the king commands."

So Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's sons.

<sup>12</sup>Mephibosheth had a young son named Mica. All the people in Ziba's family became Mephibosheth's servants.

<sup>13</sup>Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem. He was lame in both feet, and every day he ate at the king's table.

### Hanun Shames David's Men

**10** Later, King Nahash of the Ammonites died. His son Hanun became the new king. <sup>2</sup>David said, "Nahash was kind to me, so I will show kindness to his son Hanun." So David sent some messengers to the land of the Ammonites to tell Hanun that he was sorry about his father's death.

But when David's messengers arrived in the land of the Ammonites, <sup>3</sup>the Ammonite leaders warned Hanun, their master. They said, "Do you think that David is really wanting to honour your father by sending these men to comfort you? No, David sent these men to spy on your city. He plans to attack and take it from you!"

<sup>4</sup>So Hanun took David's messengers and shaved their beards off one side of their faces. Then he cut off their clothes at the hips and sent them away.

<sup>5</sup>The men were too ashamed to go home. When David heard what had happened, he sent them this message: "Stay there in Jericho until your beards grow back. Then you can come home."

### War Against the Ammonites

<sup>6</sup>The Ammonites saw that they had become David's enemies, so they hired Arameans from Beth Rehob and Zobah. There were 20,000 Aramean foot sol-

diers. The Ammonites also hired the king of Maacah with 1000 men and 12,000 men from Tob.

<sup>7</sup>When David heard about this, he sent Joab and his whole army of warriors. <sup>8</sup>The Ammonites came out and got ready for battle in front of the city gate. The Arameans from Zobah and Rehob and the men from Tob and Maacah formed a separate group and prepared to fight in the fields nearby.

<sup>9</sup>Joab saw that there were enemies in front of him and behind him. So he chose some of the best Israelite soldiers and lined them up for battle against the Arameans. <sup>10</sup>He put the rest of the army under the command of his brother Abishai, who prepared them to fight against the Ammonites. <sup>11</sup>Joab said to Abishai, "If the Arameans are too strong for me, you come and help me. If the Ammonites are too strong for you, I will come and help you. <sup>12</sup>Be strong, and let's fight bravely for our people and for the cities of our God. The LORD will do what he decides is right."

<sup>13</sup>When Joab and his men marched forward to attack, the Arameans ran away from them. <sup>14</sup>And when the Ammonites saw that the Arameans were running away, they ran away from Abishai and went back into their city. So Joab stopped fighting the Ammonites and returned to Jerusalem.

<sup>15</sup>When the Arameans saw that the Israelites had defeated them, they brought all their troops together into one big army. <sup>16</sup>Then King Hadadezer<sup>††</sup> sent for more Aramean troops from the other side of the Euphrates River. Then Shobach, the commander of Hadadezer's army, led all these troops to Helam.

<sup>17</sup>When David heard about this, he gathered all the Israelite troops. They

crossed over the Jordan River and went to Helam. There the Arameans prepared for battle and attacked. <sup>18</sup>But David defeated them, and they ran from the Israelites. David and his army killed 700 chariot drivers and 40,000 horsemen. They also wounded Shobach, the commander of the Aramean army, and he died there.

<sup>19</sup>When the kings who were under Hadadezer's rule saw that the Israelites had defeated them, they made peace with the Israelites and became their servants. So the Arameans were afraid to help the Ammonites any more.

### David and Bathsheba

**11** In the spring, the usual time for kings to go to war, David sent Joab, his officers and all the Israelite army out to fight the Ammonites. They destroyed the Ammonite army and surrounded Rabbah, the capital city.

David stayed in Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>One evening he got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of his house. From there he saw a woman bathing. She was very beautiful, <sup>3</sup>so David sent someone to find out who she was. He was told, "That is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam. She is the wife of Uriah the Hittite."

<sup>4</sup>David sent messengers to go and bring Bathsheba to him. (She had just purified herself after her monthly period of bleeding.) She went to David, and he had sex with her. Then she went back to her house. <sup>5</sup>Later, Bathsheba realized that she was pregnant. She sent word to David saying, "I am pregnant."

### David Tries to Hide His Sin

<sup>6</sup>David sent a message to Joab. "Send Uriah the Hittite to me."

<sup>††</sup>**10:16 Hadadezer** The ancient Greek version has "Hadarezer". Also in verse 19.

So Joab sent Uriah to David. <sup>7</sup>When Uriah came, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. <sup>8</sup>Then David said to Uriah, “Go home and relax.”<sup>‡‡</sup>

So Uriah left the king’s palace. The king also sent a gift to Uriah. <sup>9</sup>But Uriah did not go home. He slept outside the door of the king’s palace, as the rest of the king’s servants did. <sup>10</sup>The servants told David, “Uriah did not go home.”

Then David said to Uriah, “You came from a long journey. Why did you not go home?”

<sup>11</sup>Uriah said to David, “The Holy Box and the soldiers of Israel and Judah are staying in tents. My lord Joab and my lord’s officers are camping out in the field. So it is not right for me to go home to eat and drink and have sex with my wife. As surely as you live, I will not do this.”

<sup>12</sup>David said to Uriah, “Stay here today. Tomorrow I will send you back to the battle.”

Uriah stayed in Jerusalem until the next morning. <sup>13</sup>Then David called Uriah to come and see him. Uriah ate and drank with David. David got him drunk, but Uriah still did not go home. That evening, Uriah again slept at the palace with the rest of the king’s servants.

### David Plans Uriah’s Death

<sup>14</sup>The next morning David wrote a letter to Joab and told Uriah to take it to him. <sup>15</sup>In the letter David wrote: “Put Uriah on the front lines where the fighting is the hardest. Then leave him there alone, and let him be killed in battle.”

<sup>16</sup>Joab watched the city and saw where the bravest Ammonites were. He chose Uriah to go to that place. <sup>17</sup>The men of the city came out to fight against Joab. Some of David’s men were killed. Uriah the Hittite was one of them.

<sup>18</sup>Then Joab sent a report to David about the battle. <sup>19</sup>He told the messenger, “Tell the king everything that happened. <sup>20</sup>But the king might get upset and ask, ‘Why did Joab’s army go that close to the city to fight? Surely he knows that there are men on the city walls who can shoot arrows down at his men? <sup>21</sup>Surely he remembers that at Thebez a woman killed Abimelech son of Jerub-Baal<sup>¶</sup> when she threw a piece of a grinding stone down from the wall. So why did he go that close to the wall?’ If King David says something like that, tell him, ‘Your officer, Uriah the Hittite, also died.’”

<sup>22</sup>The messenger went in and told David everything Joab told him to say. <sup>23</sup>The messenger told David, “The men of Ammon attacked us in the field. We fought them and chased them back to the city gate. <sup>24</sup>Then the men on the city wall shot arrows at your officers. Some of your officers were killed, including Uriah the Hittite.”

<sup>25</sup>David said to the messenger, “Give this message to Joab: ‘Don’t be too upset about this. A sword can kill one person as well as the next. Make a stronger attack against Rabbah, and you will win.’ Encourage Joab with these words.”

### David Marries Bathsheba

<sup>26</sup>Bathsheba heard that her husband Uriah had died, so she mourned for him. <sup>27</sup>After her time of sadness, David sent

<sup>‡‡</sup>11:8 *relax* Literally, “wash your feet”.

<sup>¶</sup>11:21 *Jerub-Baal* This is from the ancient Greek and Syriac versions. (See Judg. 6:32; 7:1.) The traditional Hebrew text has “Jerub-Besheth”.

servants to bring her to his house. She became David's wife and gave birth to his son. But the LORD did not like what David had done.

### Nathan Speaks to David

**12** The LORD sent Nathan to David. Nathan went to him and said, "There were two men in a city. One man was rich, but the other man was poor. <sup>2</sup>The rich man had lots of sheep and cattle. <sup>3</sup>But the poor man had nothing except one little female lamb that he had bought. He fed the lamb, and the lamb grew up with this poor man and his children. She ate from the poor man's food and drank from his cup. The lamb slept on his chest. The lamb was like a daughter to the poor man.

<sup>4</sup>"Then a traveller stopped to visit the rich man. The rich man wanted to give food to the traveller, but he did not want to take any of his own sheep or cattle to feed the traveller. So, the rich man took the lamb from the poor man and cooked it for his visitor."

<sup>5</sup>David became very angry with the rich man. He said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who did this should die! <sup>6</sup>He must pay four times the price of the lamb because he did this terrible thing and because he had no mercy."

### Nathan Tells David About His Sin

<sup>7</sup>Then Nathan said to David, "You are that rich man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I chose<sup>§§</sup> you to be the king of Israel. I saved you from Saul. <sup>8</sup>I let you take his family and his wives, and I made you king of Israel and Judah. And if that had not been enough, I would have given you more and more.

<sup>9</sup>So why did you ignore my command? Why did you do what I say is evil? You let the Ammonites kill Uriah the Hittite, and you took his wife. It is as if you yourself killed Uriah in war. <sup>10</sup>So your family will never have peace! When you took Uriah's wife, you showed that you did not respect me.'

<sup>11</sup>"This is what the LORD says: 'I am bringing trouble against you. This trouble will come from your own family. I will take your wives from you and give them to someone who is very close to you. He will have sex with your wives, and everyone will know it!'<sup>\*</sup> <sup>12</sup>You had sex with Bathsheba in secret, but I will punish you so that all the people of Israel can see it.'"<sup>†</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."

Nathan said to David, "The LORD will forgive you, even for this sin. You will not die. <sup>14</sup>But what you did shows that you turned your back on the LORD, so your new baby son will die."

### David and Bathsheba's Baby Dies

<sup>15</sup>Then Nathan went home. And the LORD caused the baby boy who was born to David and Uriah's wife to become very sick. <sup>16</sup>David prayed to God for the baby. David refused to eat or drink. He went into his house and stayed there and lay on the ground all night.

<sup>17</sup>The leaders of David's family came and tried to pull David up from the ground, but he refused to get up. He refused to eat with these leaders. <sup>18</sup>On the seventh day the baby died. David's servants were afraid to tell him that the baby was dead. They said, "Look, we tried to talk to David while the baby was

<sup>§§</sup>**12:7 chose** Literally, "anointed". See anoint in the Word List.

<sup>\*</sup>**12:11 and everyone will know it** Literally, "in the sight of the sun".

<sup>†</sup>**12:12 so that all ... can see it** Literally, "before all Israel and before the sun".

alive, but he refused to listen to us. If we tell David that the baby is dead, he might do something bad to himself.”

<sup>19</sup> David saw his servants whispering and knew that the baby was dead. So David asked his servants, “Is the baby dead?”

The servants answered, “Yes, he is dead.”

<sup>20</sup> Then David got up from the floor. He washed himself, changed his clothes and got dressed. Then he went into the LORD’s house to worship. After that, he went home and asked for something to eat. His servants gave him some food, and he ate.

<sup>21</sup> David’s servants asked him, “We don’t understand what you are doing. When the baby was alive, you cried and refused to eat. But now that the baby is dead, you get up and start eating!”

<sup>22</sup> David said, “While the baby was still alive, I cried and refused to eat because I thought, ‘Who knows? Maybe the LORD will feel sorry for me and let the baby live.’ <sup>23</sup> But now the baby is dead. I can’t bring him back to life, so why should I refuse to eat? No. Someday I will go to him, but he cannot come back to me.”

### Solomon Is Born

<sup>24</sup> Then David comforted Bathsheba his wife. He had sex with her, and she became pregnant again. She had another son, and she named<sup>‡</sup> the boy Solomon. The LORD loved Solomon <sup>25</sup> and sent word for Nathan the prophet to give

Solomon the name Jedidiah.<sup>¶</sup> So Nathan did this for the LORD.

### David Captures Rabbah

<sup>26</sup> Rabbah was the capital city of the Ammonites. Joab fought against Rabbah and captured it. <sup>27</sup> Joab sent messengers to David and said, “I have fought against Rabbah and have captured its water supply. <sup>28</sup> Now bring the rest of the army together and attack Rabbah. Capture this city before I do, or else it will be called by my name.”

<sup>29</sup> So David gathered all the soldiers and went to Rabbah. He fought against Rabbah and captured the city. <sup>30</sup> David took the crown off their king’s head.<sup>§</sup> The crown weighed about 35 kilogrammes.<sup>\*\*</sup> It was made of gold and had precious stones on it. His men put the crown on David’s head.<sup>††</sup> David also took many other valuable things out of the city.

<sup>31</sup> David also brought out the people of the city of Rabbah and made them work with saws, iron picks and axes. He also put them to work making bricks. This is what he did with the people in all the Ammonite towns. Then David and the army went back to Jerusalem.

### Amnon and Tamar

**13** David had a son named Absalom. Absalom had a very beautiful sister named Tamar. Another one of David’s sons, Amnon,<sup>‡‡</sup> was in love with Tamar. <sup>2</sup> She was a virgin. Amnon

<sup>‡</sup>12:24 *she named* Another Hebrew reading is “he named”.

<sup>¶</sup>12:25 *Jedidiah* This name means “loved by the LORD”.

<sup>§</sup>12:30 *their king’s head* Or “Milcom’s head”. Milcom was a false god that the Ammonites worshipped.

<sup>\*\*</sup>12:30 *35 kilogrammes* Literally, “1 talent”.

<sup>††</sup>12:30 *precious stones ... head* Or “a precious stone, which David put on his own crown”.

<sup>‡‡</sup>13:1 *Amnon* Amnon was half-brother to Absalom and Tamar. They all had David as their father, but Amnon had a different mother. See 2 Sam. 3:2,3.

wanted her very much, but he did not think it was possible for him to have her. He thought about her so much that he made himself sick.<sup>¶</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Amnon had a friend named Jonadab son of Shimeah. (Shimeah was David's brother.) Jonadab was a very clever man. <sup>4</sup> He said to Amnon, "You are the king's son. So why do you always look so sad? Tell me what the trouble is!"

Amnon told Jonadab, "I love Tamar. But she is the sister of my half-brother Absalom."

<sup>5</sup> Jonadab said to Amnon, "Go to bed. Pretend you are sick. Then your father will come to see you. Tell him, 'Please let my sister Tamar come in and give me food to eat. Let her make the food in front of me. Then I will see it and eat it from her hand.'"

<sup>6</sup> So Amnon lay down in bed and pretended to be sick. King David came in to see Amnon. He said to King David, "Please let my sister Tamar come in. Let her make two cakes for me while I watch. Then I can eat them from her hands."

<sup>7</sup> David sent messengers to Tamar's house. They told her, "Go to your brother Amnon's house and make some food for him."

<sup>8</sup> So Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon, and he was in bed. Tamar took some dough, pressed it together with her hands and cooked the cakes. She did this while he watched. <sup>9</sup> Then Tamar took the cakes out of the pan and set them out for him. But he refused to eat. He said to his servants, "Get out of here. Leave me alone!" So all his servants left the room.

### Amnon Rapes Tamar

<sup>10</sup> Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the bedroom and feed me by hand."

So Tamar took the cakes she had made and went into her brother's bedroom. <sup>11</sup> But when she offered him the food, he grabbed her hand and said, "Come, my sister, let's have sex!"

<sup>12</sup> Tamar said to Amnon, "No, my brother, don't force me! This should never happen in Israel! Don't do such a shameful thing! <sup>13</sup> I will never be able to get rid of my shame! And everyone in Israel will see you as a useless fool! Please, talk with the king. I'm sure he will let you marry me."

<sup>14</sup> But Amnon refused to listen to Tamar. He was stronger than she was, so he raped her. <sup>15</sup> Then Amnon began to hate Tamar. He hated her much more than he had loved her before. Amnon said to her, "Get up and get out of here!"

<sup>16</sup> Tamar said to Amnon, "No! Don't send me away like this. That would be even worse than what you did before!"

But Amnon refused to listen to Tamar. <sup>17</sup> He called his servant and said, "Get this girl out of this room, now! And lock the door after her."

<sup>18</sup> So Amnon's servant led Tamar out of the room and locked the door.

Tamar was wearing a long robe with many colours.<sup>§§</sup> The king's virgin daughters wore robes like this. <sup>19</sup> Tamar tore her robe of many colours and put ashes on her head. Then she put her hand on her head and began crying.\*

<sup>20</sup> Then Tamar's brother Absalom said to her, "Did your brother Amnon force

<sup>¶</sup>13:2 *He thought ... sick* Or "Amnon thought of a plan to pretend he was sick."

<sup>§§</sup>13:18 *many colours* Or "stripes".

\*13:19 *Tamar tore ... crying* This was the way people showed how very sad and upset they were.

you to have sex with him? Well, my sister, since he is your brother, it would be better not to tell anyone. Try to control your feelings.” So Tamar did not say anything. Hurt and all alone, she went to live at Absalom’s house.

<sup>21</sup> King David heard the news and became very angry. But Amnon was his oldest son, and he loved him very much. So he did not want to do anything to upset him.<sup>†</sup> <sup>22</sup> Absalom did not say anything, good or bad, to Amnon. But he hated Amnon for raping his sister Tamar.

### Absalom’s Revenge

<sup>23</sup> Two years later, Absalom had some men come to Baal Hazor near Ephraim to cut the wool from his sheep. He invited all the king’s sons to come and watch. <sup>24</sup> Absalom went to the king and said, “I have some men coming to cut the wool from my sheep. Please come with your servants and watch.”

<sup>25</sup> King David said to Absalom, “No, son. We will not all go. It will be too much trouble for you.”

Absalom begged David to go. David did not go, but he did give his blessing.

<sup>26</sup> Absalom said, “If you don’t want to go, please let my brother Amnon go with me.”

King David asked Absalom, “Why should he go with you?”

<sup>27</sup> Absalom kept begging David. Finally, David let Amnon and all the king’s other sons go with Absalom. And Absalom had a royal feast prepared for them.

### Amnon Is Murdered

<sup>28</sup> Then Absalom gave this command to his servants, “Watch Amnon. When

he is drunk and feeling good from the wine, I will give you the command to attack Amnon and kill him. Don’t be afraid of being punished. After all, you will only be obeying my command. Now, be strong and brave.”

<sup>29</sup> So Absalom’s young soldiers did what he said. They killed Amnon. But all of David’s other sons escaped. Each son got on his mule and escaped.

### David Hears About Amnon’s Death

<sup>30</sup> While the king’s sons were still on their way to the town, King David got a message about what had happened. The message was, “Absalom has killed all the king’s sons! Not one of the sons was left alive.”

<sup>31</sup> King David tore his clothes and lay on the ground.<sup>‡</sup> All of David’s officers standing near him also tore their clothes.

<sup>32</sup> But then Jonadab, the son of David’s brother Shimeah, said, “It’s not true that all the king’s sons were killed! Only Amnon is dead. Absalom has been planning this from the day that Amnon raped his sister Tamar. <sup>33</sup> So, my lord and king, don’t think that all your sons are dead. Only Amnon is dead. <sup>34</sup> And Absalom has run away.”

There was a guard standing on the city wall. He saw many people coming from the other side of the hill and went to tell the king. <sup>35</sup> So Jonadab said to King David, “Look, I was right! The king’s sons are coming.”

<sup>36</sup> The king’s sons came in just after Jonadab said that. They were crying loudly. David and all his officers began crying with them. <sup>37</sup> David cried for his son every day.

<sup>†</sup>13:21 *But Amnon ... upset him* This is found in the ancient Greek version and a Hebrew scroll from Qumran but not in the traditional Hebrew text.

<sup>‡</sup>13:31 *tore his clothes ... ground* This showed that he was very sad and upset.

### Absalom Escapes to Geshur

Absalom ran away to Talmi son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur.<sup>¶</sup> <sup>38</sup> After Absalom had run away to Geshur, he stayed there for three years. <sup>39</sup> King David was comforted after Amnon died, but he missed Absalom very much.

### Joab Sends a Wise Woman to David

**14** King David missed Absalom very much. <sup>2</sup> So Joab sent messengers to Tekoa to bring a wise woman from there. Joab said to this wise woman, “Please pretend to be very sad. Put on rags. Don’t dress up. Act like a woman who has been crying many days for someone who died. <sup>3</sup> Go to the king and talk to him using these words that I tell you.” Then Joab told the wise woman what to say.

<sup>4</sup> Then the woman from Tekoa talked to the king. She bowed down with her face to the ground. Then she said, “King, please help me!”

<sup>5</sup> King David said to her, “Do you have a problem?”

The woman said, “I am a widow. My husband is dead. <sup>6</sup> I had two sons. They were out in the field fighting, but there was no one to stop them. One son killed the other son. <sup>7</sup> Now the whole family is against me. They said to me, ‘Bring us the son who killed his brother. We will kill him to pay for taking the life of his brother, and that will end his father’s family.’ My son is like the last spark of a fire. He is my only hope. If they kill him, there will be no one left on earth to continue my husband’s family and name.”

<sup>8</sup> Then the king said to the woman, “Go home. I will take care of things for you.”

<sup>9</sup> The woman of Tekoa said, “My lord and king, I pray that people will blame me and my family, not you, for this decision. You and your kingdom are innocent.”

<sup>10</sup> King David said, “If anyone says anything bad to you, bring them to me. They will not bother you again.”

<sup>11</sup> The woman said, “Please, use the name of the LORD your God and swear that you will stop these people. They want to punish my son for murdering his brother. Swear that you will not let them destroy my son.”

David said, “As the LORD lives, no one will hurt your son. Not even one hair from your son’s head will fall to the ground.”

<sup>12</sup> The woman said, “My lord and king, please let me say something else to you.”

The king said, “Speak.”

<sup>13</sup> Then the woman said, “In making this decision for me, you have admitted that you are guilty of doing wrong against the people of God. You agreed that my relatives were wrong in wanting to kill my son and end my husband’s family. But you have done the same thing by forcing your son to stay out of the country and never be king. <sup>14</sup> We will all die some day. We will be like water spilled on the ground that no one can gather up again. You know that God forgives people. He makes a way for the person who has been forced to run away to return safely. <sup>15</sup> My lord and king, I came to say these words to you, because the people have made me afraid. I thought, ‘I will speak to the king. Maybe he will listen to me. <sup>16</sup> Maybe he will save me from the man who wants to kill me and my son to keep us from getting what God has for us.’ <sup>17</sup> I know that the

<sup>¶</sup>13:37 *Talmi ... king of Geshur* Talmi was Absalom’s grandfather. See 2 Sam. 3:3.

words of my lord the king will give me rest, because you are like an angel from God. You know what is good and what is bad. And the LORD your God is with you.”

<sup>18</sup> King David answered the woman, “You must answer the question I will ask you.”

The woman said, “My lord and king, please ask your question.”

<sup>19</sup> The king said, “Did Joab tell you to say all these things?”

The woman answered, “As you live, my lord and king, you are right. Your officer Joab did tell me to say these things.

<sup>20</sup> Joab did this so that you would see things differently. My lord, you are as wise as God’s angel. You know everything that happens on earth.”

### Absalom Returns to Jerusalem

<sup>21</sup> The king said to Joab, “Look, I will do what I promised. Now please bring back the young man Absalom.”

<sup>22</sup> Joab bowed down with his face to the ground. He blessed King David and said, “Today I know that you are pleased with me. I know this because you have done what I asked.”

<sup>23</sup> Then Joab got up and went to Geshur and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. <sup>24</sup> But King David said, “Absalom must go back to his own house. He cannot come to see me.” So Absalom went to his own house and did not go to see the king.

<sup>25</sup> People really boasted about how good-looking Absalom was. No man in Israel was as handsome as Absalom. Every part of his body was perfect—from his head to his feet. <sup>26</sup> At the end of every year, Absalom cut the hair from his head and weighed it. The hair weighed about two kilogrammes.<sup>§</sup> <sup>27</sup> Absalom had three

sons and one daughter. Her name was Tamar, and she was a beautiful woman.

### Absalom Forces Joab to Come and See Him

<sup>28</sup> Absalom lived in Jerusalem for two full years without being allowed to visit King David. <sup>29</sup> Absalom sent a message to Joab, asking for permission to see the king, but Joab refused to come and see him. So Absalom sent a second message to Joab. Again, Joab refused to go and see him.

<sup>30</sup> Then Absalom said to his servants, “Look, Joab’s field is next to my field. He has barley growing in that field. Go and burn the barley.”

So Absalom’s servants went and started a fire in Joab’s field. <sup>31</sup> Joab got up and came to Absalom’s house. He said to him, “Why did your servants burn my field?”

<sup>32</sup> Absalom answered, “Because you didn’t come when I sent for you. I wanted to ask you to go to the king for me and ask him why he told me to come home from Geshur. If I cannot see him, it would have been better for me to stay in Geshur. Now let me see the king. If I am guilty of doing wrong, he can kill me!”

### Absalom Visits King David

<sup>33</sup> Then Joab went to the king and told him what Absalom had said. Then the king called for Absalom. Absalom went to the king and bowed low on the ground before the king. The king kissed him.

### Absalom’s Plan to Be King

**15** After this, Absalom got a chariot and horses for himself. He had 50 men run in front of him while he drove the chariot. <sup>2</sup> Absalom would get

<sup>§</sup>14:26 *about two kilogrammes* Literally, “200 *shekels* by the king’s weight”.

up early and stand near the gate.\*\* He would watch for anyone with problems who was going to King David for judgement. Then Absalom would talk to them and say, “What city are you from?” They would say they were from such and such tribe in Israel. <sup>3</sup>Then Absalom would say, “Look, you are right, but King David will not listen to you.”

<sup>4</sup>Absalom would also say, “Oh, I wish someone would make me a judge in this country! Then I could help everyone who comes to me with a problem. I would help them get a fair solution to their problem.”

<sup>5</sup>And if anyone came to Absalom and started to bow down to him, Absalom would treat him like a close friend—he would reach out and touch him and kiss him. <sup>6</sup>Absalom did this to all the Israelites who came to King David for judgement. In this way Absalom won the hearts of all the people of Israel.

<sup>7</sup>After four years,<sup>††</sup> Absalom said to King David, “Please let me go to Hebron to complete a special promise that I made to the LORD. <sup>8</sup>I made that promise while I was still living in Geshur in Aram. I said, ‘If the LORD brings me back to Jerusalem, I will serve the LORD in a special way.’”

<sup>9</sup>King David said, “Go in peace.”

Absalom went to Hebron. <sup>10</sup>But he also sent spies to all the tribes of Israel. They told the people, “When you hear the trumpet, say, ‘Absalom is king in Hebron!’”

<sup>11</sup>Absalom invited 200 men to go with him. They left Jerusalem with him, but they did not know what he was plan-

ning. <sup>12</sup>Ahithophel was one of David’s advisers. He was from the town of Giloh. While Absalom was offering sacrifices, he invited Ahithophel to come and join him. Many others also began to support him. So Absalom’s plans were going very well.

### David Learns About Absalom’s Plans

<sup>13</sup>A man came in to tell the news to David. The man said, “The people of Israel are beginning to follow Absalom.”

<sup>14</sup>Then David said to all his officers who were still in Jerusalem with him, “Come on, we cannot let him trap us here in Jerusalem. Hurry up, before he catches us. He will destroy all of us and Jerusalem in the battle.”

<sup>15</sup>The king’s officers told him, “We will do whatever you tell us.”

### David and His People Escape

<sup>16</sup>King David left with everyone in his family, except ten of his slave women. He left them to take care of the house.

<sup>17</sup>The king left with everyone in his house following him on foot. They stopped at the last house in the city.

<sup>18</sup>All the king’s officers passed by him. And all the Kerethites, all the Pelethites and the Gittites (600 men from Gath) passed by the king.

<sup>19</sup>The king said to Ittai from Gath, “Why are you also going with us? You are a foreigner; this is not your homeland. Go back and stay with the new king. <sup>20</sup>You came to join me only yesterday. You don’t need to wander from place to place with me. Take your broth-

\*\*15:2 *gate* This was where people came to do all their business. This was also where many court cases were held.

††15:7 *four years* This is found in several ancient versions. The traditional Hebrew text has “40 years”.

ers and go back. May the Lord be kind and faithful to you.”<sup>†</sup>

<sup>21</sup> But Ittai answered the king, “As the LORD lives, and as long as you live, I will stay with you, in life or death!”

<sup>22</sup> David said to Ittai, “Then come, let’s go and cross Kidron Brook.”

So Ittai from Gath and all his people and their children crossed over Kidron Brook. <sup>23</sup>The crowds of people watching<sup>¶</sup> King David leave were crying loudly. The king and all those going with him crossed over Kidron Brook and continued towards the desert. <sup>24</sup>Zadok and all the Levites with him were carrying the Box of God’s Agreement. They set it down, and Abiathar said prayers<sup>§§</sup> until all the people had left Jerusalem.

<sup>25</sup> King David said to Zadok, “Take God’s Holy Box back to Jerusalem. If the LORD is pleased with me, he will bring me back and let me see Jerusalem and his Temple. <sup>26</sup>But if he says he is not pleased with me, let him do whatever he wants to me.”

<sup>27</sup> The king said to Zadok the priest, “Surely you can see what’s happening! Go back to the city in peace.\* Take your son Ahimaaz and Jonathan son of Abiathar. <sup>28</sup>I will be waiting near the places where people cross the river into the desert. I will wait there until I hear from you.”

<sup>29</sup> So Zadok and Abiathar took God’s Holy Box back to Jerusalem and stayed there.

### David’s Prayer Against Ahithophel

<sup>30</sup> David walked up the path to the Mount of Olives. He was crying. His head was covered, and he went without sandals on his feet. All the people with David also covered their heads and were crying as they walked with him.

<sup>31</sup> Someone told David, “Ahithophel is one who joined in Absalom’s plot against you.” Then David prayed, “LORD, I ask you to make Ahithophel give only foolish advice.” <sup>32</sup>David reached the top of the Mount of Olives, a place where people worshipped God. Hushai the Arkite was there to meet him. Hushai’s coat was torn, and there was dirt on his head.<sup>†</sup>

<sup>33</sup> David said to Hushai, “If you go with me, you will be just one more person to care for. <sup>34</sup>But if you go back to Jerusalem, you can disagree with Ahithophel and make his advice useless. Tell Absalom, ‘King, I am your servant. I served your father, but now I will serve you.’ <sup>35</sup>The priests Zadok and Abiathar will be with you. You must tell them everything you hear in the king’s palace. <sup>36</sup>Zadok’s son Ahimaaz and Abiathar’s son Jonathan will be with them. You can send them to tell me everything you hear.”

<sup>37</sup> So David’s friend Hushai went back to Jerusalem and arrived there at the same time that Absalom was also entering the city.

<sup>¶</sup>15:20 *May the Lord ... to you* This is from the ancient Greek version. The traditional Hebrew text does not have “May the Lord be”.

<sup>¶</sup>15:23 *The crowds ... watching* Literally, “country”.

<sup>§§</sup>15:24 *said prayers* Literally, “went up”. This could mean “burn incense”, “offer sacrifices”, or it might mean simply that Abiathar stood to one side, by the Holy Box, until all the people passed by.

\*15:27 *Surely you ... peace* Or “You do see, don’t you, that you should go back to the city in peace.”

<sup>†</sup>15:32 *coat ... head* Signs to show sorrow.

### Ziba Meets David

**16** David went a short way over the top of the Mount of Olives and met Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth. Ziba had two donkeys with saddles on them. The donkeys also carried 200 loaves of bread, 100 bunches of raisins, 100 summer fruits and a wineskin full of wine. <sup>2</sup> King David said to Ziba, “What are these things for?”

Ziba answered, “The donkeys are for the king’s family to ride on. The bread and the summer fruit are for the servants to eat. And the wine is refreshment for whoever begins to feel weak in the desert.”

<sup>3</sup> Then the king asked, “And where is Mephibosheth?”<sup>‡</sup>

Ziba answered the king, “Mephibosheth is staying in Jerusalem. He said, ‘Today the Israelites will give my father’s kingdom back to me.’”

<sup>4</sup> Then the king said to Ziba, “All right, I now give you everything that belonged to Mephibosheth.”

Ziba said, “I bow to you. I pray I will always be able to please you.”

### Shimei Curses David

<sup>5</sup> As David came to Bahurim, a man from Saul’s family, Shimei son of Gera, came out cursing David again and again.

<sup>6</sup> Shimei began throwing stones at David and his officers. Both the people and the soldiers gathered around David to protect him. <sup>7</sup> Shimei cursed David. He said, “Get out, get out, you no-good murderer!”<sup>¶</sup> <sup>8</sup> The LORD is punishing you because you killed people in Saul’s family. You stole Saul’s place as king. But now the same bad things are happening to you. The LORD has given the kingdom

to your son Absalom, because you are a murderer.”

<sup>9</sup> Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, “Why should this dying dog curse you, my lord the king? Let me go over and cut off Shimei’s head.”

<sup>10</sup> But the king answered, “What can I do, sons of Zeruiah? Yes, Shimei is cursing me, but the LORD told him to curse me. And who can ask him why he did that?” <sup>11</sup> David also said to Abishai and all his servants, “Look, my very own son is trying to kill me, so why shouldn’t this man from the tribe of Benjamin want to do the same? Leave him alone. Let him continue to curse me. The LORD told him to do this. <sup>12</sup> Maybe the LORD will see the wrong things that are happening to me and give me something good for every bad thing that Shimei says today.”

<sup>13</sup> So David and his men went on their way down the road, but Shimei kept following David. He walked on the other side of the road by the side of the hill. He kept cursing David on his way. Shimei also threw stones and dirt at David.

<sup>14</sup> King David and all his people came to the Jordan River. They were tired, so they rested and refreshed themselves there.

<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, Absalom, Ahithophel and all the Israelites came to Jerusalem. <sup>16</sup> David’s friend, Hushai the Arkite, came to Absalom and told him, “Long live the king! Long live the king!”

<sup>17</sup> Absalom answered, “Why are you not loyal to your friend David? Why did you not leave Jerusalem with your friend?”

<sup>18</sup> Hushai said, “I belong to the one that the LORD chooses. These people and the people of Israel chose you. I will stay with you. <sup>19</sup> In the past I served your

<sup>‡</sup>16:3 *Mephibosheth* Literally, “your master’s grandson”.

<sup>¶</sup>16:7 *murderer* Literally, “man of blood”.

father. So now I will serve you, David's son."

### Absalom Asks Ahithophel for Advice

<sup>20</sup> Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Please tell us what we should do."

<sup>21</sup> Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Your father left some of his slave women here to take care of the house. Go and have sex with them. Then all the Israelites will hear how you humiliated your father, and they will be encouraged to give you more support."

<sup>22</sup> Then they put up a tent for Absalom on the roof of the house. Absalom had sex with his father's wives<sup>§</sup> where all the Israelites could see. <sup>23</sup> In those days, Ahithophel's advice was accepted as though it were the word of God. So Absalom gladly followed his advice, just as David had done.

### Ahithophel's Advice About David

**17** Ahithophel also said to Absalom, "Now, let me choose 12,000 men to chase David tonight. <sup>2</sup> I will catch him while he is tired and weak. I will frighten him, and all his people will run away. But I will kill only King David. <sup>3</sup> Then I will bring all the people back to you. If David is dead, all the people will come back in peace."

<sup>4</sup> This plan seemed good to Absalom and all the leaders of Israel. <sup>5</sup> But Absalom said, "Now call Hushai the Arkite. I also want to hear what he says."

### Hushai Ruins Ahithophel's Advice

<sup>6</sup> When Hushai arrived, Absalom said to him, "This is the plan Ahithophel gave us. Should we follow it? If not, tell us."

<sup>7</sup> Hushai said to Absalom, "Ahithophel's advice is not good this time." <sup>8</sup> Hushai added, "You know that your father and his men are strong men. They are as dangerous as a wild bear when something has taken its cubs. Your father is a skilled fighter. He will not stay all night with the people. <sup>9</sup> He is probably already hiding in a cave or some other place. If your father attacks your men first, people will hear the news and think, 'Absalom's followers are losing!'" <sup>10</sup> Then even your bravest men will be frightened, because all the Israelites know that your father is a powerful soldier and that his men are very brave.

<sup>11</sup> "This is what I suggest: gather all the Israelites from Dan to Beersheba.\*\* Then there will be many people, like the sand by the sea. Then you yourself must go into the battle. <sup>12</sup> We will catch David wherever he is hiding and attack him with so many soldiers that they will be like the dew that covers the ground. We will kill David and all his men—no one will be left alive. <sup>13</sup> But if David escapes into a city, all the Israelites can bring ropes to that city and pull its walls down into the valley. Not even a small stone will be left in that city."

<sup>14</sup> Absalom and all the Israelites said, "Hushai's advice is better than Ahithophel's." Actually, Ahithophel's advice was good, but they said this because the LORD had decided to make Ahithophel's advice useless. He did this to punish Absalom.

### Hushai Sends a Warning to David

<sup>15</sup> Hushai told the priests, Zadok and Abiathar, what was said. He told them

<sup>§</sup>16:22 *wives* Or "concubines". See slave woman in the Word List.

\*\*17:11 *Dan to Beersheba* This means the whole nation of Israel, north and south. Dan was a town in the northern part of Israel, and Beersheba was in the southern part of Judah.

what Ahithophel had suggested to Absalom and the leaders of Israel. Hushai also told them what he himself had suggested. He said, <sup>16</sup>“Send a message to David now! Tell him not to spend the night at the places where people cross into the desert. Tell him to go across the Jordan River at once. If he crosses the river, the king and all his people will not be caught.”

<sup>17</sup>The priests’ sons, Jonathan and Ahimaaz, did not want to be seen going into the city, so they waited at En Rogel. A servant girl went out to them and gave them the message. Then Jonathan and Ahimaaz took the message to King David.

<sup>18</sup>But a boy saw Jonathan and Ahimaaz and ran to tell Absalom. Jonathan and Ahimaaz ran away quickly. They arrived at a man’s house in Bahurim. The man had a well in his courtyard. Jonathan and Ahimaaz climbed down into this well. <sup>19</sup>The man’s wife spread a sheet over the mouth of the well and covered it with grain. The well looked like a pile of grain, so no one would know to look there. <sup>20</sup>Absalom’s servants came to the woman at the house. They asked, “Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?”

The woman said to Absalom’s servants, “They have already crossed over the brook.”

Absalom’s servants then went to look for Jonathan and Ahimaaz, but they could not find them. So Absalom’s servants went back to Jerusalem.

<sup>21</sup>After Absalom’s servants left, Jonathan and Ahimaaz climbed out of the well and went to King David. They said to David, “Hurry and go across the river. Ahithophel has planned something against you.”

<sup>22</sup>So David and his people crossed over the Jordan River. By sunrise, all of David’s people had crossed the Jordan River. No one was left behind.

### Ahithophel Kills Himself

<sup>23</sup>When Ahithophel saw that the Israelites did not do what he suggested, he saddled his donkey and went back to his home town. He made plans for his family and then hanged himself. They buried him in his father’s tomb.

### Absalom Crosses the Jordan River

<sup>24</sup>David arrived at Mahanaim just as Absalom and the Israelites who were with him crossed over the Jordan River. <sup>25-26</sup>Absalom and the Israelites set up camp in the land of Gilead. Absalom had made Amasa the new commander of the army. He took Joab’s place.<sup>††</sup> Amasa was the son of Ithra the Ishmaelite.<sup>‡‡</sup> His mother was Abigail, the daughter of Nahash, the sister of Joab’s mother Zeruihah.<sup>¶¶</sup>

### Shobi, Makir and Barzillai

<sup>27</sup>When David arrived at Mahanaim, Shobi, Makir and Barzillai were there. Shobi son of Nahash was from the Ammonite town of Rabbah. Makir son of Ammiel was from Lo Debar. Barzillai was from Rogelim in Gilead. <sup>28-29</sup>These

<sup>††</sup>17:25-26 *He took Joab’s place* Joab still supported David. Joab was one of the three captains in David’s army when David was running away from Absalom. See 2 Sam. 18:2.

<sup>‡‡</sup>17:25-26 *Ishmaelite* This is from the ancient Greek version. The traditional Hebrew text has “Israelite”, but see 1 Chr. 2:17.

<sup>¶¶</sup>17:25-26 *His mother ... Zeruihah* Literally, “Ithra had sex with Abigail, the daughter of Nahash sister of Zeruihah.”

three men said, “The people are tired, hungry and thirsty from the desert.” So they brought many things to David and those with him. They brought beds, bowls and other kinds of dishes. They also brought wheat, barley, flour, roasted grain, beans, lentils, dried seeds, honey, butter, sheep, and cheese made from cow’s milk.

### David Gets Ready for Battle

**18** David counted his men and chose commanders<sup>§§</sup> and captains\* to lead them. <sup>2</sup>He separated the people into three groups and sent them out. Joab led a third of the men. Joab’s brother, Abishai son of Zeruiah, led another third. And Ittai from Gath led the last third.

King David said to the people, “I will also go with you.”

<sup>3</sup>But they said, “No! You must not go with us. If we run away in the battle, Absalom’s men will not care. No, even if only half of us are killed, Absalom’s men will not care. But you are worth 10,000 of us!<sup>†</sup> It is better for you to stay in the city. Then, if we need help, you can come to help us.”

<sup>4</sup>The king said to them, “I will do what you think is best.”

Then the king stood by the gate as the army went out in groups of 100 and 1000.

<sup>5</sup>The king gave this command to Joab, Abishai and Ittai: “Do this for me: Be gentle with young Absalom!” Everyone heard the king’s orders to the captains about Absalom.

### David’s Army Defeats Absalom’s Army

<sup>6</sup>David’s army went out into the field against Absalom’s Israelites. They fought in the forest of Ephraim. <sup>7-8</sup>The fighting spread throughout the area, and David’s army defeated the Israelites. It was a great defeat because 20,000 soldiers died that day. But more of them died from the dangers in the forest than were killed in battle.

<sup>9</sup>Some of David’s men happened to see Absalom riding on a mule. Absalom tried to escape through the forest. But the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak tree, and Absalom’s head got caught in the branches. The mule kept on running, so Absalom was left hanging in the air.

<sup>10</sup>One of David’s men saw what had happened and told Joab, “I saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree.”

<sup>11</sup>Joab said to the man, “Why didn’t you kill him and let him fall to the ground? I would have given you a belt and ten pieces of silver!”

<sup>12</sup>The man said to Joab, “I would not harm the king’s son even if you gave me 1000 pieces of silver. We heard the king’s command to you, Abishai and Ittai. The king said, ‘Be careful not to hurt young Absalom.’ <sup>13</sup>If I had killed Absalom, the king himself would find out, and you would punish me.”<sup>‡</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Joab said, “I will not waste my time here with you!”

Absalom was still alive and hanging in the oak tree. Joab took three sticks in his hand and stabbed him in the heart.

§§**18:1 commanders** Literally, “leaders of 1000 men”.

\***18:1 captains** Literally, “leaders of 100 men”.

†**18:3 But you are worth 10,000 of us** This is found in two Hebrew copies, some Greek copies and an ancient Latin version. Most Hebrew copies have “for now there are 10,000 like us”.

‡**18:13 you would punish me** Or “you would have opposed me”.

<sup>15</sup>Ten of Joab's young helpers gathered around Absalom and killed him.

<sup>16</sup>Joab blew the trumpet and called the people to stop chasing the Israelites.

<sup>17</sup>Then Joab's men took Absalom's body and threw it into a large hole in the forest and covered it with stones.

All the Israelites ran away and went home.

<sup>18</sup>While Absalom was alive he put up a stone monument in King's Valley. He said, "I have no son to keep my name alive." So he named that monument after himself. It is called "Absalom's Monument" even today.

### Joab Sends the News to David

<sup>19</sup>Ahimaaz son of Zadok said to Joab, "May I run and take the news to King David? I'll tell him the LORD has destroyed the enemy for him."

<sup>20</sup>Joab answered Ahimaaz, "No, not today. You should not be the one to take the news to the king that his son is dead. You can take a message some other time, but not today because it is the king's son who is dead."

<sup>21</sup>Then Joab said to a man from Ethiopia, "Go and tell the king what you have seen."

So the Ethiopian bowed to Joab and ran to tell David.

<sup>22</sup>But Ahimaaz son of Zadok begged Joab again, "No matter what happens, please let me go too!"

Joab said, "Son, why do you want to take the news? You will not get any reward for the news you bring."

<sup>23</sup>Ahimaaz answered, "No matter what happens, I want to go."

Joab said to Ahimaaz, "All right, run to David!"

So Ahimaaz ran through Jordan Valley, which made him able to reach Mahanaim before the Ethiopian.

### David Hears the News

<sup>24</sup>David was sitting between the two gates of the city. The watchman went up to the roof over the gate walls and saw a man running alone. <sup>25</sup>The watchman shouted to tell King David.

King David said, "If the man is alone, he is bringing news."

The man came closer and closer to the city. <sup>26</sup>But then the watchman saw another man running. He called to the gatekeeper, "Look! Another man is running alone."

The king said, "He is also bringing news."

<sup>27</sup>The watchman said, "I think the first man runs like Ahimaaz son of Zadok."

The king said, "Ahimaaz is a good man, he must be bringing good news."

<sup>28</sup>Ahimaaz called to the king, "All is well!" Ahimaaz bowed down with his face to the ground in front of the king and said, "Praise the LORD your God! The LORD has defeated the men who were against you, my lord and king."

<sup>29</sup>The king asked, "Is young Absalom all right?"

Ahimaaz answered, "When Joab sent me, I saw some great excitement, but I don't know what it was."

<sup>30</sup>Then the king said, "Stand over there and wait." So Ahimaaz stood aside and waited.

<sup>31</sup>The Ethiopian arrived and said, "News for my lord and king! Today the LORD has punished all those who were against you!"

<sup>32</sup>The king asked the Ethiopian, "Is young Absalom all right?"

The Ethiopian answered, "May your enemies, or whoever tries to hurt you, suffer the same as this young man did."

<sup>33</sup>So the king knew Absalom was dead, and he became very upset. He went upstairs to the room over the gate,

crying, “O my son Absalom! My son Absalom, I wish I had died instead of you! O Absalom, my son, my son!”

### Joab Criticizes David

**19** Some people told Joab what had happened, “Look, the king is crying and mourning for Absalom.” <sup>2</sup>So the joy of victory turned to sadness for David’s troops. It was a very sad day because they heard, “The king is mourning for his son.”

<sup>3</sup>The troops came into the city quietly as if they were the ones who had been defeated in battle. <sup>4</sup>The king had covered his face and was crying loudly, “O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!”

<sup>5</sup>Joab came into the king’s palace and said to the king, “You are humiliating every one of your officers! Look, they saved your life today and the lives of your sons and daughters and your wives and slave women. <sup>6</sup>It seems that you love those who hate you, and you hate those who love you! Today you have made it clear to your officers and men that they mean nothing to you. It seems to me that you would have been perfectly happy if Absalom had lived and the rest of us had been killed today! <sup>7</sup>Now go and encourage your officers. I swear by the LORD that if you don’t go out and do that now, every one of them will leave you before the night is over. And that will be worse for you than all the trouble you have had since you were a child.”

<sup>8</sup>So the king went and sat at the city gate. <sup>¶</sup>When his men heard the news that he was there, they all came to see him.

### David Is Accepted as King Again

<sup>9</sup>And among all the tribes of Israel, the people began discussing what to do next.

They said, “King David saved us from the Philistines and our other enemies. David left the country because he was running away from Absalom. <sup>10</sup>We anointed Absalom to be the king, but he was killed in battle. So we should bring David back to be the king again.”

<sup>11</sup>Reports about what the people of Israel were saying came to the king at his palace. So King David sent a message to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. David said, “Speak to the leaders of Judah and ask them, ‘Why are you the last tribe to bring me back home as king? <sup>12</sup>You are my brothers, my family, so why are you the last ones to welcome me back?’ <sup>13</sup>Also tell Amasa, ‘You are part of my family. I swear that I will make you commander of the army in Joab’s place.’”

<sup>14</sup>David’s message convinced all the men of Judah. They sent a message to the king: “You and all your officers come back!”

<sup>15</sup>So King David began his return to Jerusalem and travelled as far as the Jordan River. The people of Judah came to Gilgal to meet the king and take him across the river.

### Shimei Asks David to Forgive Him

<sup>16</sup>Shimei son of Gera, from the tribe of Benjamin, lived in Bahurim. Shimei rushed down to meet King David, with the rest of the people of Judah. <sup>17</sup>About 1000 people from the tribe of Benjamin came with Shimei. Ziba the servant from Saul’s family also came. Ziba brought his 15 sons and 20 servants with him. All these people hurried to the Jordan River to meet King David.

<sup>18</sup>The people went across the Jordan River to help bring the king’s family back to Judah. They did whatever the king wanted. While the king was cross-

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<sup>¶</sup>19:8 *city gate* This was where the public meetings were held.

ing the river, Shimei son of Gera came to meet him. He bowed down to the ground in front of the king. <sup>19</sup>Shimei said to the king, “My lord, don’t think about the wrong things I did. My lord and king, don’t remember the bad things I did when you left Jerusalem. <sup>20</sup>I know that I sinned. That is why today I am the first person from Joseph’s family<sup>§</sup> to come down and meet you, my lord and king.”

<sup>21</sup>Abishai son of Zeruiah said, “Let’s kill him for all the bad things he said about the LORD’s chosen king.”\*\*

<sup>22</sup>David said, “What should I do with you, sons of Zeruiah? Are you trying to cause me trouble? No one will be put to death in Israel today! Don’t you know that I am now king over Israel?”

<sup>23</sup>Then the king said to Shimei, “You will not die.” The king made a promise to Shimei that he himself would not kill Shimei.††

### Mephibosheth Goes to See David

<sup>24</sup>Saul’s grandson,<sup>‡</sup> Mephibosheth, came down to meet King David. Mephibosheth had not cared for his feet, trimmed his moustache or washed his clothes since the day the king left Jerusalem. <sup>25</sup>When he met the king at Jerusalem, the king said, “Mephibosheth, why didn’t you go with me when I ran away from Jerusalem?”

<sup>26</sup>Mephibosheth answered, “My lord and king, my servant tricked me. I am lame so I said to my servant Ziba, ‘Go and saddle a donkey for me so that I

can go with the king.’ <sup>27</sup>But my servant lied to you about me. My lord and king, you are like an angel from God, so do whatever you think is right. <sup>28</sup>You could have killed all my grandfather’s<sup>¶</sup> family, but you did not do that. Instead, you included me among the people who eat at your own table. So I don’t have a right to complain to the king about anything.”

<sup>29</sup>The king said to Mephibosheth, “Don’t say anything more about your problems. I have decided that you and Ziba will divide the land.”

<sup>30</sup>Mephibosheth said to the king, “My lord and king, it is enough that you have come home in peace. Let Ziba have the land.”

### David Asks Barzillai to Come With Him

<sup>31</sup>Barzillai of Gilead came down from Rogelim to cross the Jordan River with King David and to send him on his way home. <sup>32</sup>Barzillai was a very old man, 80 years old. He had given the king food and other things when David was staying at Mahanaim. Barzillai could do this because he was a very rich man. <sup>33</sup>David said to Barzillai, “Come across the river with me. I will take care of you if you will live in Jerusalem with me.”

<sup>34</sup>But Barzillai said to the king, “Do you know how old I am? Do you think I can go with you to Jerusalem? <sup>35</sup>I am 80 years old! I am too old to enjoy life’s pleasures. I cannot taste what I eat or drink. I cannot hear the voices of the singers. Why should you be bothered

§19:20 *Joseph’s family* This probably means the Israelites who followed Absalom. Many times the name Ephraim (a son of Joseph) is used for all the tribes in northern Israel.

\*\*19:21 *chosen king* Literally, “anointed one”.

††19:23 David did not kill Shimei. But a few years later, David’s son Solomon ordered Shimei to be put to death. See 1 Kgs 2:44-46.

‡19:24 *grandson* Literally, “son”.

¶19:28 *grandfather’s* Literally, “father’s”.

with me? <sup>36</sup>You don't need to do any of the things you want to do for me. But I will go with you across the Jordan River and a little farther. <sup>37</sup>Then please let me go back so that I can die in my own town and be buried in the grave of my father and mother. But here is Kimham; take him back with you as a servant, my lord and king. Do whatever you want with him."

<sup>38</sup>The king answered, "Kimham will go back with me. I will be kind to him for you. I will do anything for you."

<sup>39</sup>The king kissed Barzillai and blessed him. Barzillai went back home, and the king and all the people went across the river.

<sup>40</sup>The king crossed the Jordan River to Gilgal. Kimham went with him. All the troops of Judah and half the troops of Israel led David across the river.

### The Israelites Argue With the People of Judah

<sup>41</sup>The Israelites came to the king and said to him, "Our brothers, the men of Judah, took you away from us and brought you and your family across the Jordan River with your men."

<sup>42</sup>All the people of Judah answered the Israelites, "We did it because the king is our close relative. Why are you angry with us about this? We have not eaten food at the king's expense. The king did not give us any gifts."

<sup>43</sup>The Israelites answered, "We have ten times more interest in David<sup>§§</sup> than you do. Why did you ignore us? We were the first ones to talk about bringing our king back."

But the people of Judah replied with words that were even louder and angrier than those of the Israelites.

### Sheba Leads Israel Away From David

**20** A man named Sheba son of Bicri happened to be there in Gilgal. He was a worthless troublemaker from the tribe of Benjamin. He blew a trumpet to gather the people around and said, "We have no interest in David! The son of Jesse means nothing to us! Men of Israel, let's all go home!"

<sup>2</sup>So all the men of Israel\* left David and followed Sheba son of Bicri. But the men of Judah stayed with their king all the way from the Jordan River to Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup>David went back to his house in Jerusalem. He had left ten of his slave women to take care of the house. He put these women in a special house.<sup>†</sup> Then he put guards around the house. They stayed in this house until they died. David took care of the women and gave them food, but he did not have sex with them. They lived like widows until they died.

<sup>4</sup>The king told Amasa, "Tell the people of Judah to meet with me in three days. You must be here, too."

<sup>5</sup>So Amasa called the people of Judah together, but he took longer than the king had told him.

### David Tells Abishai to Kill Sheba

<sup>6</sup>David said to Abishai, "Sheba son of Bicri is more dangerous to us than Absalom was. So take my officers and chase Sheba. Hurry before he gets into

§§19:43 *ten times ... in David* Literally, "Ten hands to me in the king and in David". The kingdom of Israel was made up of ten tribes, while the kingdom of Judah was made up of only two.

\*20:2 *men of Israel* Here, this means the tribes not united with Judah.

†20:3 *David ... special house* David separated these women from himself because his son Absalom had previously had sex with them. See 2 Sam. 16:21-22.

cities with walls. If he gets into the well-protected cities, we will not be able to get him.”

<sup>7</sup>So Joab took the Kerethites and Pelethites<sup>3</sup> and the other soldiers with him and left Jerusalem to chase after Sheba son of Bicri.

### Joab Kills Amasa

<sup>8</sup>When Joab and the army came to the big rock at Gibeon, Amasa came out to meet them. Joab was wearing his uniform with a belt that held a knife. As he walked towards Amasa, the knife on the belt came out. <sup>9</sup>Joab asked Amasa, “How are you doing, brother?” Joab reached out with his right hand and grabbed Amasa by the beard to greet him with a kiss. <sup>10</sup>Amasa didn’t see the knife that was now in Joab’s other hand. Joab stabbed him in the stomach, and Amasa’s intestines spilled out onto the ground. There was no need for Joab to stab him again; he was already dead.

### David’s Men Continue to Look for Sheba

Then Joab and his brother Abishai continued the chase after Sheba son of Bicri. <sup>11</sup>One of Joab’s young soldiers stood by Amasa’s body and said, “All of you who support Joab and David, let’s follow Joab.”

<sup>12</sup>Amasa was there in the middle of the road, lying in his own blood. The young soldier noticed that all the people kept stopping to look at the body. So he rolled the body off the road and into the field and covered it with a cloth. <sup>13</sup>With the body off the road, everyone passed by without stopping and followed Joab to chase Sheba son of Bicri.

### Sheba Escapes to Abel Beth Maacah

<sup>14</sup>Sheba son of Bicri passed through all the tribes of Israel on his way to Abel Beth Maacah. All the Berites<sup>4</sup> joined together and followed Sheba.

<sup>15</sup>When Joab and his men came to Abel Beth Maacah, they surrounded the town. They built a ramp up to the city wall and began breaking stones out of the wall to make it fall down.

<sup>16</sup>But there was a very wise woman in that city who shouted out to them: “Listen to me! Tell Joab to come here. I want to talk with him.”

<sup>17</sup>Joab went to talk with the woman. She asked him, “Are you Joab?”

Joab answered, “Yes, I am.”

Then the woman said, “Listen to me.”

Joab said, “I am listening.”

<sup>18</sup>Then the woman said, “In the past people used to say, ‘If you want good advice, ask someone here in Abel.’ <sup>19</sup>I am one of many peaceful, loyal people here. Why are you trying to destroy this important town in Israel? Why do you want to ruin something that belongs to the LORD?”

<sup>20</sup>Joab answered, “I don’t want to destroy anything. I don’t want to ruin your city. <sup>21</sup>But there is a man in your city from the hill country of Ephraim. He is named Sheba son of Bicri. He rebelled against King David. Bring him to me, and I will leave the city alone.”

The woman said to Joab, “All right. His head will be thrown over the wall to you.”

<sup>22</sup>Then the woman spoke very wisely to all the people of the city. They cut off the head of Sheba son of Bicri and threw it over the city wall to Joab.

<sup>3</sup>20:7 *Kerethites and Pelethites* David’s special group of fighting men. Also in verse 23.

<sup>4</sup>20:14 *Berites* The Greek and Latin versions have “Bicrites”.

So Joab blew the trumpet, and the army left the city. The soldiers went home, and Joab went back to the king in Jerusalem.

### David's Officials

<sup>23</sup> Joab was commander over the army of Israel. Benaiah son of Jehoiada was in charge of the Kerethites and Pelethites. <sup>24</sup> Adoniram led the men who were forced to do hard work. Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the historian. <sup>25</sup> Sheva was the secretary. Zadok and Abiathar were the priests. <sup>26</sup> And Ira from Jair was David's personal priest.<sup>§</sup>

### Saul's Family Punished

**21** While David was king, there was a famine that continued for three years. So David prayed to the LORD. And the LORD answered, "Saul and his family of murderers<sup>\*\*</sup> are the reason for the famine, because he killed the Gibeonites." <sup>2</sup> (The Gibeonites were not Israelites. They were a group of Amorites. The Israelites had promised with an oath not to hurt them.<sup>††</sup> But Saul wanted so much for Israel and Judah to be in control that he tried to kill all the Gibeonites.)

King David called the Gibeonites together and talked to them. <sup>3</sup> David said to the Gibeonites, "What can I do for you? What can I do to take away Israel's sin so that you can bless the LORD's people?"

<sup>4</sup> The Gibeonites said to David, "There isn't enough gold and silver for Saul's family to pay for what they did. But we don't have the right to kill anyone in Israel."

David said, "Well, what can I do for you?"

<sup>5</sup> The Gibeonites said to King David, "The person who planned to destroy us was Saul. He is the one who tried to destroy all our people living in the land of Israel. <sup>6</sup> Give us seven of Saul's descendants. We will hang his descendants before the LORD at Gibeah, the home town of Saul, the Lord's chosen king."

King David said, "All right, I will give them to you." <sup>7</sup> But the king did not give them Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, who was Saul's grandson. David spared him because he and Jonathan had made a promise of protection<sup>‡‡</sup> to each other with an oath in the LORD's name.

<sup>8</sup> David gave them Saul's sons Armoni and Mephibosheth,<sup>¶¶</sup> whose mother was Rizpah daughter of Aiah. David also gave them the five sons of Saul's daughter Merab, who was married to Adriel son of Barzillai from Meholah. <sup>9</sup> He gave these seven men to the Gibeonites, and they hanged them on the mountain there before the LORD. Those seven men died together in the spring, during the first days of the barley harvest.

§20:26 *personal priest* Or "chief servant" or "adviser".

\*\*21:1 *family of murderers* Literally, "house of blood".

††21:2 *The Israelites ... them* This happened in Joshua's time when the Gibeonites tricked the Israelites. Read Josh. 9:3-15.

‡‡21:7 *promise of protection* David and Jonathan promised each other they would not harm each other's families. Read 1 Sam. 20:12-23,42.

¶¶21:8 *Mephibosheth* This is another man named Mephibosheth, not Jonathan's son.

### David and Rizpah

<sup>10</sup> Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took a mourning cloth and put it on the rock.<sup>§§</sup> That cloth stayed on the rock from the time the harvest began until the rains came. Rizpah watched the bodies day and night. She protected them from the wild birds during the day and the wild animals at night.

<sup>11</sup> Some people told David what Saul's slave woman Rizpah was doing. <sup>12</sup> Then David took the bones of Saul and Jonathan from the men of Jabesh Gilead. (The men of Jabesh Gilead got these bones after Saul and Jonathan were killed at Gilboa. The Philistines had hanged the bodies of Saul and Jonathan on a wall in Beth Shan.\* But the leaders of Jabesh Gilead went there and stole the bodies from that public area.) <sup>13</sup> David brought the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan from Jabesh Gilead. He also brought the bones of the seven men who had been hanged. <sup>14</sup> David ordered that the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan be buried in the tomb of Saul's father Kish. This was in the town of Zela in the land of Benjamin. They did as the king commanded. After that, God again listened to the prayers of the people in that land.

### Philistine Giants Are Killed

<sup>15</sup> The Philistines started another war with Israel. David and his men went out

to fight them, but David became very tired and weak. <sup>16</sup> Ishbi-Benob was one of the giants.† His spear weighed about 3.5 kilogrammes.‡ He put on new armour and thought he would be able to kill David. <sup>17</sup> But Abishai son of Zeruah killed this giant Philistine and saved David's life.

Then David's men swore that he would not go out to battle with them any more. They said, "You must not risk losing your life because Israel's future depends on you."

<sup>18</sup> Later, there was another battle with the Philistines at Gob. Sibbecai the Hushathite killed Saph, another one of the giants.

<sup>19</sup> Then there was another battle against the Philistines at Gob. Elhanan son of Jaare Oregim from Bethlehem killed Lahmi, the brother of¶ Goliath from Gath. His spear was as big as a post.§

<sup>20</sup> In another battle at Gath, they fought against a very large man who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot. He had 24 fingers and toes in all. He also was a descendant of the giant Rephaites. <sup>21</sup> He challenged Israel and made fun of them. But Jonathan, the son of David's brother Shimei, killed this man.

<sup>22</sup> All four of these men were giants from Gath. They were all killed by David and his men.

§§21:10 *rock* This might be the big rock at Gibeon (read 2 Sam. 20:8), the rock that the bodies were lying on, or a rock that marked the place where her sons were buried.

\*21:12 *Beth Shan* Or possibly, "Beth Shean".

†21:16 *one of the giants* Or "a son of Rapha (Rephaim)". Also in verses 18,20,22.

‡21:16 *about 3.5 kilogrammes* Literally, "300 *shekels* of bronze".

¶21:19 *Lahmi, the brother of* These words are from 1 Chr. 20:5.

§21:19 *post* Literally, "a weaver's rod", the large beam across a loom.

### David's Song of Praise to the Lord

**22** <sup>\*\*</sup>David sang this song to the LORD when the LORD saved him from Saul and all his other enemies.

<sup>2</sup>The LORD is my Rock, my fortress, my place of safety.

<sup>3</sup>He is my God, the Rock I run to for protection.

He is my shield; by his power I am saved.<sup>††</sup>

He is my hiding place, my place of safety, high in the hills.

He is my saviour, the one who rescues me from the cruel enemy.

<sup>4</sup>I called to the LORD for help, and he saved me from my enemies.

He is worthy of my praise!

<sup>5</sup>Waves of death were crashing around me.

A deadly flood was carrying me away.

<sup>6</sup>The ropes of the grave wrapped around me.

Death set its trap right there in front of me.

<sup>7</sup>In my trouble I called to the LORD.

Yes, I cried out to my God for help.

There in his temple he heard my voice.

He heard my cry for help.

<sup>8</sup>The earth shook and shivered.

The foundations of heaven trembled.

They shook because he was angry!

<sup>9</sup>Smoke came from his nose,

and fierce flames came from his mouth.

Red-hot coals fell from him.

<sup>10</sup>He tore open the sky and came down.

He stood on a thick, dark cloud.

<sup>11</sup>He flew across the sky, riding on a winged creature,

gliding on the wings of the wind.

<sup>12</sup>Dark rain clouds surrounded him and covered him like a tent.

<sup>13</sup>Out of the brightness before him, flashes of lightning came down.

<sup>14</sup>The LORD thundered from the sky. God Most High let his voice be heard.

<sup>15</sup>He scattered the enemy with his arrows, the lightning bolts that scared them away.

<sup>16</sup>The LORD shouted his command, and a powerful wind began to blow.<sup>‡‡</sup> Then the bottom of the sea could be seen, and the earth's foundations were uncovered.

<sup>17</sup>The Lord reached down from above and grabbed me; he pulled me from the deep water.

<sup>18</sup>He saved me from my powerful enemies, who hated me.

They were too strong for me, so he saved me.

<sup>19</sup>They attacked me in my time of trouble,

but the LORD was there to support me.

<sup>20</sup>He was pleased with me, so he rescued me.

He took me to a safe place.

<sup>21</sup>The LORD rewarded me for doing what is right.

He was good to me because I am innocent.

<sup>22</sup>The LORD did this because I have obeyed him.

I have not turned against my God.

<sup>23</sup>I always remembered his laws.

I never stopped following his rules.

<sup>24</sup>He knows I did nothing that was wrong.

I have kept myself from sinning.

<sup>25</sup>So the LORD rewarded me for doing what is right.

He could see that I am innocent.

<sup>\*\*</sup>22:1 *Chapter 22* This song is also found in Ps. 18.

<sup>††</sup>22:3 *by his power I am saved* Literally, "He is the horn of my salvation."

<sup>‡‡</sup>22:16 *and ... blow* Or "and a blast of breath came from his nose".

26 Lord, you are faithful to those who are faithful,  
 and you are good to those who are good.  
 27 You never do wrong to those who have done no wrong,  
 but you outsmart the wicked,  
 no matter how clever they are.  
 28 You help those who are humble,  
 but as soon as you see the proud, you humiliate them.  
 29 LORD, you are my lamp.  
 You, LORD, turn the darkness around me into light.  
 30 With your help I can defeat an army.  
 If my God is with me, I can climb over enemy walls.  
 31 God's way is perfect;  
 the LORD's promise always proves to be true.  
 He is a shield for all who seek his protection.  
 32 There is no God except the LORD.  
 There is no Rock except our God.  
 33 God is my strong fortress.  
 He clears the path I need to take.  
 34 He makes my feet as steady as those of a deer.  
 Even on steep mountains he keeps me from falling.  
 35 He trains me for war  
 so that my arms can bend the most powerful bow.  
 36 Lord, you have given me your shield to protect me.  
 It is your help that has made me great.  
 37 You cleared a path for my feet  
 so that I could walk without stumbling.  
 38 I chased my enemies and defeated them.  
 I did not stop until they were destroyed.  
 39 I destroyed my enemies;  
 I struck them down.  
 They did not get up again;

they fell under my feet.  
 40 Lord, you made me strong in battle.  
 You made my enemies fall before me.  
 41 You made my enemies turn and run away,  
 and I destroyed those who hated me.  
 42 They looked for help,  
 but there was no one to save them.  
 They cried out to the LORD,  
 but he did not answer them.  
 43 I beat my enemies to pieces  
 like dust on the ground.  
 I smashed them and walked on them  
 like mud in the streets.  
 44 You saved me from those who fought against me.  
 You made me the ruler over nations.  
 People I never knew now serve me.  
 45 Foreigners fall helpless before me!  
 As soon as they heard about me, they were ready to obey.  
 46 They lose all their courage  
 and come out of their hiding places,  
 shaking with fear.  
 47 The LORD lives!  
 I praise my Rock!  
 How great is my God, the Rock who saves me!  
 48 He is the God who punishes my enemies for me,  
 the one who puts people under my rule.  
 49 He saves me from my enemies!  
 You help me defeat those who attack me.  
 You save me from cruel people.  
 50 LORD, that is why I praise you among the nations.  
 That is why I sing songs of praise to your name.  
 51 You help your king win battle after battle.  
 You show your faithful love to your chosen king,<sup>f</sup>  
 to David and his descendants forever!

<sup>f</sup>22:51 *chosen king* Literally, "anointed one". This might be anyone chosen by God to serve in a special way, but it is usually the king.

### David's Last Words

**23** These are the last words of David:  
This message is from David son  
of Jesse.

This message is from the man God made  
great.

He is the king chosen by the God of  
Jacob,

the sweet singer of Israel.<sup>§§</sup>

<sup>2</sup>The LORD's Spirit spoke through me.

His word was on my tongue.

<sup>3</sup>The God of Israel spoke.

The Rock of Israel said to me,

"Whoever rules people fairly  
and with respect for God

<sup>4</sup>is like the morning light at dawn,  
like a new day without clouds.

He is like sunshine after a rain  
that makes the grass sprout from the  
ground."

<sup>5</sup>God made my family strong and se-  
cure.\*

He made an agreement with me forever.  
God made sure this agreement was  
good and secure in every way.

So surely he will give me every victory.

He will give me everything I want!

<sup>6</sup>But evil people are like thorns.

People don't hold thorns;

they throw them away.

<sup>7</sup>If someone touches them,

it hurts like a spear made of wood and  
iron.

Yes, evil people are like thorns.  
They will be thrown into the fire  
and completely burned.

### The Three Heroes

<sup>8</sup>These are the names of David's best  
warriors:

Josheb Basshebeth the Tahkemonite<sup>†</sup>  
was captain of the king's special forces.<sup>‡</sup>  
He used his spear to kill 800 men at one  
time.<sup>¶</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Next, there was Eleazar son of Dodai<sup>§</sup>  
the Ahohite who was there with David  
when he challenged the Philistines who  
had gathered for battle. The Israelites  
ran away,<sup>10</sup> but Eleazar stood and  
fought the Philistines until his hand be-  
came so tired that he couldn't lift his  
sword. The LORD won a great victory  
that day. The people of Israel came back,  
but only to take things from the dead.

<sup>11</sup>Next there was Shammah son of  
Agee from Harar. When the Philistines  
gathered at Lehi to fight in a field of  
lentil plants,<sup>\*\*</sup> the Israelite troops ran  
away from them. <sup>12</sup>But Shammah stood  
in the middle of the field and defended  
it. He defeated the Philistines. The LORD  
gave Israel a great victory that day.

<sup>13</sup>Once during harvest time David was  
at the cave of Adullam, and three of

§§23:1 *the sweet singer of Israel* Or "The most pleasant of the songs of Israel".

\*23:5 *God ... secure* Or "Hasn't God made my family strong?"

†23:8 *Josheb Basshebeth the Tahkemonite* Or "Jashobeam the Hacmonite". See 1 Chr. 11:11.

‡23:8 *king's special forces* A special group of soldiers who formed three-man squads and went on special missions for the king.

¶23:8 *Josheb Basshebeth ... time* The Hebrew text is not clear. The translation follows 1 Chr. 11:11 and the ancient Greek version.

§23:9 *Eleazar son of Dodai* Or "Eleazar his cousin".

\*\*23:11 *lentil plants* Lentils are small, flat seeds that are cooked like dried peas or beans.

the Thirty Heroes<sup>††</sup> went down to meet him there. At the same time the Philistine army was camped in the Valley of Rephaim.

<sup>14</sup> David was in his fortress, and some of the Philistine soldiers had taken over Bethlehem. <sup>15</sup> David was thirsty and said, "Oh, if only I could have some water from that well by the gate in Bethlehem." <sup>16</sup> So the Three Heroes<sup>‡‡</sup> fought their way through the Philistine army and got some water from the well near the city gate in Bethlehem. They took it to David, but he refused to drink it. He poured it on the ground as an offering to the LORD. <sup>17</sup> David said, "LORD, I cannot drink this water. It would be like drinking the blood of the men who risked their lives for me." So he did not drink it. The Three Heroes did many brave things like that.

### Other Brave Soldiers

<sup>18</sup> The commander over the Three Heroes was Abishai, the brother of Joab. (Their mother was Zeruihah.) Abishai once killed 300 enemy soldiers with his spear. This made him as famous as the Three Heroes. <sup>19</sup> In fact, Abishai was given more honour than the Three Heroes. He became their commander, even though he was not one of them.

<sup>20</sup> Then there was Benaiah son of Jehoiada from Kabzeel. He was the son of a powerful man.<sup>¶¶</sup> Benaiah did many brave things. He killed two of the best soldiers in Moab. One day when it was snowing, Benaiah went down into a hole in the ground and killed a lion. <sup>21</sup> Benaiah also killed a big Egyptian soldier. The

Egyptian had a spear in his hand, and Benaiah only had a club. He grabbed the spear in the Egyptian's hand and took it away from him. Then Benaiah killed the Egyptian with his own spear. <sup>22</sup> Benaiah son of Jehoiada did many more brave things like that. He was as famous as the Three Heroes. <sup>23</sup> Benaiah was even more famous than the Thirty Heroes, but he was not one of the Three Heroes. David made Benaiah the leader of his bodyguards.

### The Thirty Heroes

<sup>24</sup> The following men were among the Thirty Heroes:

Asahel, the brother of Joab;

Elhanan son of Dodo from Bethlehem;

<sup>25</sup> Shammah the Harodite;

Elika the Harodite;

<sup>26</sup> Helez the Paltite;

Ira son of Ikkesh from Tekoa;

<sup>27</sup> Abiezer from Anathoth;

Mebunnai the Hushathite;

<sup>28</sup> Zalmon the Ahohite;

Maharai from Netophah;

<sup>29</sup> Heled son of Baanah from Netophah;

Ithai son of Ribai from Gibeah of Benjamin;

<sup>30</sup> Benaiah the Pirathonite;

Hiddai from the Brooks of Gaash;

<sup>31</sup> Abi Albon the Arbathite;

Azmaveth the Barhumite;

<sup>32</sup> Eliahba the Shaalbonite;

the sons of Jashen;

Jonathan <sup>33</sup> son of Shammah from Harar;

Ahiam son of Sharar from Harar;

<sup>34</sup> Eliphelet son of Ahasbai the Maacathite;

<sup>††</sup>23:13 **Thirty Heroes** Or "the king's special forces". These men were David's famous group of very brave soldiers. Also in verses 23,24.

<sup>‡‡</sup>23:16 **Three Heroes** These were David's three bravest soldiers. Also in verses 18,22.

<sup>¶¶</sup>23:20 **powerful man** That is, a man from the warrior class. He is ready to protect his people in war.

Eliam son of Ahithophel the Gilonite;  
<sup>35</sup> Hezro the Carmelite;  
 Paarai the Arbite;  
<sup>36</sup> Igal son of Nathan of Zobah;  
 Bani the Gadite;  
<sup>37</sup> Zelek the Ammonite;  
 Naharai from Beeroth, who carried the  
 armour for Joab son of Zeruiah;  
<sup>38</sup> Ira the Ithrite;  
 Gareb the Ithrite;  
<sup>39</sup> and Uriah the Hittite.  
 There were 37 in all.

### David Decides to Count His Army

**24** The LORD was angry with the Israelites again, and he caused David to do something that would bring them trouble. He told David, “Go and count the people of Israel and Judah.”

<sup>2</sup> King David said to Joab, the commander of the army, “Go through all the tribes of Israel from Dan to Beersheba,<sup>§§</sup> and count the troops. Then I will know how many there are.”

<sup>3</sup> But Joab said to the king, “My lord and king, may the LORD your God give you 100 times as many people as you have now! And may you live to see this happen. But why do you want to know how many troops there are?”

<sup>4</sup> But King David refused to change his order. So Joab and the army officers left the king to go and count how many troops Israel had. <sup>5</sup> After they crossed the Jordan River, they began counting at Aroer and at another town in the middle of the valley. They went through the territory of the Gadites. Then they went north to the town of Jazer.

<sup>6</sup> From Jazer they went through Gilead, all the way to Tahtim Hodshi. Then they went to Dan Jaan and around

to Sidon. <sup>7</sup> They went to the fortress of Tyre and to all the cities of the Hivites and of the Canaanites. Then they went south to Beersheba in the southern part of Judah. <sup>8</sup> It took nine months and 20 days for them to go through the whole country. Then they returned to Jerusalem.

<sup>9</sup> Joab gave the list of the troops to the king. There were 800,000 men in Israel who could use a sword, and there were 500,000 in Judah.

### The Lord Punishes David

<sup>10</sup> David began to feel sorry that he had counted the troops. And he said to the LORD, “What I did was a terrible sin! It was a foolish thing to do. But now, LORD, I beg you to forgive me, your servant.”

<sup>11</sup> When David got up in the morning, the LORD gave this message to Gad, David’s seer: <sup>12</sup> “Go and tell David that this is what the LORD says: “There are three ways you can be punished. Choose the one you want.”

<sup>13</sup> So Gad went to David and said to him, “Choose the punishment you want: Do you want seven\* years without enough food to feed your people? Do you want to be chased by your enemies for three months? Or do you want three days of a terrible disease spreading through your land? Think about it, and decide which one you want. I must give your answer to the one who sent me.”

<sup>14</sup> David said to Gad, “This is very troubling! It’s impossible for me to choose! So let the LORD decide how to punish us, because he is very merciful. Just don’t let my enemies decide what will happen to me!”

<sup>§§</sup>24:2 *Dan to Beersheba* This means the whole nation of Israel, north and south. Dan was a town in the northern part of Israel, and Beersheba was in the southern part of Judah. Also in verse 15.

\*24:13 *seven* 1 Chr. 21:12 and the ancient Greek version have “three”.

<sup>15</sup> So the LORD sent a terrible disease that spread all over Israel. It began in the morning and continued until the chosen time to stop. From Dan to Beersheba 70,000 people died. <sup>16</sup> The angel raised his arm over Jerusalem and was ready to destroy it, but the LORD felt very sorry about the bad things that had happened. He said to the angel who was destroying the people, “That’s enough! Put down your arm.” When the LORD said this, his angel was by the threshing floor of Araunah<sup>†</sup> the Jebusite.<sup>‡</sup>

<sup>17</sup> When he saw the angel who was killing the people, David spoke to the LORD. He said, “I am the one who sinned. I did wrong! These people who obeyed me like sheep have done nothing wrong. Please let me and my family be the ones you punish.”

### David Buys Araunah’s Threshing Floor

<sup>18</sup> That day Gad came to David and said, “Go and build an altar to honour the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.” <sup>19</sup> When David heard these instructions from Gad, he went to do what the LORD had commanded.

<sup>20</sup> When Araunah saw King David and

his men coming towards him, he went out and bowed down with his face to the ground in front of the king. <sup>21</sup> He said, “Why has my lord and king come to me?”

David answered, “I came to buy the threshing floor from you so that I can build an altar on it to honour the LORD. Then people will stop dying from this terrible disease.”

<sup>22</sup> Araunah said to David, “My lord and king, you can take anything you want for a sacrifice. Here are some oxen for the burnt offering, and you can use the threshing boards and the yokes as wood for the fire. <sup>23</sup> O king, I give it all to you!” Araunah also said to the king, “May the LORD your God be pleased with you.”

<sup>24</sup> But the king said to Araunah, “No! I will pay you for everything. I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing.”

So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for 50 pieces<sup>¶</sup> of silver.

<sup>25</sup> Then David built an altar to the LORD there and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings.

The LORD answered his prayer for the country. He stopped the disease in Israel.

<sup>†</sup>24:16 *Araunah* Also spelled “Ornan”. Also in verses 18,22,24.

<sup>‡</sup>24:16 *Jebusite* A person who lived in Jerusalem before the Israelites took the city. “Jebus” was the old name for Jerusalem.

<sup>¶</sup>24:24 *pieces* Literally, “*shekels*”.