EDIFIED EDITION

1 Samuel

A modern rendering of the Holy Scriptures

31	810	Old	9
chapters	verses	Testament	book of 66

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Edified Edition (EDE): a modern rendering of the Holy Scriptures from the original Hebrew and Greek, in everyday British English. www.edifiededition.com

Numbered notes follow each chapter.

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Chapter 1

1 Samuel 1 introduces Elkanah of Ramathaim and his two wives, Peninnah, who has children, and Hannah, who has none and is taunted by her rival year after year when the family goes up to worship at Shiloh. In deep distress Hannah prays silently at the house of the LORD, vowing that if He gives her a son she will give him to the LORD for life. Eli the priest takes her for drunk, then blesses her. She bears a son and names him Samuel. When he is weaned she brings him to Eli at Shiloh, saying that she asked the LORD for this child, and now she lends him to the LORD for as long as he lives.

1 There was a certain man from Ramathaim-zophim,[1] in the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephraimite.

2 He had two wives, one called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

3 Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of Armies[2] at Shiloh, where Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD.

4 On the day Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters.

5 But to Hannah he gave a double portion,[3] because he loved Hannah, though the LORD had closed her womb.

6 Her rival used to provoke her bitterly to make her fret, because the LORD had closed her womb.

7 So it went on year after year. Whenever she went up to the house of the LORD, her rival provoked her, and she wept and would not eat.

8 Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why will you not eat? Why are you so sad at heart? Am I not worth more to you than ten sons?"

9 After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah got up. Eli the priest was sitting on his seat by the doorpost of the temple of the LORD.

10 She was bitter of soul, and she prayed to the LORD and wept and wept.

11 She made a vow and said, "LORD of Armies, if You will only look on the misery of Your servant and remember me, and not forget Your servant, but give Your servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor shall ever touch his head."

12 As she went on praying before the LORD, Eli watched her mouth.

13 Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice could not be heard. So Eli thought she was drunk.

14 Eli said to her, "How long will you go on being drunk? Put away your wine."

15 But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled in spirit. I have not drunk wine or strong drink; I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD.

16 Do not take your servant for a worthless woman. I have been speaking all this time out of my great anguish and grief."

17 "Go in peace," Eli replied, "and may the God of Israel give you what you have asked Him for."

18 She said, "May your servant find favour in your sight." Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

19 They got up early in the morning and worshipped before the LORD, and then went back home to Ramah. Elkanah lay with Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her.

20 In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, "because I asked the LORD for him."[4]

21 The man Elkanah went up with all his household to offer the LORD the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow.

22 But Hannah did not go up. She said to her husband, "Once the boy is weaned, I will bring him, so that he may appear before the LORD and stay there for ever."

23 Elkanah her husband said to her, "Do what seems best to you. Stay until you have weaned him; only may the LORD confirm His word." So the woman stayed and nursed her son until she weaned him.

24 When she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull,[5] an ephah of flour[6] and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. The boy was still young.

25 They slaughtered the bull, and they brought the boy to Eli.

26 And she said, "Pardon me, my lord! As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you, praying to the LORD.

27 For this boy I prayed, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of Him.

28 So now I lend him to the LORD. For as long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD." And they worshipped the LORD there.

1 Ramathaim means ‘two heights’; it is Ramah in verse 19.

2 The first time this title appears in the Bible: traditionally ‘the LORD of hosts’, the God who commands the armies of heaven and of Israel.

3 The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain; perhaps ‘only one portion’.

4 Samuel sounds like the Hebrew for ‘heard by God’; the word ‘asked’ (שְׁאֵל, sha’al) runs through verses 17–28 and sounds like the name Saul.

5 So the Greek and a Dead Sea Scroll; the Hebrew has ‘three bulls’ (compare verse 25).

6 About 22 litres (5 gallons).

Chapter 2

1 Samuel 2 opens with Hannah’s prayer of praise to the LORD, who has no equal, who brings low and lifts up, raises the poor from the dust and will give strength to His king and exalt His anointed. Samuel stays to serve the LORD under Eli, while Eli’s sons, worthless men, treat the LORD’s offering with contempt and lie with the women serving at the tent of meeting. Hannah visits each year with a little robe, and the LORD gives her more children. Eli rebukes his sons, but they will not listen. A man of God announces that Eli’s house will be cut off: both sons will die on one day, and the LORD will raise up a faithful priest.

1 Then Hannah prayed and said, “My heart exults
in the LORD; my horn is lifted high in the LORD.[1]
My mouth derides my enemies, for I rejoice in
Your salvation.

2 There is none holy like the LORD, for there is
none besides You; there is no rock like our God.

3 Boast no more, so proudly, so loftily; let no
arrogant word leave your lips. For the LORD is a
God who knows, and He weighs every deed.

4 The warriors’ bows are shattered, while the
stumbling are clothed with strength.

5 Those who were full hire themselves out for
bread, but those who were hungry hunger no
more. The barren woman has borne seven, but she
who has many children pines away.

6 The LORD brings death and gives life; He brings
down to Sheol[2] and raises up.

7 The LORD sends poverty and wealth; He
humbles, and He exalts.

8 He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the
needy from the rubbish heap, to seat them with
princes and give them a throne of honour. For the
pillars of the earth are the LORD’s, and on them
He has set the world.

9 He will guard the feet of His faithful ones, but
the wicked will be silenced in darkness, for not by
strength does anyone prevail.

10 The LORD’s adversaries will be broken in
pieces; from the heavens He will thunder at them.
The LORD will judge the earth to its farthest
bounds; He will give power to His king and raise
up the horn of His anointed.”[3]

11 Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy
ministered to the LORD under Eli the priest.

12 Now Eli’s sons were worthless men; they did not
know the LORD.

13 This was the priests’ practice with the people:
whenever anyone offered a sacrifice, the priest’s
servant would come while the meat was boiling,
with a three-pronged fork in his hand,

14 and thrust it into the pan or kettle or cauldron
or pot, and whatever the fork brought up the
priest would take for himself. That is what they
did to all the Israelites who came there to Shiloh.

15 Even before the fat was burned, the priest’s
servant would come and say to the man who was
sacrificing, “Give the priest meat to roast. He will
not take boiled meat from you, only raw.”

16 If the man replied, “First let the fat be burned
off, then help yourself to whatever you like,” the
servant would say, “No, hand it over now, or I will
take it by force.”

17 So the sin of the young men was very great in
the sight of the LORD, for they treated the LORD’s
offering with contempt.

18 Samuel, meanwhile, was ministering before the
LORD, a boy clothed in a linen ephod.

19 Each year his mother made him a little robe and
brought it to him when she went up with her
husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.

20 Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife and say,
“May the LORD give you children by this woman
in place of the one she lent to the LORD.” Then
they would go home.

21 And the LORD visited Hannah; she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD.

22 Eli was very old, and he heard of everything his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

23 He said to them, “Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about your evil deeds.

24 No, my sons! It is not a good report that I hear the LORD’s people spreading.

25 If one person sins against another, God may mediate for him; but if someone sins against the LORD, who will intercede for him?” But they would not listen to their father, for it was the LORD’s will to put them to death.

26 Meanwhile the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favour with the LORD and with people.[4]

27 Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, “This is what the LORD says: ‘Did I not reveal Myself to your father’s house when they were in Egypt, subject to Pharaoh’s house?

28 Out of all Israel’s tribes I chose your ancestor to be My priest, to offer on My altar, to burn incense and to wear the ephod in My presence; and to your father’s family I gave every fire offering the Israelites bring.

29 Why then do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering, which I commanded for My dwelling? Why do you honour your sons more than Me, by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of My people Israel?’

30 Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, declares: ‘I did promise that your house and your father’s house would walk before Me for ever.’ But now the LORD declares: ‘Far be it from Me! Those who honour Me I will honour, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.

31 The days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father’s house, so that no one in your house will reach old age.

32 You will see distress in My dwelling, in spite of all the good done to Israel, and there will never be an old man in your house.

33 The one of your line whom I do not cut off from My altar will be spared to wear out his eyes and grieve his heart, and all the increase of your house will die in the prime of life.

34 And this shall be the sign to you, what will happen to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: both of them will die on the same day.

35 For Myself I will raise up a priest who is faithful, one who acts according to My heart and My purpose. I will make his house secure, and he will serve before My anointed one always.

36 Then every survivor of your family will come and bow before him, begging for a coin and a loaf: “Give me some priest’s duty, please, so that I can have a bite to eat.”’”

1 The horn is a picture of strength and dignity; so also in verse 10. Mary’s song in Luke 1:46–55 echoes this prayer.

2 Hebrew שְׁאוֹל (she’ol), the place of the dead.

3 Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ (mashiach), ‘anointed one’; through the Greek, ‘Christ’. Its first use of a king.

4 Compare Luke 2:52.

Chapter 3

1 Samuel 3 tells of the LORD’s call to Samuel. In days when a word from the LORD was rare, the boy is sleeping in the temple near the ark when the LORD calls him three times; each time he runs to Eli, until Eli realises it is the LORD and tells him to answer, “Speak, for Your servant is listening.” The LORD tells Samuel that He is about to carry out His judgement on Eli’s house for the sins of his sons. In the morning Samuel tells Eli everything, and Eli accepts it. Samuel grows up, the LORD lets none of his words fail, and all Israel knows that he is a true prophet of the LORD.

1 The boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; visions were not widely known.

2 One night Eli, whose eyes had grown so dim that he could not see, was lying down in his usual place.

3 The lamp of God had not yet gone out,[1] and
Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD,
where the ark of God was.

4 Then the LORD called Samuel, and he answered,
"Here I am."

5 He ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called
me." But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie
down." So he went and lay down.

6 Again the LORD called, "Samuel!" Samuel got
up, went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called
me." But Eli said, "I did not call, my son; go back
and lie down."

7 Samuel did not yet know the LORD; the word of
the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

8 The LORD called Samuel a third time, and he got
up, went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called
me." Then Eli understood that the LORD was
calling the boy.

9 So Eli said to Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if
He calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant
is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his
place.

10 The LORD came and stood there, calling as at
the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel
said, "Speak, for Your servant is listening."

11 Then the LORD said to Samuel, "See, I am about
to do a thing in Israel that will make both ears of
everyone who hears of it tingle.

12 On that day I will carry out against Eli
everything I have spoken about his house, from
beginning to end.

13 I have told him that I am about to judge his
house for ever because of the iniquity he knew
about: his sons were bringing a curse on
themselves,[2] and he did not restrain them.

14 So I have sworn concerning Eli's family that no
sacrifice or offering will ever wipe out the guilt of
his house."

15 Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened
the doors of the house of the LORD. He was afraid
to tell Eli the vision.

16 But Eli called to him, "Samuel, my son!" "Here I
am," Samuel answered.

17 Eli asked, "What was it He told you? Do not hide
it from me. May God deal with you, and more also,
if you hide from me anything of all He said to
you."

18 So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing
from him. And Eli said, "He is the LORD; let Him
do what seems good to Him."

19 As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him,
and not one of his words did He allow to go
unfulfilled.

20 All Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that
Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD.

21 The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, for the
LORD revealed Himself to Samuel at Shiloh
through His word.

1 The lamp in the sanctuary burned through the night until morning (Exodus 27:20–21).

2 So the Hebrew as written; an ancient scribal tradition reads 'were cursing God', softened out of reverence.

Chapter 4

> *1 Samuel 4 tells how the Philistines defeat Israel at Ebenezer. The elders send for the ark of the covenant from Shiloh, thinking it will save them, and the camp shouts so loudly that the Philistines are afraid; yet they take courage, and Israel is routed, thirty thousand fall, Hophni and Phinehas are killed, and the ark of God is captured. When a messenger brings the news to Shiloh, the aged Eli falls backward from his seat and breaks his neck. Phinehas's wife goes into labour, and as she dies she names her son Ichabod, "The glory has departed from Israel", because the ark of God has been taken.*

1 And Samuel's word came to all Israel. Now Israel
went out to battle against the Philistines. They
camped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines camped
at Aphek.

2 The Philistines drew up their lines against Israel,
and as the battle spread, Israel was defeated by
the Philistines, who killed about four thousand
men on the battlefield.

3 When the troops came back to the camp, the
elders of Israel said, "Why has the LORD let us be
defeated today before the Philistines? Let us bring
the ark of the covenant of the LORD here from
Shiloh, so that it may come among us and save us
from the hand of our enemies."

4 So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from
there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of

Armies, who is enthroned between the cherubim. Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

5 As the ark of the LORD's covenant entered the camp, the whole of Israel gave such a mighty shout that the earth resounded.

6 Hearing the noise of the shout, the Philistines asked, "What is this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews?" When they learned that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp,

7 the Philistines were afraid, for they said, "A god has come into the camp." And they said, "Woe to us! Nothing like this has happened before.

8 Woe to us! Who will rescue us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every kind of plague in the wilderness.

9 Be strong and act like men, you Philistines, or you will become slaves to the Hebrews as they have been to you. Act like men and fight!"

10 So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent. The slaughter was very great: thirty thousand of Israel's foot soldiers fell.

11 The ark of God was captured, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

12 A man of Benjamin ran from the battle line and came to Shiloh that same day, with his clothes torn and earth on his head.

13 When he arrived, Eli was sitting on his seat by the side of the road, watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God. When the man came into the city and told the news, the whole city cried out.

14 Eli heard the outcry and asked, "What is this uproar?" The man hurried over and told Eli.

15 Eli was now ninety-eight, and his eyes were fixed and sightless.

16 The man said to Eli, "I am the one who came from the battle; I fled from the battle line today." Eli asked, "What happened, my son?"

17 The messenger answered, "Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has been a great slaughter among the people. Your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured."

18 At the mention of the ark of God, Eli toppled backwards from his seat beside the gate, broke his neck and died, for he was old and heavy. He had led Israel as judge for forty years.

19 His daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant and near her time. When she heard the news that the ark of God had been captured and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she crouched down and gave birth, for her labour pains came upon her.

20 As she was dying, the women attending her said, "Do not be afraid; you have given birth to a son." But she did not answer or pay any attention.

21 She named the boy Ichabod,[1] saying, "The glory has departed from Israel," because the ark of God had been captured, and because of her father-in-law and her husband.

22 She said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."

1 'Where is the glory?' or 'No glory'.

Chapter 5

> *1 Samuel 5 tells how the Philistines carry the captured ark to the temple of Dagon at Ashdod. Two mornings running they find Dagon fallen face down before the ark of the LORD, the second time with his head and hands broken off. The LORD's hand is heavy on Ashdod, striking its people with tumours, so they send the ark to Gath, and then to Ekron, and in each city the plague and panic follow. The Philistine rulers are begged to send the ark of the God of Israel back to its own place.*

1 After the Philistines had captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod.

2 They carried it into Dagon's temple[1] and stood it next to Dagon.

3 When the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, there was Dagon, fallen face down on the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place.

4 But when they rose early the following morning, there was Dagon, fallen face down on the ground before the ark of the LORD, and Dagon's head and both his hands lay broken off on the threshold. Only Dagon's body was left of him.

5 That is why, to this day, the priests of Dagon and all who enter Dagon's temple in Ashdod do not step on the threshold of Dagon.

6 The hand of the LORD was heavy on the people of Ashdod. He brought devastation on them and struck them with tumours,[2] both Ashdod and its territory.

7 Seeing how things stood, the men of Ashdod declared, "The ark of Israel's God cannot remain here with us; His hand lies hard on us and on our god Dagon."

8 They summoned all the Philistine rulers and asked them, "What are we to do with the ark of Israel's God?" "Have it taken across to Gath," came the answer. So they took the ark of the God of Israel there.

9 But after they had moved it, the hand of the LORD was against that city, causing a very great panic. He struck the people of the city, both young and old, so that tumours broke out on them.

10 So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. But as the ark of God came into Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, "They have brought the ark of the God of Israel round to us to kill us and our people!"

11 So they sent and gathered all the rulers of the Philistines and said, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel. Let it go back to its own place, so that it does not kill us and our people." For a deadly panic had spread through the whole city; the hand of God was very heavy there.

12 Those who did not die were struck with tumours, and the outcry of the city went up to heaven.

1 The chief god of the Philistines; compare Judges 16:23.

2 So the traditional reading; the written Hebrew has a word that may mean haemorrhoids. The Greek adds that rats overran their land (compare 6:4–5).

Chapter 6

1 Samuel 6 tells how, after seven months, the Philistines ask their priests and diviners how to return the ark. They send it back on a new cart drawn by two cows that have never been yoked and whose calves are shut away, with a guilt offering of five gold tumours and five gold rats, one for each Philistine ruler. If the cows go straight to Israel's territory, it will show that the LORD sent the plague. The cows go straight to Beth-shemesh, lowing as they go, and the people there rejoice and sacrifice them. But the LORD strikes down some of the men of Beth-shemesh for looking into the ark, and they ask the people of Kiriath-jearim to take it.

1 The ark of the LORD had been in the territory of the Philistines for seven months

2 when the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us how we should send it back to its place."

3 They answered, "If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it away empty, but be sure to return a guilt offering to Him. Then you will be healed, and you will know why His hand has not turned away from you."

4 They asked, "What guilt offering shall we return to Him?" They answered, "Five gold tumours and five gold rats, according to the number of the rulers of the Philistines, for the same plague struck all of you and your rulers.

5 So make images of your tumours and images of the rats that are ravaging the land, and give glory to the God of Israel. Perhaps He will lighten His hand on you, your gods and your land.

6 Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened theirs? When He had dealt harshly with them, did they not send the Israelites away, and they went?

7 Now then, take and prepare a new cart and two milk cows that have never borne a yoke. Harness the cows to the cart, but take their calves home, away from them.

8 Then take the ark of the LORD and put it on the cart, and put the gold objects you are returning to Him as a guilt offering in a box beside it. Send it off and let it go its way,

9 and watch. If it goes up by the road to its own territory, towards Beth-shemesh, then it is He who has done us this great harm. But if not, then we shall know that it was not His hand that struck us; it happened to us by chance."

10 So the men did this: they took two cows with calves, yoked them to the cart and penned their calves at home.

11 They put the ark of the LORD on the cart,
together with the box containing the gold rats and
the images of their tumours.
12 The cows went straight along the road to Beth-
shemesh, keeping to the one highway, lowing as
they went, and turning neither to the right nor to
the left. The rulers of the Philistines followed them
as far as the border of Beth-shemesh.
13 The people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their
wheat harvest in the valley. When they looked up
and saw the ark, they were overjoyed at the sight.
14 The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth-
shemesh and stopped there, where there was a
large stone. They split up the wood of the cart and
offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD.
15 The Levites took down the ark of the LORD and
the box beside it, which held the gold objects, and
set them on the large stone. That day the men of
Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and made
sacrifices to the LORD.
16 When the five rulers of the Philistines had seen
this, they returned to Ekron that same day.
17 These are the gold tumours the Philistines
returned as a guilt offering to the LORD: one for
Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for
Gath and one for Ekron.
18 And the gold rats were according to the number
of all the Philistine cities belonging to the five
rulers, both fortified cities and country villages.
The large stone on which they set the ark of the
LORD is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua
of Beth-shemesh.[1]
19 But the LORD struck down some of the men of
Beth-shemesh, because they looked into the ark of
the LORD. He struck down seventy men of the
people.[2] The people mourned because the LORD
had struck them with a great slaughter.
20 "Who can stand in the presence of the LORD,
this holy God?" the people of Beth-shemesh asked.
"And where can He go from here, away from us?"
21 So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of
Kiriath-jearim, saying, "The Philistines have
returned the ark of the LORD. Come down and
take it up to your town."

1 So some manuscripts and the Greek; most Hebrew manuscripts have 'Abel', 'meadow'.
2 Most Hebrew manuscripts have 'seventy men, fifty thousand men', perhaps a figure added in copying; a few have 'seventy men'.

Chapter 7

1 Samuel 7 tells how the ark stays at Kiriath-jearim for twenty years while Israel mourns after the LORD. Samuel calls them to put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths and serve the LORD alone, and gathers them at Mizpah, where they fast and confess their sin. When the Philistines attack, Samuel offers a lamb and cries out to the LORD, who thunders against the Philistines and throws them into confusion. Samuel sets up a stone and names it Ebenezer, "Thus far the LORD has helped us." The Philistines are subdued all Samuel's days, and he judges Israel from Ramah on a yearly circuit.

1 So the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took up
the ark of the LORD and brought it to the house of
Abinadab on the hill. They consecrated his son
Eleazar to have charge of the ark of the LORD.
2 From the day the ark came to rest at Kiriath-
jearim, a long time passed, twenty years in all,
and the whole house of Israel lamented after the
LORD.
3 Then Samuel said to the whole house of Israel,
"If you are returning to the LORD with all your
heart, put away the foreign gods and the
Ashtoreths from among you, set your hearts on
the LORD and serve Him alone, and He will
deliver you from the hand of the Philistines."
4 So the Israelites put away the Baals and the
Ashtoreths and served the LORD alone.
5 Samuel said, "Assemble all Israel at Mizpah, and
I will pray to the LORD on your behalf."
6 When they had assembled at Mizpah, they drew
water and poured it out in the LORD's presence,
and fasted all that day. "We have sinned against
the LORD," they confessed. And Samuel acted as
Israel's judge at Mizpah.
7 When the Philistines heard that the Israelites had
gathered at Mizpah, the rulers of the Philistines
went up against Israel. When the Israelites heard
of it, they were afraid of the Philistines.
8 The Israelites said to Samuel, "Do not stop crying
out to the LORD our God for us, that He may save

us from the hand of the Philistines."

9 So Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it whole as a burnt offering to the LORD. He cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him.

10 While Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel. But that day the LORD thundered with a mighty voice against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were routed before Israel.

11 The men of Israel went out from Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, striking them down as far as below Beth-car.

12 Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer,[1] saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us."

13 So the Philistines were subdued and did not come again into Israel's territory. The hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

14 The towns the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath, and Israel freed their territory from the hand of the Philistines. There was also peace between Israel and the Amorites.

15 As long as he lived, Samuel remained Israel's judge.

16 Each year he went on a circuit to Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpah, and judged Israel in all those places.

17 Then he would return to Ramah, because his home was there, and there too he judged Israel. And he built an altar there to the LORD.

1 'Stone of help'; compare 4:1.

Chapter 8

1 Samuel 8 tells how, when Samuel is old, his sons, whom he has made judges, take bribes and pervert justice. The elders of Israel ask Samuel for a king to judge them like all the nations. Samuel is displeased, but the LORD tells him that it is not Samuel they have rejected but the LORD Himself as their king. Samuel warns them what a king will take: their sons for his army and chariots, their daughters for his kitchens, the best of their fields, a tenth of their grain and flocks, until they become his slaves. The people refuse to listen, and the LORD tells Samuel to give them a king.

1 When Samuel grew old, he made his sons judges over Israel.

2 His firstborn was named Joel and his second Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba.

3 But his sons did not walk in his ways. They turned aside after gain; they took bribes and perverted justice.

4 So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah.

5 "You are now old," they told him, "and your sons do not follow your example. So give us a king to rule over us, as every other nation has."

6 But it displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to rule over us." So Samuel prayed to the LORD.

7 And the LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in all they say to you, for it is not you they have rejected, but Me they have rejected from being king over them.

8 They are doing to you just what they have always done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt to this day, forsaking Me and serving other gods.

9 Now listen to their voice; only warn them solemnly and show them the ways of the king who will reign over them."

10 So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king.

11 He said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and assign them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run in front of his chariots.

12 He will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plough his ground and reap his harvest, and to make his weapons of war and the equipment for his chariots.

13 He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks and bakers.

14 He will take the best of your fields, vineyards and olive groves and give them to his officials.

15 He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officers and his officials.

16 He will take your male and female servants, the best of your young men[1] and your donkeys, and

put them to his own work.

17 He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you
yourselves will become his slaves.

18 On that day you will cry out because of the king
you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will
not answer you on that day."

19 But the people refused to listen to Samuel.
"No!" they said. "We will have a king over us,

20 Then we shall be like the other nations, with a
king to govern us, to march at our head and fight
our wars."

21 When Samuel had heard all the people's words,
he repeated them in the LORD's hearing.

22 The LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to their voice
and make them a king." Then Samuel said to the
men of Israel, "Go home, each of you to his own
town."

1 So the Greek; the Hebrew has 'your cattle'.

Chapter 9

1 Samuel 9 introduces Saul son of Kish, a fine young Benjaminite who stands head and shoulders above everyone. Sent to look for his father's lost donkeys, he searches in vain until his servant suggests they consult the man of God in the nearby town. The day before, the LORD has told Samuel that He will send a man from Benjamin to be anointed leader over His people and save them from the Philistines. When Saul arrives, the LORD says, "This is the man." Samuel seats Saul at the head of the guests, gives him the portion set aside for him, and at dawn takes him aside to tell him the word of God.

1 There was a man of Benjamin named Kish son of
Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah,
a Benjaminite, a man of standing.

2 He had a son named Saul, a fine young man;
there was no one among the Israelites finer than
he. From his shoulders upward he was taller than
anyone else.

3 Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, had
strayed. So Kish said to his son Saul, "Take one of
the servants with you and go and look for the
donkeys."

4 He passed through the hill country of Ephraim
and through the land of Shalishah, but they did
not find them. They passed through the land of
Shaalim, but they were not there. Then he passed
through the land of Benjamin, but they did not
find them.

5 When they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to
the servant with him, "Come, let us go back, or my
father will stop worrying about the donkeys and
start worrying about us."

6 But the servant said to him, "There is a man of
God in this town, and he is held in honour;
everything he says comes true. Let us go there
now. Perhaps he can tell us which way to take."

7 Saul said to his servant, "But if we go, what can
we bring the man? The bread in our bags is gone,
and we have no gift to bring the man of God. What
do we have?"

8 The servant answered Saul again, "Here, I have a
quarter of a shekel[1] of silver. I will give it to the
man of God, and he will tell us our way."

9 (Formerly in Israel, when someone went to
enquire of God, he would say, "Come, let us go to
the seer," for the one who is now called a prophet
was formerly called a seer.)

10 "A good idea," Saul told his servant. "Let us go."
So they set off for the town where the man of God
lived.

11 As they went up the hill to the town, they met
some young women coming out to draw water and
asked them, "Is the seer here?"

12 "He is," they answered. "He is just ahead of you.
Hurry now; he has just come to the town today,
because the people have a sacrifice today at the
high place.

13 As soon as you enter the town, you will find him
before he goes up to the high place to eat. The
people will not eat until he comes, for he blesses
the sacrifice; after that the guests eat. Go up now,
for you will find him about this time."

14 So they went up to the town, and as they were
entering it, there was Samuel coming out towards
them on his way up to the high place.

15 Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had
revealed this to Samuel:

16 "This time tomorrow I am sending you a man
from Benjamin's territory. You are to anoint him
leader over Israel My people, and he will rescue

My people from the Philistines. For I have seen My people's plight; their cry has reached Me."

17 When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD told him, "Here is the man I spoke to you about. He will govern My people."

18 In the gateway Saul came up to Samuel and asked, "Could you tell me, please, which is the seer's house?"

19 "I am the seer," Samuel replied. "Go on up before me to the high place; today you will dine with me. Tomorrow morning I will let you go, and I will tell you everything that is in your heart.

20 As for the donkeys that strayed three days ago, do not trouble yourself about them, for they have been found. And to whom is all the desire of Israel turned, if not to you and to all your father's house?"

21 "But I am only a Benjaminite," Saul answered, "from the least of Israel's tribes, and my clan is the humblest in all Benjamin. Why say such things to me?"

22 Then Samuel took Saul and his servant, brought them into the hall and gave them a place at the head of the guests, who numbered about thirty.

23 Samuel said to the cook, "Bring the portion I gave you, the one I told you to put aside."

24 The cook took up the leg and what was on it[2] and set it before Saul. Samuel said, "Here is what has been kept for you. Eat, for it has been set aside for you for this occasion, from the time I said I had invited the people." So Saul ate with Samuel that day.

25 When they came down from the high place into the town, Samuel talked with Saul on the roof.

26 They got up early, and at daybreak Samuel called to Saul on the roof, "Get up, and I will send you on your way." Saul got up, and he and Samuel went outside together.

27 As they were going down to the edge of the town, Samuel said to Saul, "Tell the servant to go on ahead of us." When he had gone on, Samuel said, "But you stay here for a while, so that I may make known to you the word of God."

1 About 3 grams (one tenth of an ounce).

2 The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

Chapter 10

1 Samuel 10 tells how Samuel anoints Saul with oil as leader over the LORD's inheritance and gives him three signs: men near Rachel's tomb will tell him the donkeys are found; three men at the oak of Tabor will give him bread; and at Gibeah of God he will meet a band of prophets, the Spirit of the LORD will rush on him, and he will be changed into another man. All the signs come true, and people ask, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" At Mizpah Samuel reminds Israel that in asking for a king they have rejected their God, then casts lots; Saul is chosen, but is found hiding among the baggage. The people shout, "Long live the king!", though some worthless men despise him.

1 Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on Saul's head and kissed him, and said, "Has not the LORD anointed you as leader over His inheritance?[1]

2 When you leave me today, you will meet two men by Rachel's tomb, at Zelzah on the border of Benjamin. They will tell you, 'The donkeys you went to look for have been found. Now your father has stopped thinking about the donkeys and is worried about you, saying, "What shall I do about my son?"'

3 Then you will go on from there and come to the oak of Tabor. Three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine.

4 They will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you are to accept from them.

5 After that you will come to Gibeah of God, where there is a Philistine garrison. As you come to the town, you will meet a band of prophets coming down from the high place, with harp, tambourine, flute and lyre before them, and they will be prophesying.

6 Then the Spirit of the LORD will rush on you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man.

7 When these signs have come to you, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.

8 Go down to Gilgal before me. I will certainly
come down to you there to sacrifice burnt
offerings and peace offerings. You must wait seven
days for me to arrive, and then I will show you
what to do."
9 As Saul turned his back to leave Samuel, God
gave him another heart, and all these signs came
true that day.
10 When they came to Gibeah, there was a band of
prophets to meet him, and the Spirit of God
rushed on him, and he prophesied among them.
11 When all who had known him before saw him
prophesying with the prophets, the people said to
one another, "What has happened to the son of
Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?"
12 A man from there answered, "And who is their
father?"[2] So it became a proverb: "Is Saul also
among the prophets?"
13 When he had finished prophesying, he went to
the high place.
14 Saul's uncle asked him and his servant, "Where
did you go?" "To look for the donkeys," he said.
"When we saw they were nowhere to be found, we
went to Samuel."
15 "Tell me, please," said Saul's uncle, "what did
Samuel say to you?"
16 Saul answered his uncle, "He told us plainly that
the donkeys had been found." But he did not tell
him what Samuel had said about the kingship.
17 Samuel called the people together to the LORD
at Mizpah
18 and said to the Israelites, "This is what the
LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I brought Israel up
from Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of
the Egyptians and from the hand of all the
kingdoms that oppressed you.'
19 But today you have rejected your God, who
saves you from all your calamities and distresses,
and you have said, 'No, set a king over us.' Now
therefore present yourselves before the LORD by
your tribes and by your thousands."
20 Samuel had all Israel's tribes come forward, and
the lot fell on Benjamin.
21 He brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its
clans, and the clan of the Matrites was taken; and
Saul son of Kish was taken. But when they looked
for him, he could not be found.
22 So they enquired again of the LORD, "Has the
man come here yet?" The LORD said, "He is
hiding among the baggage."
23 They ran and brought him from there, and when
he stood among the people, he was taller than any
of them from his shoulders upward.
24 Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see the
man the LORD has chosen? There is no one like
him among all the people." And all the people
shouted, "Long live the king!"
25 Then Samuel told the people the rights and
duties of the kingship. He wrote them in a book
and laid it up before the LORD. Then Samuel sent
all the people away, each to his home.
26 Saul too went home to Gibeah, and with him
went men of valour whose hearts God had
touched.
27 But some worthless men said, "How can this
man save us?" They despised him and brought him
no gift. But he kept silent.[3]

1 The Greek adds: 'over His people Israel? You will reign over the people of the LORD and save them from the hand of their enemies all around. And this will be the sign to you that the LORD has anointed you as leader over His inheritance:'

2 That is, prophets are not a matter of birth; anyone may be among them. Compare 19:24.

3 A Dead Sea Scroll adds a paragraph here about Nahash king of the Ammonites oppressing Gad and Reuben, which explains 11:1.

Chapter 11

> *1 Samuel 11 tells how Nahash the Ammonite besieges Jabesh-gilead and offers terms only if he may gouge out every man's right eye. When the news reaches Gibeah, the Spirit of God rushes on Saul. He cuts up a yoke of oxen and sends the pieces through Israel, warning that the same will be done to the oxen of anyone who does not follow Saul and Samuel, and the people come out as one man. Saul breaks into the Ammonite camp at dawn and scatters them. He refuses to put to death those who had despised him, for the LORD has brought salvation to Israel, and at Gilgal the people renew the kingship and rejoice greatly.*

1 Nahash the Ammonite marched up and laid siege
to Jabesh-gilead. "Agree terms with us," all the

men of Jabesh said to him, “and we will be your subjects.”

2 But Nahash the Ammonite answered them, “I will make a treaty with you on this condition: that I gouge out the right eye of every one of you, and so bring disgrace on all Israel.”

3 The elders of Jabesh said to him, “Give us seven days to send messengers throughout the territory of Israel. If no one comes to save us, we will surrender to you.”

4 When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and reported these words in the hearing of the people, they all wept aloud.

5 Just then Saul was coming in from the field behind the oxen, and he asked, “What is wrong with the people, that they are weeping?” So they told him the message of the men of Jabesh.

6 When Saul heard these words, the Spirit of God rushed on him, and his anger burned hotly.

7 He took a pair of oxen, cut them into pieces[1] and sent them by messengers throughout the territory of Israel, saying, “Whoever does not come out after Saul and Samuel, this is what will be done to his oxen!” Then the dread of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out as one man.

8 When he mustered them at Bezek, the Israelites numbered three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand.

9 To the messengers who had come they said, “Tell the men of Jabesh-gilead that by the time the sun grows hot tomorrow, help will have come.” The messengers went and told them, and the men of Jabesh rejoiced.

10 So the men of Jabesh said to the Ammonites, “Tomorrow we will come out to you, and you may do with us whatever seems good to you.”

11 The next day Saul divided the army into three companies. In the morning watch they broke into the camp and struck down the Ammonites until the heat of the day. Those who survived were so scattered that no two of them were left together.

12 Then the people said to Samuel, “Who was it that said, ‘Shall Saul reign over us?’ Hand the men over, and we will put them to death.”

13 But Saul said, “No one shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has brought salvation to Israel.”

14 Samuel then said to the people, “Come, we will go to Gilgal and renew the kingship there.”

15 So all the people went to Gilgal, and there, in the presence of the LORD, they made Saul king. There they sacrificed peace offerings before the LORD, and Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

1 Compare Judges 19:29, where the tribes were summoned in a similar way, also from Gibeah.

Chapter 12

1 Samuel 12 records Samuel’s farewell address. He calls the people to witness before the LORD and His anointed that he has never taken an ox or a bribe or cheated anyone, and they agree. He reviews the LORD’s righteous acts from Moses and Aaron through the judges, and reminds them that they asked for a king though the LORD was their king. If they and their king fear and serve the LORD, all will be well; if not, His hand will be against them. As a sign, the LORD sends thunder and rain at wheat harvest. The frightened people ask Samuel to pray for them; he tells them not to turn aside to empty things, promises that he will not sin by ceasing to pray for them, and urges them to serve the LORD faithfully.

1 Samuel said to all Israel, “I have listened to you in all you have said to me and have set a king over you.

2 And now, here is the king walking before you. As for me, I am old and grey, and my sons are here with you. I have walked before you from my youth until this day.

3 Here I stand. Bring your charges against me in the presence of the LORD and of His anointed. Have I taken anyone’s ox, or anyone’s donkey? Have I defrauded or crushed anyone? Have I accepted a bribe from anyone to look the other way? If so, I will make it good.”

4 They said, “You have not cheated us or oppressed us, nor taken anything from anyone’s hand.”

5 “The LORD is witness against you,” he said, “and His anointed is witness today, that you have found nothing against me.” “He is our witness,” they replied.

6 Samuel went on, “The LORD is the One who raised up Moses and Aaron and led your fathers out of Egypt.

7 Now therefore stand still, so that I may plead with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous acts of the LORD that He did for you and for your fathers.

8 When Jacob went into Egypt, and your fathers cried out to the LORD, the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and settled them in this place.

9 But they forgot the LORD their God, and He handed them over to Sisera, the army commander of Hazor, and to the Philistines and the king of Moab, who made war on them.

10 Then they cried out to the LORD and said, 'We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths. But now deliver us from the hand of our enemies, and we will serve You.'

11 Then the LORD sent Jerubbaal and Bedan,[1] Jephthah and Samuel, and rescued you from the enemies all round you, so that you lived in security.

12 But when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites was coming against you, you said to me, 'No, a king shall reign over us,' when the LORD your God was your king.

13 Now here is the king you have chosen, the one you asked for. See, the LORD has set a king over you.

14 If you fear the LORD, serve Him and listen to His voice, not defying His commands, and if you and the king who reigns over you are followers of the LORD your God, all will be well.[2]

15 But if you do not listen to the LORD's voice and you defy His commands, His hand will be raised against you, as it was against your fathers.

16 So now stand here and watch this great thing the LORD is about to do before your eyes.

17 Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call on the LORD, and He will send thunder and rain. Then you will know and see that the evil you have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking for a king, is great."

18 Samuel called to the LORD, and that same day the LORD sent thunder and rain; and all the people were filled with awe of the LORD and of Samuel.

19 The people all begged Samuel, "Pray to the LORD your God for us your servants, or we shall die, for on top of all our other sins we have done wrong in asking for a king."

20 Samuel said to the people, "Do not be afraid. You have done all this evil, yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart.

21 Do not turn aside after empty things[3] that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty.

22 For the LORD will not forsake His people, for the sake of His great name, because it has pleased the LORD to make you a people for Himself.

23 As for me, far be it from me to sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you. I will go on teaching you the way that is good and right.

24 Only fear the LORD and serve Him faithfully with all your heart. Consider what great things He has done for you.

25 But if you still do evil, both you and your king will be swept away."

1 So the Hebrew; the Greek and Syriac have 'Barak'.

2 The Hebrew sentence breaks off; 'it will be well' is supplied, as the sense requires.

3 Hebrew תֹּהוּ (tohu), 'emptiness', the word used in Genesis 1:2 for the formless earth.

Chapter 13

1 Samuel 13 tells how Jonathan attacks the Philistine garrison at Geba, and the Philistines gather a vast army at Michmash. Israel's soldiers hide in caves and thickets, and Saul's men drift away while he waits seven days at Gilgal for Samuel. When Samuel does not come, Saul offers the burnt offering himself; Samuel arrives as he finishes and tells him that because he has not kept the LORD's command, his kingdom will not last: the LORD has sought out a man after His own heart. The Philistines send out raiding parties, and Israel has no swords or spears, for the Philistines have allowed no blacksmiths in the land.

1 At his accession Saul was [thirty] years of age, and his reign over Israel lasted [forty-]two years.[1]

2 Saul chose three thousand men from Israel. Two thousand were with Saul at Michmash and in the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with

Jonathan at Gibeah in Benjamin. The rest of the people he sent home, each to his tent.

3 Jonathan struck down the Philistine garrison at Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. Then Saul had the ram's horn blown throughout the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear!"

4 All Israel heard the news: "Saul has struck down the Philistine garrison, and Israel has become a stench to the Philistines." So the people were called out to join Saul at Gilgal.

5 The Philistines gathered to fight Israel: thirty thousand chariots,[2] six thousand horsemen, and troops as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They came up and camped at Michmash, east of Beth-aven.

6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in trouble, for the army was hard pressed, the people hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, in pits and in cisterns.

7 Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were trembling.

8 He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people began to slip away from him.

9 So Saul said, "Bring me the burnt offering and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering.

10 Just as he finished offering the burnt offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to meet him and greet him.

11 Samuel said, "What have you done?" Saul answered, "When I saw that the people were scattering from me, and you did not come within the appointed days, and the Philistines were gathering at Michmash,

12 I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD's favour.' So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering."

13 Samuel said to Saul, "You have acted foolishly. You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you. If you had, the LORD would now have established your kingdom over Israel for ever.

14 But now your kingdom will not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart,[3] and the LORD has appointed him leader over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

15 Samuel then left Gilgal and went up to Gibeah in Benjamin.[4] Saul numbered the men still with him: about six hundred.

16 Saul and his son Jonathan and the troops with them stayed in Geba of Benjamin, while the Philistines camped at Michmash.

17 Raiders came out of the Philistine camp in three companies. One company turned towards Ophrah in the land of Shual,

18 another turned towards Beth-horon, and the third turned towards the border overlooking the Valley of Zeboim towards the wilderness.

19 No blacksmith could be found in all the land of Israel, for the Philistines had said, "The Hebrews must not make swords or spears."

20 So all Israel went down to the Philistines to have their ploughshares, mattocks, axes and sickles sharpened.

21 The charge was a pim[5] for ploughshares and mattocks, and a third of a shekel for sharpening forks and axes and setting goads.

22 So on the day of the battle not a sword or spear was to be found in the hands of any of the troops with Saul and Jonathan; only Saul and his son Jonathan had them.

23 And the Philistine garrison went out to the pass of Michmash.

1 The Hebrew lacks the numbers, reading 'Saul was a year old … and reigned two years'. The figures in brackets are supplied from later Greek manuscripts and from Acts 13:21, which gives forty years.

2 So the Hebrew; some Greek manuscripts and the Syriac have 'three thousand'.

3 Quoted of David in Acts 13:22.

4 The Greek adds 'and the rest of the people followed Saul to meet the army, and they went from Gilgal'.

5 About two-thirds of a shekel, some 8 grams; the word was unknown until weights marked with it were found.

Chapter 14

1 Samuel 14 tells how Jonathan and his armour-bearer climb up to the Philistine outpost, trusting that nothing can hinder the LORD from saving by many or by few. They kill about twenty men, an earthquake throws the Philistines into panic, and the LORD saves Israel that day. But Saul has bound the army with an oath to eat nothing until evening, and Jonathan, unaware, eats some honey. The exhausted troops later fall on the spoil and eat meat with the blood. When God does not answer Saul, he casts lots, and Jonathan is taken; Saul would put him to death, but the people ransom him. The chapter closes with a summary of Saul's wars and family.

1 One day Jonathan son of Saul said to the young man who carried his armour, "Come, let us go over to the Philistine garrison on the other side." But he did not tell his father.

2 Saul was staying on the outskirts of Gibeah under the pomegranate tree at Migron, and the troops with him numbered about six hundred men.

3 Ahijah son of Ahitub, the brother of Ichabod son of Phinehas, son of Eli, the priest of the LORD at Shiloh, was wearing the ephod. The people did not know that Jonathan had gone.

4 In the pass Jonathan meant to cross to reach the Philistine garrison, there was a rocky crag on one side and a rocky crag on the other. One was called Bozez and the other Seneh.[1]

5 One crag stood on the north towards Michmash, and the other on the south towards Geba.

6 Jonathan said to his armour-bearer, "Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised men. Perhaps the LORD will act for us, for nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few."

7 His armour-bearer said to him, "Do all that is in your heart. Go ahead; I am with you heart and soul."

8 Jonathan said, "We will cross over to the men and let them see us.

9 If they say to us, 'Wait until we come to you,' we will stay where we are and not go up to them.

10 But if they say, 'Come up to us,' we will go up, for the LORD has given them into our hand. That will be the sign for us."

11 So the two of them showed themselves to the Philistine garrison, and the Philistines said, "Look, the Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have been hiding."

12 The men of the garrison called to Jonathan and his armour-bearer, "Come up to us, and we will teach you a lesson!" Jonathan said to his armour-bearer, "Come up after me, for the LORD has given them into the hand of Israel."

13 Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet, with his armour-bearer behind him. The Philistines fell before Jonathan, and his armour-bearer killed them behind him.

14 In that first attack Jonathan and his armour-bearer killed about twenty men within about half a furrow's length in a field.

15 Panic spread through the camp in the field and through all the people; the garrison and the raiders also trembled. The earth quaked, and it became a panic sent by God.

16 Saul's lookouts at Gibeah in Benjamin saw the multitude melting away this way and that.

17 Saul said to the people with him, "Call the roll and see who has gone from us." When they called the roll, Jonathan and his armour-bearer were missing.

18 Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the ark of God here." For at that time the ark of God was with the Israelites.[2]

19 While Saul was talking to the priest, the tumult in the Philistine camp grew louder and louder. So Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand."

20 Then Saul and all the people with him rallied and went into the battle, and there they found the Philistines in total confusion, every man's sword against his fellow.

21 The Hebrews who had previously been with the Philistines and had gone up with them into the camp also turned to join the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan.

22 And when all the Israelites who had hidden in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines were fleeing, they too joined the pursuit and the battle.

23 So the LORD saved Israel that day, and the battle spread beyond Beth-aven.

24 The men of Israel were hard pressed that day, for Saul had bound the people under an oath, saying, "Cursed is the man who eats any food

before evening, before I have taken vengeance on my enemies.” So none of the people tasted food.

25 The whole army entered the woods, where honey lay on the ground.

26 As they went into the woods, they saw the honey oozing out, yet nobody lifted a hand to his lips, because they were afraid of the oath.

27 Jonathan, though, had not heard his father put the army under oath. He stretched out the end of the staff he was holding, dipped it in the honeycomb and raised his hand to his mouth, and his eyes shone again.

28 Then one of the soldiers said, “Your father strictly bound the people with an oath, saying, ‘Cursed is the man who eats food today.’ That is why the people are faint.”

29 Jonathan said, “My father has brought trouble on the land. See how my eyes have brightened because I tasted a little of this honey.

30 How much better if the people had eaten freely today of the spoil they found from their enemies! Then the slaughter among the Philistines would have been far greater.”

31 That day they struck down the Philistines from Michmash to Aijalon, and the people were utterly exhausted.

32 They rushed on the spoil, took sheep, cattle and calves, slaughtered them on the ground, and ate the meat with the blood.[3]

33 Then Saul was told, “Look, the people are sinning against the LORD by eating meat with the blood.” He said, “You have broken faith. Roll a large stone over to me here.”

34 And Saul said, “Go out among the people and tell them, ‘Each of you bring me his ox or his sheep, and slaughter them here and eat. Do not sin against the LORD by eating meat with the blood.’” So that night each of the people brought his ox with him and slaughtered it there.

35 And Saul built an altar to the LORD; it was the first altar he built to the LORD.

36 Saul said, “We will go down after the Philistines tonight and plunder them until dawn, and leave not a man alive.” “Do whatever you think best,” they replied. But the priest said, “First let us come near to God here.”

37 So Saul asked God, “Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will You give them into the hand of Israel?” But God did not answer him that day.

38 Saul said, “Come here, all you leaders of the people, and find out how this sin has come about today.

39 For as surely as the LORD lives, who saves Israel, even if it lies with my son Jonathan, he shall surely die.” But not one of the people answered him.

40 He told all Israel, “Stand over there on one side; my son Jonathan and I will stand on the other.” “Do as you think best,” the people answered.

41 Then Saul said to the LORD, the God of Israel, “Give the right answer.”[4] Jonathan and Saul were taken, and the people went free.

42 Saul said, “Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan.” And Jonathan was taken.

43 Then Saul said to Jonathan, “Tell me what you have done.” Jonathan told him, “I did taste a little honey with the tip of the staff in my hand. Here I am; I am ready to die.”

44 Saul said, “May God deal with me, and more also; you shall surely die, Jonathan.”

45 But the people said to Saul, “Shall Jonathan die, who has brought about this great salvation in Israel? Far from it! As surely as the LORD lives, not a hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day.” So the people ransomed Jonathan, and he did not die.

46 Then Saul gave up pursuing the Philistines, and the Philistines went back to their own land.

47 When Saul had taken the kingship over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side: against Moab, the Ammonites, Edom, the kings of Zobah and the Philistines. Wherever he turned he inflicted punishment.

48 He acted valiantly and struck down the Amalekites, and delivered Israel from the hand of those who plundered them.

49 Saul’s sons were Jonathan, Ishvi and Malchi-shua. The names of his two daughters were these: the elder was Merab and the younger Michal.

50 Saul’s wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz, and his army commander was Abner son of Ner, Saul’s uncle.

51 Kish, Saul’s father, and Ner, Abner’s father, were sons of Abiel.

52 There was fierce war with the Philistines all the days of Saul, and whenever Saul saw any strong or valiant man, he took him into his service.

1 Bozez perhaps means ‘shining’, Seneh ‘thorny’.

2 The Greek has ‘Bring the ephod here, for at that time he wore the ephod before Israel’; compare verse 3 and 23:9.

3 Forbidden in Leviticus 17:10–14 and Deuteronomy 12:16.

4 The Greek has a longer prayer: ‘Why have You not answered Your servant today? If the guilt is in me or in my son Jonathan, LORD God of Israel, give Urim; but if it is in Your people Israel, give Thummim.’

Chapter 15

1 Samuel 15 tells how Samuel sends Saul to devote the Amalekites to destruction for what they did to Israel on the way out of Egypt. Saul defeats them but spares King Agag and the best of the livestock. The LORD tells Samuel that He regrets making Saul king. Saul greets Samuel claiming to have obeyed, but Samuel hears the bleating of sheep. To Saul’s excuse that the animals were kept for sacrifice, Samuel answers that to obey is better than sacrifice; because Saul has rejected the word of the LORD, the LORD has rejected him as king. When Saul seizes his robe and it tears, Samuel declares that the LORD has torn the kingdom from him and given it to a better man. Samuel puts Agag to death, and never sees Saul again.

1 Samuel said to Saul, “The LORD sent me to anoint you king over His people Israel. Now listen to the words of the LORD.

2 This is what the LORD of Armies says: ‘I will punish Amalek for what they did to Israel, opposing them on the way when they came up from Egypt.[1]

3 Now go and strike Amalek, and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but put to death man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.’”[2]

4 So Saul summoned the people and mustered them at Telaim: two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men of Judah.

5 Saul advanced to the Amalekite city and set an ambush in the ravine.

6 Then Saul said to the Kenites, “Go, leave, come away from the Amalekites, so that I do not destroy you with them, for you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they came up from Egypt.” So the Kenites withdrew from among the Amalekites.

7 Saul struck down the Amalekites from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt.

8 He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and devoted all the people to destruction with the sword.

9 But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep and the cattle, the fatlings and the lambs, and all that was good. They were unwilling to devote them to destruction; only what was despised and worthless they destroyed.

10 Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel:

11 “I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands.” Samuel was angry, and he cried out to the LORD all night.

12 Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, and Samuel was told, “Saul went to Carmel, and there he has set up a monument for himself. Then he turned and went on down to Gilgal.”

13 When Samuel came to Saul, Saul said to him, “May you be blessed by the LORD! I have carried out the LORD’s command.”

14 But Samuel said, “Then what is this bleating of sheep in my ears, and the lowing of cattle that I hear?”

15 Saul said, “They have brought them from the Amalekites. The people spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD your God, but the rest we have devoted to destruction.”

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

17 Samuel said, “Though you were small in your own eyes, did you not become head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel.

18 And the LORD sent you on a mission and said, ‘Go, devote to destruction those sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are wiped out.’

19 Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop on the spoil and do what was evil in the LORD’s sight?”

20 Saul said to Samuel, “But I did obey the voice of the LORD. I went on the mission the LORD sent me on. I brought back Agag king of Amalek, and I devoted the Amalekites to destruction.

21 But the people took from the spoil sheep and cattle, the best of what was devoted to

destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God at Gilgal.”

22 Samuel said, “Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? See, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.[3]

23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and stubbornness like iniquity and idolatry.[4] Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has rejected you as king.”

24 Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned. I have transgressed the command of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice.

25 Now please forgive my sin, and come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD.”

26 Samuel said to Saul, “I will not come back with you. You have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel.”

27 As Samuel turned to go, Saul caught hold of the hem of his robe, and it tore.

28 “Today the LORD has torn Israel’s kingdom away from you,” Samuel told him, “and handed it to someone close to you, a better man than you.

29 And the Glory of Israel[5] will not lie or change His mind, for He is not a man, that He should change His mind.”

30 Saul said, “I have sinned. But please honour me now before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD your God.”

31 So Samuel went back with Saul, and Saul worshipped the LORD.

32 Then Samuel said, “Bring me Agag king of the Amalekites.” Agag came to him trembling,[6] and Agag said, “Surely the bitterness of death is past.”

33 But Samuel said, “As your sword has made women childless, so your mother shall be childless among women.” And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD at Gilgal.

34 Samuel left for Ramah, and Saul went home to Gibeah of Saul.

35 Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.

1 See Exodus 17:8–16 and Deuteronomy 25:17–19.

2 On ‘devote to destruction’ see the note at Deuteronomy 2:34.

3 Compare Psalm 51:16–17, Hosea 6:6 and Mark 12:33.

4 Hebrew תְּרָפִים (teraphim), ‘household gods’.

5 Hebrew נֵצַח יִשְׂרָאֵל (netsach yisra’el), ‘the Eternal One’ or ‘the Splendour of Israel’.

6 Or ‘confidently’; the meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain.

Chapter 16

1 Samuel 16 tells how the LORD sends Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint one of the sons of Jesse. When Samuel sees the tall Eliab, the LORD tells him not to look at appearance or height, for the LORD looks on the heart. Seven sons pass before him, but the LORD has chosen none of them; the youngest, David, is out keeping the sheep. When he is brought in, the LORD says, “Arise, anoint him,” and the Spirit of the LORD rushes on David from that day on. The Spirit of the LORD leaves Saul, and a harmful spirit from the LORD torments him. His servants find a skilled harpist, David son of Jesse, who becomes Saul’s armour-bearer, and whenever the spirit comes on Saul, David plays and Saul is refreshed.

1 The LORD said to Samuel, “How much longer will you mourn for Saul? I have rejected him as king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I am sending you to Jesse in Bethlehem, because I have picked out a king for Myself from among his sons.”

2 Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.” The LORD said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’

3 Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you are to do. You are to anoint for Me the one I point out to you.”

4 Samuel did what the LORD said and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the town came trembling to meet him and said, “Do you come in peace?”

5 He said, “In peace. I have come to sacrifice to the
LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come with me
to the sacrifice.” And he consecrated Jesse and his
sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

6 When they came, he looked at Eliab and thought,
“Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before
Him.”

7 But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his
appearance or at how tall he is, for I have rejected
him. The LORD does not see as a man sees: man
looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD
looks at the heart.”

8 Next Jesse called Abinadab and had him walk
past Samuel. “The LORD has not chosen him
either,” Samuel said.

9 Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said,
“The LORD has not chosen this one either.”

10 So Jesse had seven of his sons pass before
Samuel, but Samuel told him, “None of these is
the LORD’s choice.”

11 Then Samuel asked Jesse, “Are these all your
sons?” He answered, “There is still the youngest,
but he is out keeping the sheep.” Samuel said to
Jesse, “Send and bring him, for we will not sit
down to eat until he comes here.”

12 So he sent and brought him in. He was ruddy,
with fine eyes and a handsome appearance. And
the LORD said, “Arise, anoint him, for this is the
one.”

13 So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him
in the presence of his brothers. And the Spirit of
the LORD rushed on David from that day forward.
Then Samuel set out and went to Ramah.

14 Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from
Saul, and a harmful spirit from the LORD
tormented him.[1]

15 Saul’s servants said to him, “See, a harmful
spirit from God is tormenting you.

16 Let our lord command your servants who stand
before you to look for a man who knows how to
play the lyre. When the harmful spirit from God
comes on you, he will play, and you will feel
better.”

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

18 One of the young men answered, “I have seen a
son of Jesse of Bethlehem who knows how to play.
He is a man of valour, a warrior, skilful in speech
and good-looking, and the LORD is with him.”

19 Saul then sent messengers to Jesse to say, “Send
me David your son, the one who looks after the
sheep.”

20 So Jesse loaded a donkey with bread, a wineskin
and a young goat, and sent them to Saul with his
son David.

21 David came to Saul and entered his service. Saul
loved him greatly, and he became his armour-
bearer.

22 Saul sent word to Jesse, “Let David stay in my
service, for he has found favour in my sight.”

23 And whenever the spirit from God came on Saul,
David would take the lyre and play it. Then Saul
would be relieved and feel better, and the harmful
spirit would leave him.

1 Or ‘an evil spirit’. The narrator traces even this trouble to the LORD’s hand.

Chapter 17

1 Samuel 17 tells how the Philistine champion Goliath of Gath, a giant in bronze armour, defies the army of Israel in the Valley of Elah for forty days, and Saul and all Israel are terrified. David, sent by his father with food for his brothers, hears the challenge and asks who this uncircumcised Philistine is to defy the armies of the living God. His brother rebukes him, but Saul sends for him. David tells Saul that the LORD who rescued him from the lion and the bear will rescue him from the Philistine. Refusing Saul’s armour, he goes out with his staff, his sling and five smooth stones, declaring that he comes in the name of the LORD of Armies, for the battle is the LORD’s. He strikes Goliath on the forehead with a stone and cuts off his head with the giant’s own sword, and the Philistines flee.

1 The Philistines gathered their forces for war.
They assembled at Socoh, which belongs to Judah,
and camped between Socoh and Azekah, at Ephes-
dammim.

2 Saul and the men of Israel gathered and camped
in the Valley of Elah, and drew up their battle line
to face the Philistines.

3 The Philistines stood on the hill on one side and
Israel stood on the hill on the other, with the
valley between them.

4 A champion came out from the Philistine camp,
named Goliath, from Gath. He was six cubits and a
span tall.[1]

5 He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a
coat of scale armour weighing five thousand
shekels of bronze.[2]

6 He had bronze greaves on his legs and a bronze
javelin slung between his shoulders.

7 The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam,
and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels.[3]
His shield-bearer walked ahead of him.

8 He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel,
"Why have you come out to draw up for battle?
Am I not the Philistine, and are you not Saul's
servants? Choose a man for yourselves, and let
him come down to me.

9 If he can fight me and beat me, we will become
your subjects; but if I beat him and kill him, you
will become our subjects and serve us."

10 And the Philistine said, "This day I defy the
ranks of Israel! Give me a man, and let us fight it
out together."

11 Hearing what the Philistine said, Saul and all
the Israelites were shaken and terrified.

12 Now David was the son of an Ephrathite of
Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight
sons. In the days of Saul the man was already old
and advanced in years.

13 Jesse's three eldest sons had followed Saul to
the war. The names of his three sons who went to
the war were Eliab the firstborn, next to him
Abinadab, and the third Shammah.

14 David was the youngest. The three eldest
followed Saul,

15 David, though, would go to and fro between
Saul's camp and Bethlehem, where he looked
after his father's flock.

16 For forty days the Philistine came forward
morning and evening and took his stand.

17 One day Jesse told his son David, "Take this
ephah of roasted grain and these ten loaves to
your brothers, and run with them to their camp.

18 Take these ten cheeses to the commander of
their thousand. See how your brothers are and
bring back some token from them."

19 They were with Saul and all the men of Israel in
the Valley of Elah, fighting the Philistines.

20 David rose early in the morning, left the sheep
with a keeper, took the provisions and went, as
Jesse had commanded him. He came to the camp
just as the army was going out to the battle line,
shouting the war cry.

21 Israel and the Philistines drew up their lines,
army against army.

22 David left his things with the keeper of the
baggage, ran to the battle line, and went and
greeted his brothers.

23 As he was talking with them, the champion,
Goliath the Philistine of Gath, came up out of the
Philistine ranks and spoke the same words as
before, and David heard him.

24 When all the men of Israel saw the man, they
fled from him in great fear.

25 The men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man
who keeps coming up? He comes up to defy Israel.
The king will make the man who kills him very
rich, give him his daughter in marriage, and free
his father's house from taxes in Israel."

26 David asked the men beside him, "What reward
is there for the man who kills this Philistine and
wipes out Israel's disgrace? Who does this
uncircumcised Philistine think he is, to defy the
armies of the living God?"

27 The people told him the same thing: "This is
what will be done for the man who kills him."

28 When Eliab his eldest brother heard him
speaking to the men, his anger burned against
David, and he said, "Why have you come down
here? And with whom have you left those few
sheep in the wilderness? I know your arrogance
and the wickedness of your heart; you have come
down to watch the battle."

29 David said, "What have I done now? It was only
a question."

30 He turned away from him towards another and
asked the same thing, and the people gave him
the same answer as before.

31 When David's words were overheard, they were
reported to Saul, and he sent for him.

32 David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on
account of him. Your servant will go and fight this
Philistine."

33 Saul said to David, "You cannot go against this
Philistine to fight him. You are only a youth, and

he has been a warrior from his youth.”

34 But David said to Saul, “Your servant used to keep his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a lamb from the flock,

35 I went after it, struck it and rescued the lamb from its mouth. If it turned on me, I caught it by its beard, struck it and killed it.

36 Your servant has killed both lion and bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God.”

37 And David said, “The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.” Saul said to David, “Go, and may the LORD be with you.”

38 Then Saul clothed David with his own tunic. He put a bronze helmet on his head and clothed him with a coat of armour.

39 David strapped Saul’s sword over the tunic and tried to walk, for he was not used to them. David said to Saul, “I cannot go in these, for I am not used to them.” So David took them off.

40 Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, and put them in his shepherd’s bag, in the pouch. With his sling in his hand, he approached the Philistine.

41 The Philistine came on and drew near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him.

42 When the Philistine looked and saw David, he despised him, for he was only a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance.

43 “Am I a dog,” the Philistine said to David, “that you come after me with sticks?” And he called down curses on David in the name of his gods.

44 “Come on, then,” he told David, “and I will feed your flesh to the birds and the wild animals.”

45 Then David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD of Armies, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.

46 This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand. I will strike you down and cut off your head. And this day I will give the corpses of the Philistine army to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel,

47 and so that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not save by sword or spear. For the battle is the LORD’s, and He will give you into our hand.”

48 When the Philistine moved to come and meet David, David ran quickly towards the battle line to meet the Philistine.

49 David put his hand into his bag, took out a stone, slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; he struck the Philistine down and killed him without a sword in his hand.

51 David ran and stood over him. Seizing the Philistine’s sword, he pulled it from its sheath, finished him off and cut off his head with it. Seeing their hero dead, the Philistines took to flight.

52 The men of Israel and Judah rose with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath[4] and the gates of Ekron. The Philistine dead lay strewn along the road from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron.

53 When the Israelites returned from chasing the Philistines, they plundered their camp.

54 David brought the Philistine’s head to Jerusalem, and kept his weapons in his own tent.

55 When Saul saw David going out to meet the Philistine, he said to Abner, the commander of the army, “Abner, whose son is this youth?” Abner said, “As surely as you live, O king, I do not know.”

56 The king said, “Find out whose son the young man is.”

57 So when David returned from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with the Philistine’s head in his hand.

58 “Whose son are you, young man?” Saul asked him. “The son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite,” David replied.

1 About 3 metres (9 feet 9 inches). A Dead Sea Scroll and the Greek have ‘four cubits and a span’, about 2 metres (6 feet 9 inches).

2 About 57 kilograms (126 pounds).

3 About 7 kilograms (15 pounds).

4 So the Greek; the Hebrew has ‘a valley’.

Chapter 18

1 Samuel 18 tells how Jonathan's soul is bound to David's; he loves him as himself, makes a covenant with him and gives him his own robe and weapons. David succeeds in everything Saul sends him to do. But when the women come out singing, "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his tens of thousands," Saul becomes angry and jealous, and watches David from that day on. In a fit sent by a harmful spirit he twice hurls his spear at David, who escapes. Fearing him because the LORD is with him, Saul makes him a commander, offers him his daughter Merab and then gives her to another, and asks for a hundred Philistine foreskins as the bride-price for Michal, hoping David will fall. David brings two hundred and marries Michal, who loves him, and Saul becomes his enemy for good.

1 When David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself.

2 Saul took him into his service that day and would not let him return to his father's house.

3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as himself.

4 Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.

5 David went out wherever Saul sent him and succeeded, so Saul set him over the men of war. This pleased all the people and Saul's officials as well.

6 As they were coming home, when David returned from striking down the Philistine, the women came out of all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul, singing and dancing, with tambourines, with songs of joy and with lutes.[1]

7 And the women sang to one another as they danced, "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."

8 Saul was very angry, and this saying displeased him. He said, "They have credited David with tens of thousands, but me with only thousands. What more can he have but the kingdom?"

9 And from that day on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

10 The next day a harmful spirit from God rushed on Saul, and he raved[2] inside his house while David was playing the lyre, as he did every day. Saul had a spear in his hand,

11 and Saul hurled the spear, thinking, "I will pin David to the wall." But David dodged him twice.

12 Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul.

13 So Saul sent him away from his presence and made him a commander of a thousand, and he led the troops out and back.

14 David had success in all his ways, for the LORD was with him.

15 When Saul saw how very successful he was, he stood in dread of him.

16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, for he led them out and back.

17 Then Saul said to David, "Here is my elder daughter Merab. I will give her to you as your wife; only be valiant for me and fight the LORD's battles." For Saul thought, "Let my hand not be against him; let the hand of the Philistines be against him."

18 But David answered Saul, "Who am I, and who are my kin, my father's family in Israel, for me to be the king's son-in-law?"

19 But when the time came for Merab, Saul's daughter, to be given to David, she was given in marriage to Adriel the Meholathite.

20 Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David. When Saul was told, it pleased him.

21 Saul thought, "I will give her to him, so that she may be a snare to him and the hand of the Philistines may be against him." So Saul said to David a second time, "You shall now be my son-in-law."

22 Saul commanded his servants, "Speak to David privately and say, 'The king is delighted with you, and all his servants love you. Now become the king's son-in-law.'"

23 Saul's servants spoke these words in David's hearing. And David said, "Does it seem a small thing to you to become the king's son-in-law, when I am a poor man of no standing?"

24 Saul's servants reported to him what David had said.

25 Then Saul said, "Say this to David: 'The king wants no other bride-price than a hundred Philistine foreskins, to take vengeance on the

king’s enemies.’” For Saul planned to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.

26 When his servants told David these words, David was pleased to become the king’s son-in-law. Before the time had expired,

27 David got up and went, he and his men, and struck down two hundred of the Philistines. David brought their foreskins and presented the full number to the king, so that he might become the king’s son-in-law. And Saul gave him his daughter Michal as his wife.

28 Saul saw clearly that the LORD was with David, and that his own daughter Michal loved him.

29 Saul was even more afraid of David. So Saul was David’s enemy from then on.

30 The commanders of the Philistines would go out to battle, and every time they did, David had more success than all Saul’s officers, so that his name became highly esteemed.

1 The Hebrew word, found only here, may mean a three-stringed instrument.

2 Hebrew ‘prophesied’, here of frenzied behaviour; compare 10:10 and 19:23–24.

Chapter 19

1 Samuel 19 tells how Saul orders Jonathan and his servants to kill David. Jonathan pleads for him, and Saul swears that David will not be put to death; but when David wins another victory, a harmful spirit from the LORD comes on Saul and he hurls his spear at David again. Saul sends men to watch David’s house, and Michal lets him down through a window and puts the household gods in his bed. David flees to Samuel at Ramah. Three times Saul sends messengers to seize him, and each time the Spirit of God comes on them and they prophesy; at last Saul goes himself, and he too prophesies and lies stripped before Samuel all day and night. So people say, “Is Saul also among the prophets?”

1 Saul told his son Jonathan and all his servants that they should kill David. But Jonathan, Saul’s son, was very fond of David.

2 So Jonathan told David, “My father Saul is seeking to kill you. Be on your guard in the morning; stay in a secret place and hide.

3 I will go out and stand with my father in the field where you are hiding, and talk to him about you. Whatever I find out, I will let you know.”

4 Jonathan spoke well of David to his father Saul and said to him, “Let not the king sin against his servant David, for he has not sinned against you, and what he has done has been very good for you.

5 He took his life in his hands and struck down the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great salvation for all Israel. You saw it and rejoiced. Why then would you sin against innocent blood by killing David without cause?”

6 Saul listened to Jonathan, and Saul swore, “As surely as the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death.”

7 Afterwards Jonathan called David and reported the whole conversation to him. Then he took David to Saul, and David served him as he had before.

8 Once more there was war, and David went out and fought against the Philistines. He struck them with a great slaughter, and they fled before him.

9 Then a harmful spirit from the LORD came on Saul as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand, while David was playing the lyre.

10 Saul tried to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he slipped away from Saul, and the spear struck the wall. David fled and escaped that night.

11 Saul sent men to keep watch on David’s house, meaning to kill him in the morning. But his wife Michal warned him, “Unless you get away tonight, tomorrow you are a dead man.”

12 Michal lowered David from a window, and he slipped away and got clear.

13 Michal took the household gods and laid them in the bed, put a quilt of goats’ hair at its head and covered it with a garment.

14 When Saul’s men came to seize David, Michal told them, “He is sick.”

15 Saul sent the men back to look at David for themselves. “Carry him to me in his bed,” he said, “so that I can kill him.”

16 When the messengers came in, there were the household gods in the bed, with the quilt of goats’ hair at its head.

17 “Why did you trick me like this,” Saul asked Michal, “and let my enemy get away?” Michal

answered, “He told me, ‘Let me go! Why should I have to kill you?’”

18 So David made his escape and went to Samuel at Ramah, and told him everything Saul had done to him. He and Samuel then went to stay at Naioth.[1]

19 Saul was told, “David is at Naioth in Ramah.”

20 So Saul sent messengers to take David. When they saw the company of prophets prophesying, with Samuel standing at their head, the Spirit of God came on Saul’s messengers, and they too prophesied.

21 Saul heard of this and sent more men, but they prophesied too. A third time he sent men, and they prophesied as well.

22 Then he himself went to Ramah. He came to the great cistern at Secu and asked, “Where are Samuel and David?” He was told, “They are at Naioth in Ramah.”

23 So he went there to Naioth in Ramah, and the Spirit of God came on him too, and he walked along prophesying until he came to Naioth in Ramah.

24 He too stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel, and lay naked all that day and all that night. That is why people say, “Is Saul also among the prophets?”[2]

1 Perhaps ‘the dwellings’, a place in Ramah where the prophets lived together.
2 Compare 10:11–12, where the saying first arises.

Chapter 20

1 Samuel 20 tells how David flees from Naioth to Jonathan and asks what he has done to make Saul seek his life. They agree on a test: David will be absent from the king’s table at the New Moon feast, and Jonathan will learn his father’s mind. Jonathan renews his covenant with David, asking him to show loyal kindness to his house for ever, and arranges a signal with arrows shot in the field. When Saul notices David’s absence, he rages at Jonathan, insults his mother and hurls a spear at him. The next morning Jonathan shoots the arrows beyond the boy as the sign that David must go. David comes out, and the two friends kiss and weep together before parting in peace.

1 David fled from Naioth in Ramah and went to Jonathan. “What have I done?” he asked. “What is my crime? How have I wronged your father, that he wants to kill me?”

2 Jonathan said to him, “Far from it! You shall not die. My father does nothing, great or small, without telling me. Why would my father hide this from me? It is not so.”

3 But David took an oath again and said, “Your father knows very well that I have found favour in your eyes, and he thinks, ‘Jonathan must not know this, or he will be grieved.’ But truly, as the LORD lives and as you live, there is only a step between me and death.”

4 Jonathan said to David, “Whatever you wish, I will do for you.”

5 David said to Jonathan, “Tomorrow is the New Moon, and I am expected to sit at table with the king. But let me go and hide in the field until the evening of the third day.

6 If your father misses me at all, say, ‘David earnestly asked my leave to hurry to Bethlehem, his town, because there is a yearly sacrifice there for the whole clan.’

7 If he says, ‘Good,’ your servant will be safe. But if he is angry, then you will know that he has determined to do me harm.

8 Be loyal to me, your servant, since you bound me to yourself in a covenant before the LORD. If I am guilty, put me to death yourself; why hand me over to your father?”

9 Jonathan said, “Far be it from you! If I knew for certain that my father had determined to do you harm, would I not tell you?”

10 “If your father gives you a harsh answer,” David asked, “who will let me know?”

11 Jonathan said to David, “Come, let us go out into the field.” So the two of them went out into the field.

12 Then Jonathan said to David, “By the LORD, the God of Israel, when I have sounded out my father about this time tomorrow, or the day after, and he is well disposed towards David, will I not then send and tell you?

13 But if my father means to do you harm, may the
LORD deal with Jonathan, and more also, if I do
not tell you and send you away, so that you may go
in peace. May the LORD be with you as He has
been with my father.
14 And while I am still alive, show me the loyal
kindness of the LORD, so that I may not die;
15 and never cut off your loyal kindness from my
house, not even when the LORD has cut off every
one of David's enemies from the face of the
earth."
16 So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of
David, saying, "May the LORD call David's
enemies to account."
17 And Jonathan made David swear again by his
love for him, for he loved him as he loved his own
soul.
18 "Tomorrow is the New Moon," Jonathan told
him, "and your empty seat will be noticed.
19 On the third day go down quickly to the place
where you hid on the day of the matter, and stay
beside the stone Ezel.[1]
20 I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as
though I were shooting at a target.
21 Then I will send the boy, saying, 'Go, find the
arrows.' If I say to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are
on this side of you; pick them up,' then come, for,
as the LORD lives, it is safe for you and there is no
danger.
22 But if I say to the young man, 'Look, the arrows
are beyond you,' then go, for the LORD has sent
you away.
23 And as for the matter you and I have spoken of,
the LORD is witness between you and me for
ever."
24 So David hid in the field. When the New Moon
came, the king sat down to eat the meal.
25 The king sat in his usual seat by the wall.
Jonathan sat opposite,[2] and Abner sat beside Saul,
but David's place was empty.
26 Saul said nothing that day, for he thought,
"Something has happened to him. He must be
unclean; surely he is unclean."
27 But on the day after the New Moon, the second
day, David's place was empty again. Saul said to
his son Jonathan, "Why has the son of Jesse not
come to the meal, either yesterday or today?"
28 Jonathan answered Saul, "David earnestly asked
my leave to go to Bethlehem.
29 He said, 'Please let me go, for our family has a
sacrifice in the town, and my brother has ordered
me to be there. Now if I have found favour in your
eyes, let me slip away to see my brothers.' That is
why he has not come to the king's table."
30 Saul flared up at Jonathan. "Son of a perverse
and rebellious woman!" he said. "Do you think I
do not see how you have sided with Jesse's son, to
your own shame and the shame of the mother who
bore you?
31 For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth,
neither you nor your kingdom will be established.
Now send and bring him to me, for he must die."
32 Jonathan answered his father Saul, "Why should
he be put to death? What has he done?"
33 At that Saul threw his spear at him to kill him,
and Jonathan understood that his father was set
on putting David to death.
34 Jonathan rose from the table in fierce anger and
ate no food on the second day of the New Moon,
for he was grieved for David, because his father
had disgraced him.
35 Next morning Jonathan went out to the field at
the time agreed with David, taking a young boy
with him.
36 "Run and look for the arrows I am about to
shoot," he told the boy; and as the boy ran,
Jonathan shot an arrow past him.
37 When the boy came to the place where
Jonathan's arrow had fallen, Jonathan called after
the boy, "Is not the arrow beyond you?"
38 And Jonathan called after the boy, "Hurry! Be
quick! Do not stop!" So Jonathan's boy gathered
up the arrows and came back to his master.
39 The boy knew nothing; only Jonathan and David
knew the matter.
40 Jonathan handed his weapons to the boy and
told him, "Take these back to the town."
41 As soon as the boy had gone, David rose from
beside the mound[3] and fell on his face to the
ground, and bowed three times. They kissed one
another and wept with one another, David
weeping the more.
42 Then Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, for
we have both sworn in the name of the LORD,
saying, 'The LORD shall be between me and you,
and between my offspring and your offspring, for
ever.'" Then David got up and left, and Jonathan
went back into the town.[4]

1 The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain; the Greek has ‘beside that mound’.
2 So the Greek; the Hebrew has ‘Jonathan stood up’.
3 So the Greek; the Hebrew has ‘from the south’.
4 In Hebrew the last sentence is 21:1, and 21:1–15 are 21:2–16.

Chapter 21

1 Samuel 21 tells how David, alone and in flight, comes to Ahimelech the priest at Nob. Claiming to be on a secret mission for the king, he asks for bread, and the priest gives him the consecrated bread of the Presence, since there is no other, and also the sword of Goliath. Doeg the Edomite, Saul’s chief herdsman, is there that day. David then flees to Achish king of Gath, but when the king’s servants recognise him as the David of the women’s song, he is afraid and pretends to be mad, scribbling on the gate and letting spittle run down his beard, and Achish sends him away.

1 David went to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest, who
came out trembling to meet him. “Why are you on
your own?” he asked. “Why is no one with you?”

2 David said to Ahimelech the priest, “The king has
given me a task and said to me, ‘Let no one know
anything about the mission I am sending you on or
what I have commanded you.’ I have arranged to
meet my young men at a certain place.

3 Now then, what have you got on hand? Give me
five loaves of bread, or whatever can be found.”

4 The priest answered David, “I have no ordinary
bread on hand, only consecrated bread, provided
the young men have kept themselves from
women.”

5 David answered the priest, “Indeed women have
been kept from us, as always when I set out. The
young men’s bodies[1] are holy even on ordinary
missions; how much more today!”

6 So the priest gave him consecrated bread, for
there was no bread there except the bread of the
Presence, which had been removed from before
the LORD to be replaced by hot bread on the day
it was taken away.[2]

7 Now one of Saul’s servants was there that day,
detained before the LORD. His name was Doeg
the Edomite, the chief of Saul’s herdsmen.

8 David said to Ahimelech, “Have you not got a
spear or a sword here on hand? I did not bring my
sword or my weapons with me, because the king’s
business was urgent.”

9 “There is the sword of Goliath the Philistine,” the
priest said, “the man you killed in the Valley of
Elah. It is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod.
Take it if you like; there is nothing else here.”
“Nothing could match it,” David said. “Let me
have it.”

10 That day David got up and fled from Saul, and
went to Achish king of Gath.

11 The servants of Achish said to him, “Is this not
David, the king of the land? Is this not the one
they sing about as they dance: ‘Saul has struck
down his thousands, and David his tens of
thousands’?”

12 David took these words to heart and was very
much afraid of Achish king of Gath.

13 So he changed his behaviour before them and
pretended to be mad in their presence. He
scrawled on the doors of the gate and let his
spittle run down his beard.[3]

14 “Look at him!” Achish said to his officials. “The
man is out of his mind. Why bring him to me?

15 Am I short of madmen, that you have brought
this one to carry on like a madman in front of me?
Must this fellow come into my house?”

1 Hebrew ‘vessels’, perhaps their equipment, perhaps a polite word for their bodies.
2 See Leviticus 24:5–9. Jesus refers to this in Matthew 12:3–4, Mark 2:25–26 and Luke 6:3–4.
3 Compare the heading of Psalm 34, where the king is called Abimelech.

Chapter 22

1 Samuel 22 tells how David escapes to the cave of Adullam, where his family and some four hundred men in distress, in debt or discontented gather to him, and he becomes their leader. He leaves his parents in the care of the king of Moab and, at the prophet Gad's word, returns to Judah. Saul accuses his servants of conspiring with David, and Doeg the Edomite reports that Ahimelech helped him. Saul summons Ahimelech and all the priests of Nob, and though Ahimelech protests his innocence, Saul orders them killed. When his guards refuse to lift a hand against the LORD's priests, Doeg kills eighty-five of them and puts Nob to the sword. Only Abiathar escapes to David, who blames himself and promises to protect him.

1 David got away from there and took refuge in the
cave of Adullam. When his brothers and the rest of
his father's family heard, they went down to join
him.

2 Everyone who was in distress, everyone who was
in debt and everyone who was bitter in spirit
gathered to him, and he became their leader.
There were about four hundred men with him.

3 From there David moved on to Mizpeh in Moab.
"Let my father and mother come and live with
you, please," he asked the king of Moab, "until I
find out what God has in store for me."

4 So he left them with the king of Moab, and they
stayed with him all the time David was in the
stronghold.

5 Then the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not stay
in the stronghold. Go into the land of Judah." So
David left and went to the forest of Hereth.

6 Saul heard that David and the men with him had
been discovered. Saul was sitting at Gibeah under
the tamarisk tree on the height, with his spear in
his hand, and all his servants were standing
around him.

7 Saul said to his servants who stood around him,
"Listen, you Benjaminites! Will the son of Jesse
give every one of you fields and vineyards? Will he
make you all commanders of thousands and
commanders of hundreds?

8 Is that why all of you have conspired against me?
No one tells me when my son makes a covenant
with the son of Jesse. None of you is sorry for me
or tells me that my son has stirred up my servant
to lie in wait against me, as he does today."

9 Then Doeg the Edomite, who was standing with
Saul's servants, answered, "I saw the son of Jesse
come to Nob, to Ahimelech son of Ahitub.

10 He consulted the LORD on David's behalf and
gave him food, and handed him the sword of
Goliath the Philistine."

11 The king sent for Ahimelech son of Ahitub, the
priest, together with his whole family, the priests
at Nob, and they all came before him.

12 "Listen to me, son of Ahitub," Saul said. "I am
listening, my lord," he replied.

13 "Why have you and Jesse's son plotted against
me?" Saul demanded. "You gave him bread and a
sword and sought God's guidance for him, so that
he could rebel against me and lie in wait, as he is
doing now."

14 Ahimelech answered the king, "Who among all
your servants is as faithful as David, the king's
son-in-law, captain of your bodyguard and
honoured in your house?

15 Was that the first time I had enquired of God for
him? Far from it! Let not the king lay any charge
against his servant or against any of my father's
household, for your servant knew nothing at all of
all this, great or small."

16 "You will certainly die, Ahimelech," the king
said, "and your whole family with you."

17 And the king said to the guards who stood
around him, "Turn and kill the priests of the
LORD, because their hand also is with David; they
knew he was fleeing and did not tell me." But the
king's servants would not raise their hands to
strike the priests of the LORD.

18 Then the king said to Doeg, "You turn and strike
the priests." So Doeg the Edomite turned and
struck down the priests. That day he killed eighty-
five men who wore the linen ephod.

19 And Nob, the city of the priests, he put to the
sword, men and women, children and infants,
oxen, donkeys and sheep.

20 But one son of Ahimelech son of Ahitub, named
Abiathar, escaped and fled to join David.[1]

21 Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the
priests of the LORD.

22 David said to Abiathar, "I knew that day, when
Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would be
sure to tell Saul. I am responsible for the death of
every person in your father's household.

23 Stay with me; do not be afraid. The one who seeks my life seeks your life, but with me you will be safe.”

1 Compare Mark 2:26, where Jesus refers to ‘Abiathar the high priest’.

Chapter 23

1 Samuel 23 tells how David, after enquiring of the LORD, rescues the town of Keilah from the Philistines. Abiathar has brought the ephod, and when Saul prepares to besiege Keilah, David asks the LORD and learns that the townspeople will hand him over, so he and his six hundred men move on. Saul hunts him day after day in the wilderness of Ziph, but God does not give David into his hand. Jonathan comes to David at Horesh and strengthens his hand in God, and the two renew their covenant. The Ziphites betray David’s hiding place, and Saul closes in on him in the wilderness of Maon, but a messenger arrives with news of a Philistine raid, and Saul turns back. The place is called the Rock of Escape.

1 Word came to David: “The Philistines are attacking Keilah and plundering the threshing floors.”

2 So David asked the LORD, “Shall I go and attack these Philistines?” The LORD said to David, “Go, attack the Philistines and save Keilah.”

3 But David’s men said to him, “Here in Judah we are afraid. How much more if we go to Keilah against the Philistine forces!”

4 So David asked the LORD once more, and the LORD answered him, “Get up, go down to Keilah, for I am giving the Philistines into your hand.”

5 So David and his men went to Keilah and fought the Philistines. He drove off their livestock and struck them with a great slaughter. So David saved the people of Keilah.

6 (When Abiathar son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, he had brought the ephod down with him.)

7 Saul was told that David had come to Keilah, and Saul said, “God has handed him over to me, for he has shut himself in by entering a town with gates and bars.”

8 Saul called up his whole army for battle, to march down to Keilah and lay siege to David and his men.

9 When David learned that Saul was plotting evil against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, “Bring the ephod here.”

10 Then David said, “LORD, God of Israel, Your servant has heard for certain that Saul intends to come to Keilah to destroy the town on my account.

11 Will the citizens of Keilah hand me over to him? Will Saul come down, as Your servant has heard? LORD, God of Israel, please tell Your servant.” The LORD said, “He will come down.”

12 David asked, “Will the citizens of Keilah hand me and my men over to Saul?” The LORD said, “They will.”

13 So David and his men, about six hundred in number, left Keilah and wandered wherever they could. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the expedition.

14 David stayed in the strongholds in the wilderness, in the hill country of the wilderness of Ziph. Saul searched for him every day, but God did not give him into his hand.

15 While David was at Horesh in the wilderness of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life.

16 And Saul’s son Jonathan set out and came to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God.

17 He said to him, “Do not be afraid, for the hand of my father Saul will not find you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this.”

18 The two of them made a covenant before the LORD. David stayed at Horesh, and Jonathan went home.

19 Then the Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah and said, “Is not David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, south of Jeshimon?

20 Now, O king, come down whenever you wish, and it will be our part to hand him over to the king.”

21 Saul said, “May you be blessed by the LORD, for you have had compassion on me.

22 Go and make further sure. Find out and see where he goes and who has seen him there, for I am told that he is very cunning.

23 Look and find out all the hiding places where he lurks, and come back to me with certain information. Then I will go with you, and if he is in the land, I will search him out among all the thousands of Judah."

24 So they set out and went to Ziph ahead of Saul. David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah south of Jeshimon.

25 When Saul and his men set out on the search, David heard of it and went down to the crag in the wilderness of Maon. Saul, hearing where he was, went after him there.

26 Saul went along one side of the mountain, and David and his men along the other side. David was hurrying to get away from Saul, while Saul and his men were closing in on David and his men to capture them,

27 when a messenger came to Saul saying, "Come quickly! The Philistines have raided the land."

28 So Saul turned back from pursuing David and went to meet the Philistines. That is why that place is called Sela-hammahlekoth.[1]

29 From there David went up and settled in the strongholds near En-gedi.[2]

1 'The Rock of Escape' or 'The Rock of Parting'.
2 In Hebrew this verse is 24:1, and 24:1–22 are 24:2–23.

Chapter 24

1 Samuel 24 tells how Saul pursues David with three thousand men to En-gedi and goes into a cave to relieve himself, not knowing that David and his men are hiding in its depths. David's men urge him to strike, but he only cuts off a corner of Saul's robe, and even that troubles his conscience: he will not lift his hand against the LORD's anointed. When Saul leaves, David calls after him, shows him the piece of robe, and appeals to the LORD to judge between them. Saul weeps, acknowledges that David is more righteous than he, says he knows David will be king, and makes him swear not to wipe out his descendants.

1 After Saul came back from chasing the Philistines, he was informed, "David is in the wilderness near En-gedi."

2 So Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel and went to look for David and his men near the Rocks of the Wild Goats.

3 By the road he came to some sheep pens where there was a cave, and Saul went inside to relieve himself.[1] David and his men were sitting far back in the cave.

4 David's men said to him, "This is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as seems good to you.'" Then David got up and secretly cut off the corner of Saul's robe.

5 Afterwards David's heart struck him, because he had cut off the corner of Saul's robe.

6 He said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed, to lift my hand against him, for he is the LORD's anointed."

7 With these words David restrained his men and did not let them attack Saul. And Saul got up, left the cave and went on his way.

8 Then David too came out of the cave and called after Saul, "My lord the king!" Saul looked round, and David bowed low with his face to the ground.

9 David said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the words of those who say, 'David seeks to harm you'?

10 You can see for yourself today that the LORD put you in my power in the cave. I was told to kill you, but I spared you, saying, 'I will not raise my hand against my master, because he is the LORD's anointed.'

11 See, my father, see the corner of your robe in my hand! Since I cut off the corner of your robe and did not kill you, you may know and see that there is no evil or rebellion in my hand. I have not sinned against you, though you are hunting me to take my life.

12 May the LORD judge between me and you, and may the LORD avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you.

13 As the old proverb says, 'Out of the wicked comes wickedness'; but my hand shall not be against you.

14 After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog! A single flea!

15 May the LORD be judge and decide between me and you. May He see and plead my cause, and

vindicate me against you."

16 David finished speaking, and Saul asked, "Is that your voice, David my son?" and he wept aloud.

17 He said to David, "You are more righteous than I, for you have repaid me with good, whereas I have repaid you with evil.

18 You have shown today how you have dealt well with me, for when the LORD put me into your hands, you did not kill me.

19 For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away unharmed? May the LORD reward you with good for what you have done for me today.

20 Now I am sure that you will be king, and that Israel's kingdom will stand firm under your rule.

21 Swear to me now by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants after me, nor wipe out my name from my father's house."

22 David gave Saul his oath. Saul went back home, while David and his men climbed up to the stronghold.

1 Hebrew 'to cover his feet'.

Chapter 25

1 Samuel 25 opens with the death of Samuel, mourned by all Israel. In the wilderness David sends young men to ask Nabal, a rich and surly man of Maon, for provisions at sheep-shearing time, since David's men had protected his shepherds. Nabal insults them, and David sets out with four hundred men to wipe out his household. Nabal's wise and beautiful wife Abigail hurries to meet David with gifts, takes the blame on herself, and reminds him that the LORD will make him a lasting house and that he should not have blood-guilt on his conscience. David blesses her and the LORD for keeping him from vengeance. Ten days later the LORD strikes Nabal and he dies, and David takes Abigail as his wife.

1 Now Samuel died, and all Israel gathered and mourned for him, and they buried him at his home in Ramah. Then David set out and went down to the wilderness of Paran.[1]

2 In Maon lived a man with property at Carmel, a very wealthy man who owned three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. He was at Carmel for the shearing of his flock.

3 The man's name was Nabal,[2] and his wife's name was Abigail. The woman was intelligent and beautiful, but the man was harsh and evil in his dealings. He was a Calebite.

4 Out in the wilderness David heard that Nabal was shearing his flock.

5 So he sent off ten young men with these instructions: "Go up to Nabal at Carmel and give him my greetings.

6 Say to him, 'Long life to you! Peace be to you, peace to your household, and peace to all that you have.

7 I hear that you have shearers. While your shepherds were with us, we did them no harm, and nothing of theirs went missing all the time they were in Carmel.

8 Ask your young men, and they will tell you. So let my young men find favour in your eyes, for we have come on a feast day. Please give whatever you can spare to your servants and to your son David.'"

9 When David's young men arrived, they said all this to Nabal in David's name, and then they waited.

10 But Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants these days who are breaking away from their masters.

11 Shall I take my bread and my water and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men who come from I do not know where?"

12 So David's young men turned round and went back, and when they arrived they reported all this to him.

13 David said to his men, "Every man strap on his sword!" So every man strapped on his sword, and David also strapped on his sword. About four hundred men went up after David, while two hundred stayed with the baggage.

14 But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master, but he railed at them.

15 Yet the men were very good to us. We were not harmed, and we missed nothing all the time we went about with them in the fields.

16 Night and day they were like a wall round us,
the whole time we were with them looking after
the flocks.
17 Now think it over and see what you should do,
for harm is determined against our master and
against all his household. He is such a worthless
man that no one can speak to him."
18 Abigail lost no time. She took two hundred
loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep
already prepared, five seahs[3] of roasted grain, a
hundred bunches of raisins and two hundred fig
cakes, and loaded them on donkeys.
19 "Go ahead of me," she told her servants; "I will
follow you." She said nothing to her husband
Nabal.
20 As she rode on the donkey and came down
under cover of the mountain, there were David
and his men coming down towards her, and she
met them.
21 Now David had said, "It was all for nothing that
I guarded everything this fellow has in the
wilderness, so that nothing of his went missing.
He has repaid me evil for good.
22 May God do so to the enemies of David,[4] and
more also, if by morning I leave alive so much as
one male of all who belong to him."[5]
23 When Abigail saw David, she hurried and got
down from the donkey, fell on her face before
David and bowed to the ground.
24 Throwing herself at his feet she said, "My lord,
let the blame be mine alone. Please allow your
servant to speak to you; listen to what your
servant has to say.
25 Let not my lord pay any attention to this
worthless man, Nabal, for he is just like his name:
Nabal is his name, and folly goes with him. But I
your servant did not see the young men my lord
sent.
26 Now, my lord, as the LORD lives and as you live,
since the LORD has kept you from coming into
bloodguilt and from saving yourself with your own
hand, now let your enemies and those who seek to
harm my lord be like Nabal.
27 And now let this gift your servant has brought to
my lord be given to the young men who follow my
lord.
28 Please forgive your servant's offence. The LORD
will certainly make my lord a lasting house,
because my lord is fighting the battles of the
LORD, and no evil will be found in you as long as
you live.
29 If anyone rises up to pursue you and to seek
your life, the life of my lord will be bound up in
the bundle of the living with the LORD your God,
but the lives of your enemies He will sling away as
from the pocket of a sling.
30 And when the LORD has done for my lord all the
good He has promised concerning you, and has
appointed you leader over Israel,
31 my lord will have no cause for grief or a
troubled conscience at having shed blood without
cause or having taken vengeance himself. And
when the LORD has dealt well with my lord,
remember your servant."
32 David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the LORD, the
God of Israel, who sent you to meet me today!
33 Blessed be your good sense, and blessed be you,
for keeping me today from bloodguilt and from
avenging myself with my own hand!
34 For as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel,
lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you
had not hurried to meet me, truly by morning light
not one male would have been left to Nabal."
35 Then David accepted from her hand what she
had brought him and said to her, "Go up to your
house in peace. See, I have listened to your voice
and granted your request."
36 When Abigail came to Nabal, he was holding a
feast in his house like a king's feast. Nabal was in
high spirits and very drunk, so she told him
nothing at all until morning light.
37 Next morning, when Nabal had sobered up, his
wife told him all that had happened; his heart
failed him and he lay like a stone.
38 About ten days later the LORD struck Nabal,
and he died.
39 When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said,
"Blessed be the LORD, who has pleaded my cause
against the insult I received from Nabal, and has
kept His servant from evil. The LORD has turned
Nabal's evil back on his own head." Then David
sent word to Abigail, proposing to take her as his
wife.
40 David's servants came to Abigail at Carmel and
said to her, "David has sent us to you to take you
to be his wife."
41 She rose and bowed with her face to the ground
and said, "Here is your servant, a slave to wash

the feet of my lord's servants."

42 Abigail quickly got up and mounted a donkey, with her five young women who attended her, and followed David's messengers and became his wife.

43 David had also taken Ahinoam of Jezreel, and both of them became his wives.

44 Saul had given his daughter Michal, David's wife, to Palti son of Laish, who was from Gallim.

1 The Greek has 'Maon', which suits verse 2.

2 Nabal means 'fool' (compare verse 25).

3 About 37 litres (1 bushel).

4 The Greek has simply 'to David', which is probably the original sense; the Hebrew turns the curse away from David.

5 Hebrew 'one who urinates against a wall', a coarse expression for a man or boy; so also in verse 34.

Chapter 26

1 Samuel 26 tells how the Ziphites again betray David's hiding place, and Saul comes after him with three thousand men. By night David and Abishai slip into the camp, where Saul lies asleep with his spear stuck in the ground by his head, for a deep sleep from the LORD has fallen on them all. Abishai wants to pin Saul to the ground, but David will not let him lift a hand against the LORD's anointed; they take only the spear and the water jug. From a distant hilltop David taunts Abner for failing to guard the king, and pleads with Saul to stop hunting him. Saul admits he has sinned and played the fool, and blesses David, and they part.

1 The Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah and said, "Is not David hiding on the hill of Hachilah, opposite Jeshimon?"

2 So Saul set out and went down to the wilderness of Ziph with three thousand chosen men of Israel, to look for David in the wilderness of Ziph.

3 Saul camped on the hill of Hachilah, beside the road opposite Jeshimon. David was staying in the wilderness, and when he saw that Saul had come after him into the wilderness,

4 he sent out scouts and learned that Saul had certainly come.

5 Then David set out and came to the place where Saul had camped. David saw where Saul lay, with Abner son of Ner, the commander of his army. Saul was lying within the camp, with the troops encamped around him.

6 Then David said to Ahimelech the Hittite and to Abishai son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, "Who will go down with me into the camp to Saul?" Abishai said, "I will go down with you."

7 So David and Abishai went to the army by night, and there was Saul lying asleep within the camp, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head, and Abner and the troops lying around him.

8 Abishai said to David, "Today God has given your enemy into your hand. Now let me pin him to the ground with one thrust of the spear; I will not need a second."

9 But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him, for who can lay a hand on the LORD's anointed and be guiltless?"

10 And David said, "As surely as the LORD lives, the LORD Himself will strike him, or his day will come and he will die, or he will go down into battle and perish.

11 The LORD forbid that I should lay a hand on the LORD's anointed. But now take the spear that is at his head and the water jug, and let us go."

12 So David took the spear and the water jug from beside Saul's head, and they went away. No one saw it or knew it or woke up, for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen on them.

13 David crossed to the far side and stood on top of the hill at a distance, with plenty of ground between them.

14 David called to the army and to Abner son of Ner, "Will you not answer, Abner?" Abner answered, "Who are you, calling to the king?"

15 "You are a man, are you not?" David said to Abner. "And who is your equal in Israel? So why did you not protect your master the king? Someone came to kill your lord the king.

16 What you have done is not good. As surely as the LORD lives, you deserve to die, because you have not kept watch over your lord, the LORD's anointed. Now look: where are the king's spear and the water jug that were at his head?"

17 Saul knew David's voice. "Is that you, David my son?" he said. "It is, my lord the king," David answered.

18 “Why is my lord chasing his servant?” he went
on. “What have I done? What wrong am I guilty
of?
19 Now may my lord the king listen to his servant’s
words. If it is the LORD who has set you against
me, may He accept an offering;[1] but if it is men,
may they be cursed before the LORD, for they
have driven me out today from my share in the
LORD’s inheritance, saying, ‘Go, serve other
gods.’
20 Now do not let my blood fall to the ground away
from the presence of the LORD. For the king of
Israel has come out to look for a single flea, like
one who hunts a partridge in the mountains.”
21 Then Saul said, “I have sinned. Come back, my
son David, for I will never harm you again,
because my life was precious in your eyes today. I
have acted like a fool and gone very badly astray.”
22 David answered, “Here is the king’s spear! Let
one of the young men come over and fetch it.
23 The LORD repays every man for his
righteousness and his faithfulness. The LORD
gave you into my hand today, but I would not lay a
hand on the LORD’s anointed.
24 As your life was precious today in my sight, so
may my life be precious in the sight of the LORD,
and may He deliver me from all trouble.”
25 Then Saul said to David, “Blessed be you, my
son David! You will do great things and will surely
succeed.” So David went on his way, and Saul
returned home.

1 Hebrew ‘may He smell an offering’, that is, be appeased by a sacrifice.

Chapter 27

1 Samuel 27 tells how David, fearing that he will one day perish at Saul’s hand, takes his six hundred men and their families over to Achish king of Gath, and Saul stops searching for him. Achish gives him the town of Ziklag, where he lives for a year and four months. David raids the Geshurites, Girzites and Amalekites, leaving no one alive to report what he has done, while telling Achish that he has been raiding the south of Judah, so that Achish trusts him and thinks Israel must hate him.

1 David thought to himself, “One of these days I
shall perish by the hand of Saul. There is nothing
better for me than to escape to the land of the
Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for
me anywhere in the territory of Israel, and I shall
escape from his hand.”
2 So David set out and went over, with the six
hundred men who were with him, to Achish son of
Maoch, king of Gath.
3 David and his men lived with Achish at Gath,
each man with his household, and David with his
two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of
Carmel, Nabal’s widow.
4 When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath,
he no longer searched for him.
5 Then David said to Achish, “If I have found favour
in your eyes, let me be given a place in one of the
country towns, so that I may live there. Why
should your servant live in the royal city with
you?”
6 So that day Achish gave him Ziklag. That is why
Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this
day.
7 David lived in Philistine territory for a year and
four months.
8 David and his men would go up and raid the
Geshurites, the Girzites[1] and the Amalekites, for
these peoples had long lived in the land, as far as
Shur and on to the land of Egypt.
9 Whenever David attacked the land, he left
neither man nor woman alive, but took the sheep,
cattle, donkeys, camels and clothing, and came
back to Achish.
10 When Achish asked, “Where did you raid
today?” David would say, “Against the Negev of
Judah,” or “Against the Negev of the
Jerahmeelites,” or “Against the Negev of the
Kenites.”
11 David left neither man nor woman alive to bring
to Gath, for he thought, “They might tell about us
and say, ‘This is what David did.’” Such was his
practice all the time he lived in Philistine territory.
12 Achish trusted David and thought, “He has made
himself utterly odious to his people Israel, so he
will be my servant for life.”

1 So the traditional reading; the written Hebrew has ‘Gezrites’.

Chapter 28

1 Samuel 28 tells how the Philistines gather to fight Israel, and Achish tells David he must march with him. Samuel is dead, and Saul has expelled the mediums and spiritists from the land. Seeing the Philistine army at Shunem, Saul is terrified, but the LORD does not answer him by dreams, by Urim or by prophets. So he disguises himself and goes by night to a woman at En-dor who consults the dead, and asks her to bring up Samuel. When she sees Samuel she cries out, realising that her visitor is Saul. Samuel tells Saul that the LORD has torn the kingdom from him and given it to David, and that tomorrow Saul and his sons will be with him. Saul falls to the ground, and the woman persuades him to eat before he goes.

1 In those days the Philistines gathered their forces for war, to fight against Israel. Achish said to David, “You must understand that you and your men are to go out with me in the army.”

2 David said to Achish, “Very well, you will see what your servant can do.” Achish said to David, “Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life.”

3 Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own town. And Saul had removed the mediums and the spiritists from the land.[1]

4 The Philistines assembled and came and camped at Shunem, and Saul gathered all Israel, and they camped at Gilboa.

5 At the sight of the Philistine forces Saul was seized with fear; his heart pounded.

6 Saul enquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets.

7 Then Saul said to his servants, “Find me a woman who is a medium, so that I may go to her and enquire of her.” His servants said to him, “There is a medium at En-dor.”

8 So Saul disguised himself, put on other clothes and went with two men. They came to the woman by night, and he said, “Divine for me by a spirit, and bring up for me the one I shall name to you.”

9 The woman said to him, “Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the spiritists from the land. Why then are you laying a trap for my life, to bring about my death?”

10 But Saul swore to her by the LORD, “As surely as the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this.”

11 “Whom do you want me to call up?” the woman asked. “Call up Samuel,” he said.

12 At the sight of Samuel the woman screamed and said to Saul, “You have tricked me! You are Saul!”

13 “Do not be afraid,” the king told her. “What can you see?” “I see a divine being,”[2] she said, “rising out of the ground.”

14 He said to her, “What does he look like?” She said, “An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe.” Then Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and paid homage.

15 Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?” Saul answered, “I am in great distress. The Philistines are making war against me, and God has turned away from me and no longer answers me, either by prophets or by dreams. So I have called you to tell me what to do.”

16 Samuel said, “Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has turned away from you and has become your enemy?

17 The LORD has done to you as He spoke through me. The LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbour, David.

18 Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD and did not carry out His fierce wrath against Amalek, the LORD has done this thing to you today.

19 Moreover, the LORD will give Israel also, along with you, into the hand of the Philistines. Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The LORD will also give the army of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.”

20 Then Saul fell at once full length on the ground, filled with fear because of Samuel’s words. There was no strength left in him, for he had eaten nothing all day and all night.

21 The woman came to Saul, and when she saw that he was terrified, she said to him, “Your

servant has listened to you. I have taken my life in my hands and have done what you told me.

22 Now then, please listen to your servant. Let me set a bit of bread before you, and eat, so that you may have strength when you go on your way."

23 "No," he said, "I will not eat." But his men joined the woman in pressing him, until he gave in. He rose from the ground and sat on the couch.

24 The woman had a fattened calf in the house. She quickly slaughtered it, and she took flour, kneaded it and baked unleavened bread.

25 She served it to Saul and his men, and they ate, and left that very night.

1 As Leviticus 19:31 and Deuteronomy 18:10–11 command.

2 Hebrew אֱלֹהִים (elohim), here a spirit or 'divine being'.

Chapter 29

1 Samuel 29 tells how the Philistines muster at Aphek, with David and his men marching at the rear with Achish. The Philistine commanders object to having Hebrews with them, fearing that David will turn against them in the battle to win back Saul's favour, for he is the David of the women's song. Achish assures David that he has found no fault in him, but sends him back, and David and his men return to the land of the Philistines while the Philistines go up to Jezreel.

1 The Philistines gathered all their forces at Aphek, and the Israelites were camped by the spring in Jezreel.

2 As the rulers of the Philistines were passing on by hundreds and by thousands, David and his men were passing on in the rear with Achish.

3 The commanders of the Philistines said, "What are these Hebrews doing here?" Achish said to the commanders of the Philistines, "Is this not David, the servant of Saul king of Israel, who has been with me now for days and years? I have found no fault in him from the day he deserted to me until now."

4 But the commanders of the Philistines were angry with him and said to him, "Send the man back to the place you assigned him. He must not go down with us into battle, or he may become our adversary in the battle. For how could this fellow win back his master's favour? Would it not be with the heads of these men here?

5 Is this not David, of whom they sang to one another in their dances, 'Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his tens of thousands'?"

6 Then Achish called David and said to him, "As surely as the LORD lives,[1] you have been honest, and I would be glad to have you march out and in with me in the army, for I have found no wrong in you from the day you came to me until now. But the rulers do not approve of you.

7 So go back now, and go in peace, so that you do nothing to displease the rulers of the Philistines."

8 "But what have I done?" David asked Achish. "What fault have you found in me since the day I came to serve you, that I should not go and fight the enemies of my lord the king?"

9 "I know you have been as good to me as an angel of God," Achish answered David. "But the Philistine commanders have said, 'He is not to go into battle with us.'

10 Now then, rise early in the morning with your master's servants who came with you, and as soon as you are up and have light, go."

11 So early in the morning David and his men set off back to the Philistine country, and the Philistines marched up to Jezreel.

1 Achish swears by Israel's God, perhaps out of courtesy to David.

Chapter 30

1 Samuel 30 tells how David and his men return to Ziklag to find that the Amalekites have raided it, burned it and carried off the women and children, including David's two wives. The men weep until they can weep no more and talk of stoning David, but David strengthens himself in the LORD his God. Enquiring of the LORD through Abiathar's ephod, he pursues the raiders. Two hundred men, too exhausted to cross the Brook Besor, stay behind. An abandoned Egyptian slave leads David to the Amalekites, whom he strikes down as they feast, recovering everything they had taken. When some worthless men refuse to share the spoil with those who stayed behind, David rules that all shall share alike, and it becomes a statute in Israel. He sends gifts from the spoil to the elders of Judah.

1 When David and his men came to Ziklag on the
third day, the Amalekites had raided the Negev
and Ziklag. They had attacked Ziklag and burned
it with fire,
2 and taken captive the women and everyone in it,
both small and great. They had killed no one, but
carried them off and gone on their way.
3 When David and his men came to the town, there
it was, burned with fire, and their wives and sons
and daughters had been taken captive.
4 Then David and the people with him lifted up
their voices and wept until they had no strength
left to weep.
5 David's two wives had also been taken captive,
Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, Nabal's widow, of
Carmel.
6 David was in great distress, for the people spoke
of stoning him, because all the people were bitter
in soul, each for his sons and daughters. But David
strengthened himself in the LORD his God.
7 David said to Abiathar the priest, son of
Ahimelech, "Bring me the ephod." So Abiathar
brought the ephod to David.
8 And David enquired of the LORD, "Shall I pursue
this raiding band? Shall I overtake them?" He
answered him, "Pursue, for you will surely
overtake them and will surely rescue."
9 So David set out, he and the six hundred men
with him, and they came to the Brook Besor,
where some stayed behind.
10 David went on in pursuit with four hundred
men; two hundred stayed behind, too exhausted to
cross the Brook Besor.
11 Out in the fields they came across an Egyptian
and brought him to David. They gave him food to
eat and water to drink,
12 and gave him a piece of a fig cake and two
clusters of raisins. When he had eaten, his
strength revived, for he had had no food or water
for three days and three nights.
13 "Who is your master," David asked him, "and
where do you come from?" "I am an Egyptian lad,"
he said, "a slave belonging to an Amalekite. My
master abandoned me three days ago when I fell
sick.
14 We raided the Negev of the Cherethites,[1] the
territory of Judah and the Negev of Caleb, and we
burned Ziklag with fire."
15 David said to him, "Will you take me down to
this raiding band?" He said, "Swear to me by God
that you will not kill me or hand me over to my
master, and I will take you down to them."
16 When he had led him down, there they were,
spread out over all the land, eating and drinking
and celebrating because of all the great spoil they
had taken from the land of the Philistines and the
land of Judah.
17 David struck them down from twilight until the
evening of the next day, and not one of them
escaped except four hundred young men who
mounted camels and fled.
18 David got back everything the Amalekites had
carried off, his two wives included.
19 Nothing was missing, small or great, sons or
daughters, spoil or anything they had taken. David
brought it all back.
20 David also took all the flocks and herds, and the
people drove them ahead of the other livestock
and said, "This is David's spoil."
21 Then David came to the two hundred men who
had been too exhausted to follow him and had
been left at the Brook Besor. They went out to
meet David and the people with him, and when
David came near to the people, he greeted them.
22 But all the wicked and worthless men among
those who had gone with David said, "Because
they did not go with us, we will not give them any

of the spoil we have recovered, except that each man may take his wife and children and go."

23 But David said, "You shall not do so, my brothers, with what the LORD has given us. He has kept us safe and given into our hand the band that came against us.

24 Who would listen to you in this matter? The share of the one who goes down into the battle shall be the same as the share of the one who stays with the baggage; they shall share alike."

25 And from that day forward he made it a statute and a rule for Israel, to this day.

26 When David came to Ziklag, he sent some of the spoil to his friends, the elders of Judah, saying, "Here is a gift for you from the spoil of the LORD's enemies":

27 to those in Bethel, in Ramoth of the Negev and in Jattir,

28 in Aroer, in Siphmoth and in Eshtemoa,

29 in Racal, in the towns of the Jerahmeelites and in the towns of the Kenites,

30 in Hormah, in Bor-ashan and in Athach,

31 in Hebron, and in all the places where David and his men had roamed.

1 A people related to the Philistines, perhaps from Crete; some later served in David's bodyguard (2 Samuel 8:18).

Chapter 31

1 Samuel 31 tells of Saul's death. The Philistines defeat Israel on Mount Gilboa and kill Jonathan and two of Saul's other sons. Saul, badly wounded by archers, asks his armour-bearer to kill him so that the uncircumcised will not abuse him; when he refuses, Saul falls on his own sword, and the armour-bearer dies with him. The Israelites abandon their towns. The next day the Philistines cut off Saul's head, put his armour in the temple of the Ashtoreths and fasten his body to the wall of Beth-shan. The valiant men of Jabesh-gilead, whom Saul had once rescued, march all night to take down the bodies of Saul and his sons, burn them at Jabesh, bury their bones under the tamarisk tree, and fast seven days.

1 The Philistines went into battle against Israel. The Israelites ran from them, and many lay dead on the slopes of Mount Gilboa.

2 The Philistines pressed hard after Saul and his sons, and the Philistines struck down Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchi-shua, the sons of Saul.

3 The battle went hard against Saul. The archers found him, and he was badly wounded by the archers.

4 Then Saul said to his armour-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through with it, or these uncircumcised men will come and run me through and make sport of me." But his armour-bearer would not, for he was terrified. So Saul took his own sword and fell on it.[1]

5 Seeing Saul dead, his armour-bearer also threw himself on his sword and died at his side.

6 So Saul died, with his three sons, his armour-bearer and all his men, together on that day.

7 The Israelites living across the valley and beyond the Jordan saw that Israel's army had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead. They deserted their towns and ran, and the Philistines moved in and occupied them.

8 On the following day, when the Philistines came to plunder the dead, they discovered Saul and his three sons where they had fallen on Mount Gilboa.

9 They cut off his head and stripped off his armour, and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to carry the news to the temples of their idols and to the people.

10 They put his armour in the temple of the Ashtoreths and fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan.

11 But when the people of Jabesh-gilead learned how the Philistines had treated Saul,[2]

12 all their bravest men marched through the night, took down the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, carried them to Jabesh and burned them there.

13 They gathered the bones and buried them beneath the tamarisk at Jabesh, and they fasted for seven days.

1 A different account of Saul's death is given by the Amalekite in 2 Samuel 1:6–10.

2 Saul had rescued Jabesh-gilead from the Ammonites at the start of his reign (11:1–11).