EDIFIED EDITION

2 Samuel

A modern rendering of the Holy Scriptures

24	695	Old	10
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

2 Samuel 1 tells how, after Saul's death, a young Amalekite comes to David at Ziklag with torn clothes and earth on his head, bringing Saul's crown and armlet. He claims to have killed the wounded king at his own request. David and his men mourn and fast for Saul, Jonathan and the people of the LORD, and David has the Amalekite put to death for daring to destroy the LORD's anointed. Then David laments over Saul and Jonathan in the Song of the Bow: how the mighty have fallen; they were lovely in life and in death not parted; and Jonathan's love was more wonderful to him than the love of women.

[1]After the death of Saul, when David had returned from striking down the Amalekites, David stayed two days in Ziklag.

[2]Two days later a man arrived from Saul's camp. His clothes were torn and there was dust on his head, and when he reached David he threw himself to the ground before him.

[3]David said to him, "Where have you come from?" He said, "I have escaped from the camp of Israel."

4 David said to him, “What happened? Tell me.” He answered, “The people fled from the battle, and many of the people have fallen and died. Saul and his son Jonathan are dead too.”

5 David said to the young man who brought the news, “How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?”

6 The young man said, “I happened to be on Mount Gilboa, and there was Saul leaning on his spear, with the chariots and the horsemen closing in on him.

7 He turned round and saw me and called to me, and I said, ‘Here I am.’

8 He asked me, ‘Who are you?’ I told him, ‘I am an Amalekite.’

9 He said to me, ‘Stand over me and kill me, for agony has seized me, yet my life still lingers.’

10 So I went over and finished him off, since I could see that once he had fallen he would not survive. Then I took the crown from his head and the band from his arm, and here they are, brought to my lord.”[1]

11 Then David took hold of his clothes and tore them, and so did all the men with him.

12 Until nightfall they grieved, wept and went without food for Saul and his son Jonathan, for the LORD’s people and for Israel’s whole house, since they had been cut down by the sword.

13 Then David asked the young man who had told him, “Where do you come from?” “My father was a foreigner living in Israel,” he said. “I am an Amalekite.”

14 David said to him, “How was it that you were not afraid to put out your hand to destroy the LORD’s anointed?”

15 Then David called one of the young men and said, “Go, strike him down.” So he struck him, and he died.

16 David said to him, “Your blood be on your own head, for your own mouth has testified against you, saying, ‘I have killed the LORD’s anointed.’”

17 David sang this lament over Saul and his son Jonathan,

18 and he ordered that the people of Judah be taught the Song of the Bow.[2] It is written in the Book of Jashar.[3]

19 “Your glory, Israel, lies slain on your heights. How the mighty have fallen!

20 Do not tell it in Gath; do not proclaim it in the streets of Ashkelon, or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice, the daughters of the uncircumcised will exult.

21 Mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew or rain on you, nor fields yielding offerings, for there the shield of the mighty was defiled, the shield of Saul, no longer anointed with oil.

22 Jonathan’s bow never drew back from the blood of the fallen or the fat of warriors, and Saul’s sword never came home without its prize.

23 Saul and Jonathan, much loved and gracious while they lived, were not divided in death. Swifter they were than eagles, mightier than lions.

24 Daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and finery, who adorned your clothing with ornaments of gold.

25 How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan lies slain on your heights.

26 I grieve for you, my brother Jonathan; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was more wonderful than the love of women.

27 How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war perished!”

1 Compare 1 Samuel 31:3–5, where Saul falls on his own sword; the Amalekite’s story may be invented to win David’s favour.

2 Hebrew simply ‘the Bow’; perhaps the name of the song, from the mention of Jonathan’s bow in verse 22.

3 A lost collection of poems; compare Joshua 10:13.

Chapter 2

2 Samuel 2 tells how David, at the LORD’s word, goes up to Hebron, where the men of Judah anoint him king over the house of Judah. He thanks the men of Jabesh-gilead for burying Saul. Meanwhile Abner, Saul’s commander, makes Saul’s son Ish-bosheth king over Israel at Mahanaim. At the pool of Gibeon twelve young men from each side fight and all fall, and in the battle that follows Abner’s men are beaten. Abner kills Asahel, Joab’s swift-footed brother, who will not stop chasing him. At sunset Abner calls on Joab to end the slaughter between brothers, and Joab sounds the horn; the two armies withdraw.

1 After this David enquired of the LORD, “Shall I
go up to one of the towns of Judah?” The LORD
said to him, “Go up.” David asked, “Where shall I
go?” He said, “To Hebron.”
2 So David went up there with his two wives,
Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, Nabal’s widow, of
Carmel.
3 David also brought up the men who were with
him, each with his household, and they settled in
the towns around Hebron.
4 The men of Judah came to Hebron and there
anointed David as king over Judah’s house. When
word reached David that the people of Jabesh-
gilead had buried Saul,
5 David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-
gilead and said to them, “May you be blessed by
the LORD, because you showed this loyal kindness
to Saul your lord and buried him.
6 Now may the LORD show you loyal kindness and
faithfulness. I too will do you good because you
have done this.
7 So now take courage and be brave. Your master
Saul is dead, and Judah’s house has anointed me
as its king.”
8 But Abner son of Ner, the commander of Saul’s
army, had taken Ish-bosheth[1] son of Saul and
brought him over to Mahanaim.
9 He made him king over Gilead, the Ashurites,[2]
Jezreel, Ephraim, Benjamin and all Israel.
10 Saul’s son Ish-bosheth was forty when he
became king of Israel, and his reign lasted two
years. Judah’s house, however, stayed loyal to
David.
11 David reigned in Hebron as king of Judah’s
house for seven years and six months.
12 Then Abner son of Ner set out from Mahanaim
for Gibeon with the men of Ish-bosheth son of
Saul.
13 Joab son of Zeruiah and the servants of David
also went out, and they met at the pool of Gibeon.
They sat down, one group on one side of the pool
and the other on the other side.
14 Abner said to Joab, “Let the young men get up
and compete before us.” Joab said, “Let them.”
15 So they got up and were counted off: twelve for
Benjamin and Ish-bosheth son of Saul, and twelve
of David’s servants.
16 Each man seized his opponent by the head and
thrust his sword into his opponent’s side, and they
fell down together. So that place in Gibeon was
called Helkath-hazzurim.[3]
17 The battle was very fierce that day, and Abner
and the men of Israel were beaten by David’s
servants.
18 Zeruiah’s three sons were there, Joab, Abishai
and Asahel, and Asahel could run like a gazelle in
the open country.
19 Asahel pursued Abner, turning neither to the
right nor to the left from following him.
20 Abner glanced back and called, “Asahel, is it
you?” “Yes, it is,” he replied.
21 Abner said to him, “Turn aside to your right or
to your left; seize one of the young men and take
his gear for yourself.” But Asahel would not turn
aside from following him.
22 Once more Abner warned Asahel, “Stop chasing
me. Must I cut you down? How could I look your
brother Joab in the face after that?”
23 But he refused to turn aside, so Abner struck
him in the belly with the butt of his spear, and the
spear came out at his back. He fell there and died
on the spot. And all who came to the place where
Asahel had fallen and died stood still.
24 But Joab and Abishai pursued Abner. As the sun
was going down, they came to the hill of Ammah,
which lies before Giah on the way to the
wilderness of Gibeon.
25 The Benjaminites rallied behind Abner and
formed a single band, and took their stand on the
top of a hill.
26 Then Abner called to Joab, “Must the sword
devour for ever? Do you not know that it will end
in bitterness? How long will it be before you tell
your people to turn back from pursuing their
brothers?”
27 Joab said, “As God lives, if you had not spoken,
the people would surely have gone on pursuing
their brothers until morning.”
28 So Joab blew the ram’s horn, and all the people
stopped. They no longer pursued Israel, and they
fought no more.
29 Abner and his men went all that night through
the Arabah. They crossed the Jordan, marched
through the whole Bithron[4] and came to
Mahanaim.
30 Joab returned from pursuing Abner and
gathered all the people together. Nineteen of
David’s servants were missing, besides Asahel.

31 But David’s servants had struck down three hundred and sixty of Benjamin and Abner’s men, who died.

32 They took up Asahel and buried him in his father’s tomb at Bethlehem. Joab and his men marched all night and reached Hebron at daybreak.

1 ‘Man of shame’; his name was probably Eshbaal, ‘man of the Lord’ (1 Chronicles 8:33), with ‘shame’ (bosheth) written in place of ‘Baal’.

2 Perhaps ‘the Asherites’; the Greek and other versions have ‘the Geshurites’.

3 ‘Field of flints’ or ‘field of blades’.

4 Perhaps a ravine; or ‘all the morning’.

Chapter 3

2 Samuel 3 tells how the long war between the house of Saul and the house of David goes on, with David growing stronger and Saul’s house weaker, and lists the six sons born to David at Hebron. When Ish-bosheth accuses Abner over Saul’s concubine Rizpah, Abner angrily swears to hand the kingdom to David. David agrees to a covenant on condition that his wife Michal is returned, and she is taken from her weeping husband Paltiel. Abner wins over the elders of Israel and is sent away from Hebron in peace, but Joab, avenging his brother Asahel, lures him back and kills him in the gateway. David declares himself innocent, curses Joab’s house, walks behind the bier, laments over Abner and fasts, and all the people see that the king had no part in the killing.

1 The war between Saul’s house and David’s house dragged on for a long time. David kept gaining strength, while the house of Saul kept growing feebler.

2 Sons were born to David at Hebron. His eldest was Amnon, whose mother was Ahinoam of Jezreel.

3 Next came Chileab, whose mother was Abigail, formerly wife of Nabal of Carmel.[1] The third was Absalom, the son of Maacah, daughter of King Talmai of Geshur.

4 The fourth was Adonijah, Haggith’s son, and the fifth Shephatiah, Abital’s son.

5 The sixth was Ithream, whose mother was David’s wife Eglah. These sons were all born to David at Hebron.

6 While the fighting between the two houses went on, Abner was steadily strengthening his own position in the house of Saul.

7 Saul had once had a concubine called Rizpah, Aiah’s daughter. Ish-bosheth[2] demanded of Abner, “Why have you slept with my father’s concubine?”[3]

8 Abner was furious at Ish-bosheth’s words. “Do you take me for a dog’s head, a man of Judah?” he said. “To this day I have been loyal to your father Saul’s house, to his kinsmen and his friends. I have not let you fall into David’s hands, and now you call me to account over a woman!

9 May God deal with Abner, and more severely still, if I do not now do for David what the LORD promised him on oath:

10 to take the kingdom away from Saul’s house and set up David’s throne over Israel and Judah, from Dan all the way to Beersheba.”

11 Ish-bosheth dared not answer Abner a single word, so afraid of him was he.

12 Then Abner sent messengers to David on his own behalf[4] to say, “Whose land is it? Make an agreement with me, and I will use my influence to bring the whole of Israel over to you.”

13 “Very well,” David replied. “I will make a covenant with you. But I ask one thing of you: you will not come into my presence unless you bring Saul’s daughter Michal with you when you come to see me.”

14 David also sent envoys to Saul’s son Ish-bosheth with this demand: “Hand over my wife Michal. I pledged myself to her for the price of a hundred Philistine foreskins.”[5]

15 So Ish-bosheth sent and took her away from her husband, Paltiel son of Laish.

16 Her husband went along with her, weeping as he walked behind her as far as Bahurim. Then Abner told him, “Go home,” and he turned back.

17 Abner held talks with Israel’s elders. “For a long time now,” he said, “you have been wanting David as your king.

18 So now act, for the LORD has said of David,
‘Through My servant David I will rescue My
people Israel from the Philistines and from every
enemy they have.’”
19 Abner also spoke with the Benjaminites face to
face. Then he went to Hebron to tell David
personally all that Israel and the whole tribe of
Benjamin had agreed to.
20 Abner arrived at Hebron with twenty men, and
David held a banquet for him and his companions.
21 Abner said to David, “Let me set off now and
rally all Israel to my lord the king, so that they
may make a covenant with you, and you will rule
over everything you wish.” So David let Abner go,
and he left in peace.
22 Just then David’s men and Joab came back from
a raid, laden with plunder. Abner was no longer
with David at Hebron, for David had let him go
and he had left in peace.
23 When Joab and the troops with him arrived, Joab
was informed, “Abner son of Ner came to the king,
and the king let him go, and he has left in peace.”
24 Joab went in to the king and said, “What have
you done? Abner came to you! Why ever did you
let him go, so that now he is clean away?
25 Surely you know Abner son of Ner. He came
here to fool you, to find out all your comings and
goings and everything you are doing.”
26 Joab left David’s presence and sent men after
Abner, and they brought him back from the cistern
of Sirah. David knew nothing of it.
27 When Abner came back to Hebron, Joab drew
him aside into the gateway as if to have a quiet
word with him, and there he stabbed him in the
belly. Abner died for the blood of Joab’s brother
Asahel.
28 Afterwards, when David heard of it, he said, “In
the LORD’s sight my kingdom and I are for ever
guiltless of the blood of Abner son of Ner.
29 Let it whirl down on the head of Joab and on his
whole family! May Joab’s house never lack
someone with a discharge or a skin disease,[6]
someone who must hold a spindle,[7] someone who
falls by the sword, or someone who goes hungry.”
30 So Joab and his brother Abishai killed Abner,
because he had put their brother Asahel to death
in the battle at Gibeon.
31 Then David told Joab and all the people with
him, “Tear your clothes, put on sackcloth and
mourn in front of Abner.” King David himself
walked behind the bier.
32 They buried Abner at Hebron, and the king wept
aloud beside Abner’s grave, and all the people
wept too.
33 The king sang a lament for Abner: “Was Abner
to die the death of a fool?
34 Your hands were not tied; your feet were not put
in fetters. You fell as a man falls before the
wicked.” And all the people wept over him once
more.
35 Then all the people came and pressed David to
eat something while it was still day, but David
swore, “May God deal with me, and more severely
still, if I taste bread or anything at all before the
sun goes down.”
36 All the people noticed this and approved, just as
they approved of everything the king did.
37 So that day all the people, and all Israel,
understood that the king had not been behind the
killing of Abner son of Ner.
38 The king said to his servants, “Do you not see
that a commander and a great man has fallen in
Israel today?
39 As for me, though I am anointed king, I am weak
today, and these sons of Zeruiah are too hard for
me. May the LORD repay the wrongdoer as his
wrong deserves.”

1 Called Daniel in 1 Chronicles 3:1.

2 The name is supplied from the context and the ancient versions; the Hebrew has only ‘he said’.

3 To take a dead king’s concubine could be seen as a claim to his throne; compare 16:21–22 and 1 Kings 2:22.

4 Or ‘at once’; the Hebrew is uncertain.

5 See 1 Samuel 18:25–27; David had in fact brought two hundred.

6 The Hebrew word covers various skin diseases; see the note at Leviticus 13:2.

7 Perhaps meaning a man fit only for women’s work; or ‘leans on a crutch’.

Chapter 4

2 Samuel 4 tells how Ish-bosheth loses heart when he hears that Abner is dead, and all Israel is alarmed. Two of his raiding captains, the brothers Rechab and Baanah of Beeroth, slip into his house in the heat of the day, kill him on his bed, cut off his head and bring it to David at Hebron, expecting a reward. The chapter also notes that Jonathan's son Mephibosheth was lamed as a child of five when his nurse fled at the news of Saul's death. David reminds the brothers how he dealt with the man who brought news of Saul's death, and has them executed for murdering an innocent man; Ish-bosheth's head is buried in Abner's tomb.

1 When Saul's son heard that Abner had died at
Hebron, his courage failed, and all Israel was
dismayed.

2 Saul's son had two men who led raiding bands.
One was called Baanah and the other Rechab,
sons of Rimmon of Beeroth, a Benjaminite, for
Beeroth too was counted as part of Benjamin.

3 The people of Beeroth had fled to Gittaim, and
they have lived there as resident foreigners to this
day.

4 Jonathan son of Saul had a son who was crippled
in his feet. He was five years old when word about
Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. His nurse
picked him up and ran, and in her haste to get
away he fell and was lamed. His name was
Mephibosheth.[1]

5 Rechab and Baanah, the sons of Rimmon of
Beeroth, set out and reached Ish-bosheth's house
in the heat of the day, while he was having his
midday rest.

6 They went into the middle of the house as though
to fetch wheat, and struck him in the belly; then
Rechab and his brother Baanah slipped away.[2]

7 They had entered the house while he lay on his
bed in his bedroom, and they struck him and killed
him. They cut off his head, took it, and travelled
all night by the road through the Arabah.

8 They brought Ish-bosheth's head to David at
Hebron and said to the king, "Here is the head of
Ish-bosheth son of Saul, your enemy, who sought
your life. Today the LORD has given my lord the
king vengeance on Saul and on his descendants."

9 David answered Rechab and his brother Baanah,
the sons of Rimmon of Beeroth, "As the LORD
lives, who has rescued me from every distress,

10 the man who told me, 'Saul is dead,' thought he
was bringing good news. I seized him and had him
killed at Ziklag; that was the reward I gave him
for his news.

11 How much more, when wicked men have
murdered an innocent man in his own house, on
his own bed! Shall I not now demand his blood
from you and wipe you from the earth?"

12 Then David gave orders to his young men, and
they killed them. They cut off their hands and feet
and hung their bodies beside the pool at Hebron.
But they took Ish-bosheth's head and buried it in
Abner's tomb at Hebron.

1 Called Merib-baal in 1 Chronicles 8:34; compare the note at 2:8.

2 The Greek has a different text: 'The doorkeeper of the house had been cleaning wheat, but she grew drowsy and fell asleep, so Rechab and Baanah slipped in.'

Chapter 5

2 Samuel 5 tells how all the tribes of Israel come to Hebron and anoint David king over Israel, recalling that the LORD had said he would shepherd His people. David is thirty when he begins to reign, and he reigns forty years. He captures the stronghold of Zion from the Jebusites, who had mocked that even the blind and the lame could keep him out, and it becomes the City of David. Hiram king of Tyre builds him a palace, and David knows that the LORD has established him. More sons and daughters are born to him in Jerusalem. Twice the Philistines come up into the Valley of Rephaim; David enquires of the LORD and defeats them, first at Baal-perazim, and then by circling behind them and attacking when he hears the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees.

1 All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron
and said, "We are your own flesh and blood.

2 Even in the past, when Saul was our king, it was
you who led Israel out to war and brought them
home again. And the LORD said to you, 'You shall

shepherd My people Israel, and you shall be leader over Israel.’”

3 So all Israel’s elders came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel.

4 David was thirty when he became king, and he reigned for forty years.

5 At Hebron he ruled Judah for seven and a half years, and at Jerusalem he ruled all Israel and Judah for thirty-three years.

6 The king marched with his men to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, who lived in that region. They told David, “You will never get in here. Even the blind and the lame could fend you off.” They meant, “David cannot get in here.”

7 Yet David captured the fortress of Zion, which is now the City of David.

8 That day David said, “Whoever would strike the Jebusites must go up through the water shaft[1] to reach those ‘lame and blind’ whom David’s soul hates.” That is why people say, “The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.”[2]

9 David took up residence in the fortress and named it the City of David. He built up the city all round, from the Millo[3] inwards.

10 So David’s power kept on increasing, because the LORD, the God of Armies, was with him.

11 Hiram king of Tyre sent envoys to David, with cedar logs, carpenters and stonemasons, and they built David a palace.

12 And David understood that the LORD had made him secure as king over Israel and had raised his kingdom high for the sake of His people Israel.

13 After he came from Hebron, David took more concubines and wives in Jerusalem, and more sons and daughters were born to him.

14 The children born to him in Jerusalem were named Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon,

15 Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia,

16 Elishama, Eliada and Eliphelet.

17 When the Philistines learned that David had been anointed king of Israel, they all marched up in search of him. David heard of it and went down to the stronghold.

18 The Philistines had come and spread out across the Valley of Rephaim.

19 David asked the LORD, “Should I attack the Philistines? Will You hand them over to me?” The LORD answered David, “Attack, for I will certainly hand the Philistines over to you.”

20 So David came to Baal-perazim and defeated them there. He said, “The LORD has broken through my enemies ahead of me like water bursting through.” So that place was named Baal-perazim.[4]

21 The Philistines left their idols behind there, and David and his men carried them off.[5]

22 Once again the Philistines came up and spread out across the Valley of Rephaim.

23 When David enquired of the LORD, He said, “Do not go straight up. Circle round behind them and come at them opposite the balsam trees.[6]

24 As soon as you hear a sound like marching in the tops of the balsam trees, move quickly, for that will mean the LORD has gone out ahead of you to strike down the Philistine army.”

25 David did exactly as the LORD had commanded him, and he struck down the Philistines all the way from Geba to the approaches of Gezer.

1 The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain; perhaps a water channel or a grappling hook.

2 Perhaps the house of the LORD, or the palace; the saying is obscure.

3 ‘The filling’; probably a terraced earthwork supporting buildings on the slope.

4 ‘Lord of breaking through’.

5 1 Chronicles 14:12 adds that David had them burned.

6 The kind of tree is uncertain; perhaps poplars or mulberries.

Chapter 6

2 Samuel 6 tells how David gathers thirty thousand chosen men to bring the ark of God, called by the name of the LORD of Armies enthroned on the cherubim, from Baale-judah to Jerusalem. They set it on a new cart, and David and all Israel celebrate before the LORD with music. When the oxen stumble, Uzzah takes hold of the ark, and God strikes him dead; David is angry and afraid, and leaves the ark at the house of Obed-edom the Gittite, whose household the LORD blesses. Three months later David brings the ark up with sacrifices, shouting and the sound of the horn, dancing before the LORD with all his might in a linen ephod. He sets it in the tent he has pitched, offers sacrifices, blesses the people and gives them food. Michal, Saul's daughter, despises him and mocks him for uncovering himself; David answers that he will celebrate before the LORD who chose him, and Michal has no child to the day of her death.

1 David again assembled all the picked men of
Israel, thirty thousand in all.

2 He and all the people with him set out from
Baale-judah[1] to bring up from there the ark of
God, which is called by the Name, the name of the
LORD of Armies, who is enthroned above the
cherubim.

3 They placed the ark of God on a new cart and
brought it away from the house of Abinadab on
the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, Abinadab's sons, were
guiding the new cart,

4 and they brought it from Abinadab's house on the
hill, with the ark of God, while Ahio walked ahead
of the ark.

5 David and the whole house of Israel were
celebrating before the LORD with all their
strength, with songs,[2] lyres, harps, tambourines,
rattles and cymbals.

6 When they reached the threshing floor of Nacon,
the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah reached out to the
ark of God and took hold of it.

7 The LORD's anger blazed against Uzzah, and God
struck him down there for his irreverence,[3] and he
died there beside the ark of God.

8 David was angry because the LORD had burst
out against Uzzah, and that place is called Perez-
uzzah[4] to this day.

9 That day David was afraid of the LORD. "How
can the ark of the LORD ever come to me?" he
said.

10 So David was unwilling to move the ark of the
LORD to be with him in the City of David. Instead
he had it taken aside to the house of Obed-edom
the Gittite.

11 For three months the ark of the LORD remained
at the home of Obed-edom the Gittite, and the
LORD poured blessing on him and on everyone in
his house.

12 King David was told, "The LORD has blessed
Obed-edom's household and all that he has
because of the ark of God." So David went and
brought the ark of God up from Obed-edom's
house to the City of David with rejoicing.

13 When those carrying the ark of the LORD had
taken six steps, he sacrificed an ox and a fattened
calf.

14 David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the
LORD with all his might,

15 as he and the whole house of Israel brought up
the ark of the LORD with shouts of joy and the
blast of the ram's horn.

16 As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of
David, Saul's daughter Michal looked down from a
window. When she saw King David leaping and
whirling before the LORD, she despised him in her
heart.

17 The ark of the LORD was carried in and put in
its appointed place within the tent David had set
up for it. Then David presented burnt offerings
and peace offerings in the LORD's presence.

18 When he had completed the burnt offerings and
peace offerings, David pronounced a blessing on
the people in the name of the LORD of Armies.

19 Then he gave out to all the people, the whole
crowd of Israel, men and women alike, a ring of
bread, a portion of meat[5] and a cake of raisins
each. Then all the people went home.

20 When David returned to bless his own
household, Michal daughter of Saul came out to
meet him. "How the king of Israel has honoured
himself today," she said, "exposing himself before
the eyes of his servants' slave girls, as any
worthless fellow might shamelessly expose
himself!"

21 David said to Michal, "It was before the LORD,
who chose me above your father and all his family

and appointed me leader over the LORD's people Israel. I will celebrate before the LORD,

22 and I will make myself even more contemptible than this, and be lowly in my own eyes. But by those slave girls you spoke of, by them I shall be held in honour."

23 As for Saul's daughter Michal, she remained childless until the day she died.

1 Another name for Kiriath-jearim (Joshua 15:9; 1 Samuel 7:1–2).

2 So 1 Chronicles 13:8 and the Greek; the Hebrew has 'with all kinds of instruments of cypress wood'.

3 The Hebrew word is uncertain; compare Numbers 4:15, which forbids anyone to touch the holy things.

4 'Outburst against Uzzah'.

5 The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain; perhaps 'a date cake'.

Chapter 7

2 Samuel 7 tells how David, settled in his cedar palace with rest from his enemies, tells Nathan the prophet that he wants to build a house for the ark of God. That night the LORD sends Nathan back with His answer: He has never asked for a house of cedar, but has moved about in a tent. He took David from following the sheep to be leader over His people, and now He will make David a house. When David dies, the LORD will raise up his offspring, who will build a house for His name, and He will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to Me a son"; if he does wrong, He will discipline him, but His loyal kindness will not be taken from him as it was from Saul. David's house, kingdom and throne will stand for ever. David goes in and sits before the LORD, and prays in wonder and thanks: there is none like the LORD, and no people like Israel, whom He redeemed; he asks Him to do as He has promised, so that His name may be great and David's house blessed for ever.

1 Once the king was settled in his palace[1] and the LORD had given him rest from all the enemies around him,

2 the king said to Nathan the prophet, "Look, here I am living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God stays inside a tent."

3 Nathan told the king, "Go and do whatever you have in mind, for the LORD is with you."

4 But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan:

5 "Go and tell My servant David, 'This is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build Me a house to live in?

6 From the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day I have never lived in a house. I have been travelling about in a tent as My dwelling.

7 In all My journeys among the people of Israel, did I ever say a word to any of the tribes[2] of Israel whom I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, asking, "Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?"

8 Now then, say this to My servant David: This is what the LORD of Armies says: I took you from the pasture, from following the flock, to be leader over My people Israel.

9 Wherever you have gone I have been with you, and I have destroyed every enemy in your path. Now I will give you a great name, as great as the names of the mightiest men on earth.

10 I will provide a place for My people Israel and will plant them there, so that they may live in their own home and be disturbed no more. Wicked men will no longer oppress them as they did at first,

11 ever since the time I appointed judges over My people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies. And the LORD declares to you that the LORD Himself will make you a house.

12 When your days are over and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, one who will come from your own body, and I will make his kingdom secure.

13 It is he who will build a house for My name, and I will make the throne of his kingdom secure for all time.

14 I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to Me a son.[3] When he does wrong, I will correct him with the rod that men use, with the blows that human beings inflict.

15 But My loyal kindness will not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you.

16 Your house and your kingdom will stand firm for
ever before Me;[4] your throne will be established
for ever.'"

17 Nathan reported to David all these words and
this whole vision.

18 Then King David went in and sat before the
LORD and said, "Who am I, Lord GOD,[5] and what
is my family, that You have brought me this far?

19 And as if this were too little in Your eyes, Lord
GOD, You have spoken also about Your servant's
house for a long time to come. And this is a law
for humankind,[6] Lord GOD!

20 What else can David say to You, Lord GOD? You
know Your servant through and through.

21 For the sake of Your word, and as You Yourself
intended, You have done all this great thing to
make it known to Your servant.

22 That is why You are great, Lord GOD. There is
no one like You, and there is no God but You,
according to everything we have heard with our
own ears.

23 And who is like Your people Israel, the one
nation on earth whom God went to redeem as a
people for Himself, making a name for Himself
and doing great and awesome things for them,[7]
driving out nations and their gods before Your
people, whom You redeemed for Yourself from
Egypt?

24 You have made Your people Israel Your very own
people for ever, and You, LORD, have become
their God.

25 Now, LORD God, confirm for ever the promise
You have made concerning Your servant and his
house, and do as You have said,

26 so that Your name may be great for ever, and
people will say, 'The LORD of Armies is God over
Israel,' and the house of Your servant David will
stand firm before You.

27 For You, LORD of Armies, God of Israel, have
revealed this to Your servant, saying, 'I will build
you a house.' That is why Your servant has found
the courage to offer You this prayer.

28 Now, Lord GOD, You alone are God. Your words
are true, and You have made this good promise to
Your servant.

29 So now may it please You to bless the house of
Your servant, so that it may continue for ever
before You. For You, Lord GOD, have spoken, and
with Your blessing the house of Your servant will
be blessed for ever."

1 Hebrew 'house'. Throughout this chapter the same word is used for David's palace, the LORD's temple and David's dynasty; it is kept as 'house' wherever the play on words matters.

2 Or 'rulers', following 1 Chronicles 17:6, a very similar word.

3 Quoted of Christ in Hebrews 1:5; compare 2 Corinthians 6:18.

4 So some Hebrew manuscripts and the Greek; most have 'before you'.

5 Hebrew 'Adonai YHWH'. As elsewhere in this translation, GOD in capitals stands for the divine name when it follows 'Lord'.

6 The meaning is uncertain; perhaps 'Is this the way You deal with mere men?' Compare 1 Chronicles 17:17.

7 Hebrew 'for you'; the wording of this verse is difficult and is partly smoothed from 1 Chronicles 17:21.

Chapter 8

2 Samuel 8 tells of David's victories. He subdues the Philistines; he defeats Moab, putting two-thirds of the captives to death, and the Moabites become his tributaries. He defeats Hadadezer king of Zobah and the Arameans of Damascus who come to help him, puts garrisons in Aram, and brings back gold shields and much bronze. Toi king of Hamath sends his son with gifts, which David dedicates to the LORD with the silver and gold from the nations he conquered. He also puts garrisons throughout Edom. The LORD gives David victory wherever he goes, and he reigns over all Israel with justice and righteousness. The chapter lists his officials.

1 Some time later David struck the Philistines and
subdued them, and he took Metheg-ammah[1] out of
the hands of the Philistines.

2 He also defeated Moab. He made the prisoners
lie down on the ground and measured them off
with a line: two lengths of line he marked out to
be put to death, and one full length to be spared.
So the Moabites became subject to David and
brought him tribute.

3 David also defeated Hadadezer son of Rehob,
king of Zobah, when he went to restore his
control[2] along the River Euphrates.

4 David captured from him one thousand seven
hundred horsemen[3] and twenty thousand foot

soldiers. He hamstrung all the chariot horses, but kept enough of them for a hundred chariots.

5 When the Arameans of Damascus came to the aid
of Hadadezer king of Zobah, David killed twenty-
two thousand of their men.

6 Then David stationed garrisons in Aram of
Damascus, and the Arameans became subject to
him and brought him tribute. The LORD gave
David victory wherever he went.

7 David took the gold shields[4] that belonged to
Hadadezer's officers and brought them to
Jerusalem.

8 And from Betah and Berothai, towns of
Hadadezer, King David took a very large quantity
of bronze.

9 Toi king of Hamath heard that David had
defeated the whole army of Hadadezer.

10 So he sent his son Joram to King David to greet
him and to congratulate him on fighting
Hadadezer and defeating him, for Hadadezer had
often been at war with Toi. Joram brought with
him articles of silver, gold and bronze.

11 These too King David dedicated to the LORD,
along with the silver and gold he had dedicated
from all the nations he had brought under his rule:

12 from Aram,[5] Moab, the Ammonites, the
Philistines and Amalek, and from the plunder
taken from Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of
Zobah.

13 David won great renown when he returned from
striking down eighteen thousand Arameans[6] in the
Valley of Salt.

14 He put garrisons in Edom, throughout the whole
of Edom, and all the Edomites became subject to
David. The LORD gave David victory wherever he
went.

15 David reigned over all Israel, doing what was
just and right for all his people.

16 Joab son of Zeruiah was commander of the
army; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder;

17 Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of
Abiathar[7] served as priests, and Seraiah as
secretary;

18 Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the
Cherethites and the Pelethites;[8] and David's sons
were priests.[9]

1 Perhaps 'the bridle of the mother city', that is, control of the chief city; 1 Chronicles 18:1 has 'Gath and its villages'.

2 Hebrew 'his hand'; it is not clear whether 'he' is Hadadezer or David.

3 1 Chronicles 18:4 and the Greek have 'a thousand chariots and seven thousand horsemen'.

4 The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain; perhaps 'quivers'.

5 Some Hebrew manuscripts and the Greek have 'Edom', as in 1 Chronicles 18:11; the two names differ by one letter in Hebrew.

6 Probably 'Edomites', as in some manuscripts, the Greek and 1 Chronicles 18:12; compare verse 14.

7 Compare 1 Samuel 22:20, where Abiathar is the son of Ahimelech; the names may have been reversed in copying.

8 David's foreign bodyguard; compare 1 Samuel 30:14. The Hebrew lacks 'was over'; it is supplied from 20:23 and 1 Chronicles 18:17.

9 1 Chronicles 18:17 has 'chief officials at the king's side'.

Chapter 9

2 Samuel 9 tells how David, wanting to show loyal kindness to someone of Saul's house for Jonathan's sake, learns from Saul's servant Ziba that Jonathan has a son, Mephibosheth, who is lame in both feet and living at Lo-debar. David sends for him, tells him not to be afraid, restores to him all Saul's land and invites him to eat at the king's table always. Mephibosheth calls himself a dead dog. David puts Ziba, with his fifteen sons and twenty servants, in charge of farming the land for Mephibosheth, who lives in Jerusalem and eats at the king's table like one of the king's sons.

1 David asked, "Is anyone still left of Saul's family,
to whom I can show loyal kindness for Jonathan's
sake?"

2 There was a servant of Saul's household named
Ziba, and they summoned him to David. The king
said to him, "Are you Ziba?" "At your service," he
replied.

3 The king asked, "Is there no one left of Saul's
family to whom I may show God's own kindness?"
Ziba told the king, "There is still a son of
Jonathan; he is crippled in both feet."

4 “Where is he?” the king asked. Ziba answered, “He is staying in the house of Machir son of Ammiel at Lo-debar.”[1]

5 So King David sent for him and had him brought from Machir’s house at Lo-debar.

6 When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he threw himself face down and bowed low. David said, “Mephibosheth!” “Your servant is here,” he answered.

7 “Do not be afraid,” David told him, “for I mean to show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will give you back all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you yourself shall always eat at my table.”

8 He bowed again and said, “What is your servant, that you should take notice of a dead dog like me?”

9 Then the king called Saul’s steward Ziba and told him, “Everything that belonged to Saul and his family I have given to your master’s grandson.

10 You, your sons and your servants are to work the land for him and bring in the harvest, so that your master’s grandson may have food to eat. But Mephibosheth himself, your master’s grandson, shall always eat at my table.” Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.

11 Ziba said to the king, “Your servant will do whatever my lord the king commands.” So Mephibosheth ate at David’s[2] table like one of the king’s sons.

12 Mephibosheth had a young son named Mica. Everyone who lived in Ziba’s household became Mephibosheth’s servants.

13 Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, because he always ate at the king’s table. He was lame in both feet.

1 A town east of the Jordan; the name may mean ‘no pasture’ or ‘nothing’.

2 Hebrew ‘my’; the Greek has ‘David’s’.

Chapter 10

2 Samuel 10 tells how, when Nahash king of the Ammonites dies, David sends envoys to comfort his son Hanun. Hanun’s officials persuade him that they are spies, so he shaves off half of each man’s beard, cuts their garments off at the hips and sends them away; David tells them to wait at Jericho until their beards have grown. The Ammonites hire Aramean troops, and Joab, finding himself with enemies in front and behind, divides his army with his brother Abishai, urging him to fight bravely for their people and leave the outcome to the LORD. The Arameans and the Ammonites flee. When Hadadezer brings Arameans from beyond the Euphrates, David himself defeats them at Helam and kills their commander Shobach, and the Arameans make peace with Israel and are afraid to help the Ammonites any more.

1 Some time later the king of the Ammonites died, and his son Hanun succeeded him as king.

2 David thought, “I will show kindness to Hanun son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness to me.” So David sent some of his officials to express his sympathy to him over his father. When David’s officials came into the Ammonites’ land,

3 the Ammonite commanders said to their lord Hanun, “Do you really think David is honouring your father by sending you men to console you? Has David not sent his servants to you to explore the city, to spy it out and overthrow it?”

4 So Hanun seized David’s officials, shaved off half of each one’s beard, cut off their garments in the middle as far as their buttocks, and sent them away.

5 When David was told, he sent messengers to meet them, for the men were deeply humiliated. The king said, “Stay at Jericho until your beards have grown again, and then come back.”

6 When the Ammonites realised that they had made themselves odious to David, they sent and hired the Arameans of Beth-rehob and of Zobah, twenty thousand foot soldiers, the king of Maacah with a thousand men, and twelve thousand men from Tob.

7 Hearing of this, David sent out Joab with the whole army of fighting men.

8 The Ammonites came out and drew up for battle at the entrance to the city gate, while the Arameans of Zobah and Rehob and the men of Tob and Maacah stood by themselves in the open country.

9 Joab saw that the battle lines were facing him
both in front and behind. So he chose some of the
best troops in Israel and lined them up against the
Arameans.
10 The rest of the army he put under the command
of his brother Abishai, who lined them up against
the Ammonites.
11 Joab said, “If the Arameans prove too strong for
me, you are to come and rescue me; but if the
Ammonites prove too strong for you, I will come
and rescue you.
12 Take heart, and let us fight bravely for our
people and for the cities of our God. And may the
LORD do what He thinks best.”
13 Then Joab and the troops with him advanced to
fight the Arameans, and they fled before him.
14 When the Ammonites saw that the Arameans
had fled, they too fled before Abishai and went
inside the city. So Joab turned back from fighting
the Ammonites and came to Jerusalem.
15 When the Arameans saw that they had been
routed by Israel, they regrouped.
16 Hadadezer sent for the Arameans from beyond
the Euphrates,[1] and they came to Helam, led by
Shobach the commander of Hadadezer’s army.
17 When David was told, he gathered all Israel,
crossed the Jordan and came to Helam. The
Arameans formed their lines to meet David and
fought against him.
18 But the Arameans fled before Israel, and David
killed seven hundred of their chariot crews and
forty thousand of their horsemen.[2] He also struck
down Shobach, the commander of their army, who
died there.
19 When all the kings who were Hadadezer’s
vassals saw that they had been defeated by Israel,
they made peace with Israel and became subject
to them. And the Arameans were afraid to help the
Ammonites any more.

1 Hebrew ‘the River’.
2 1 Chronicles 19:18 has ‘seven thousand charioteers and forty thousand foot soldiers’.

Chapter 11

2 Samuel 11 tells how, in the spring, David sends Joab and the army to besiege Rabbah while he stays in Jerusalem. From his roof he sees Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, bathing. He sends for her and sleeps with her, and she becomes pregnant. David calls Uriah home from the war and urges him to go down to his house, but Uriah will not, since the ark, Israel and Judah are in tents and his comrades camp in the open field; even when David makes him drunk he sleeps among the king’s servants. So David sends a letter by Uriah’s own hand telling Joab to put him in the fiercest fighting and draw back from him. Uriah is killed, and Joab sends news of the battle with a message ready for the king’s anger. After her mourning, David brings Bathsheba into his house and she bears him a son. But what David has done displeases the LORD.

1 In the spring, at the time when kings go out to
war,[1] David sent out Joab with his officers and the
whole Israelite army. They devastated the
Ammonites and laid siege to Rabbah. But David
remained in Jerusalem.
2 One evening David got up from his bed and was
strolling on the roof of the palace. From the roof
he saw a woman bathing, and she was very
beautiful to look at.
3 David sent someone to find out about her, and he
was told, “That is Bathsheba, the daughter of
Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.”
4 Then David sent messengers to fetch her. She
came to him, and he slept with her. (She had just
purified herself from her uncleanness.)[2] Then she
went back home.
5 The woman conceived, and she sent word to
David: “I am pregnant.”
6 David then sent orders to Joab: “Have Uriah the
Hittite sent to me.” So Joab dispatched him to
David.
7 When Uriah arrived, David asked him how Joab
was, how the troops were faring and how the war
was going.
8 Then David said to Uriah, “Go down to your
house and wash your feet.” Uriah left the palace,
and a present from the king was sent after him.
9 But Uriah slept at the entrance of the palace with
all his lord’s servants and did not go down to his
own house.
10 When David was told, “Uriah did not go down to
his house,” he said to Uriah, “Have you not just

come from a journey? Why did you not go home?”

11 “The ark and the men of Israel and Judah are under canvas,”[3] Uriah replied, “and my commander Joab and his officers are encamped out in the countryside. Am I to go home, eat and drink, and lie with my wife? By your life, by your very soul, I will never do it.”

12 Then David told Uriah, “Stay here today as well, and tomorrow I will send you back.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next.

13 David invited him, and he ate and drank with him, and David got him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to lie on his mat among his lord’s servants; he still did not go down to his house.

14 In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah.

15 In the letter he wrote, “Station Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest, and then pull back from him, so that he will be struck down and die.”

16 So while Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew the enemy’s strongest fighters were.

17 When the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of David’s soldiers fell, and Uriah the Hittite was killed as well.

18 Joab sent David a full report of the fighting.

19 He instructed the messenger, “When you have finished telling the king all about the battle,

20 the king may flare up in anger and say to you, ‘Why did you go so near the city to fight? Did you not know they would shoot from the wall?

21 Remember who struck down Abimelech son of Jerubbesheth.[4] A woman threw a millstone down on him from the top of the wall at Thebez, and that was how he died. So why go up close to the wall?’ If he says that, tell him, ‘Your servant Uriah the Hittite is also among the dead.’”

22 The messenger set off, and when he arrived he told David everything Joab had sent him to say.

23 The messenger said to David, “The men got the upper hand and came out against us in the open, but we drove them back to the entrance of the gate.

24 Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall, and some of the king’s men are dead. Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead too.”

25 David told the messenger, “Say this to Joab: ‘Do not let this trouble you, for the sword takes one as well as another. Press your attack on the city and destroy it.’ And encourage him.”

26 When Uriah’s wife heard that her husband Uriah was dead, she mourned for him.

27 Once the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his palace, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the LORD was displeased with what David had done.

1 So many manuscripts and 1 Chronicles 20:1; most Hebrew manuscripts have ‘messengers’, a word with one letter more.

2 That is, after her monthly period (Leviticus 15:19–28); the remark shows that the child could not be Uriah’s.

3 Or ‘in Succoth’, a town east of the Jordan.

4 That is, Jerubbaal, Gideon (Judges 6:32), with ‘shame’ (bosheth) written in place of ‘Baal’; compare the note at 2:8. For Abimelech’s death see Judges 9:50–54.

Chapter 12

2 Samuel 12 tells how the LORD sends Nathan to David with a story of a rich man who, rather than take one of his own many flocks, takes a poor man’s one little ewe lamb to feed a guest. David burns with anger and says the man deserves to die. Nathan says, “You are that man!” and declares the LORD’s word: since David despised Him by killing Uriah and taking his wife, the sword will never leave his house, and his wives will be taken in broad daylight. David confesses, “I have sinned against the LORD,” and Nathan tells him that the LORD has taken away his sin and he will not die, but the child will die. David fasts and lies on the ground while the child is ill; when it dies on the seventh day he rises, worships and eats, saying that one day he will go to the child, but the child cannot return to him. Bathsheba bears Solomon, whom the LORD loves and names Jedidiah. Joab takes the water city of Rabbah and calls David to capture the city; David takes the Ammonite king’s crown and sets the people to forced labour.

1 The LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said, “There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor.

2 The rich man had a great many sheep and cattle,

3 but the poor man had nothing at all except one little ewe lamb that he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It used to share his food and drink from his cup and sleep in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.

4 Now a traveller came to the rich man, but he could not bring himself to take one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the visitor who had come to him. Instead he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for his guest."

5 David flew into a rage against the man and said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die!

6 He must pay for that lamb four times over,[1] because he did such a thing and had no pity."

7 Nathan said to David, "You are that man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from Saul.

8 I gave you your master's house and put your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if that had been too little, I would have given you as much again.

9 Why have you despised the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in His sight? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your wife. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.

10 Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you despised Me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own wife.'

11 This is what the LORD says: 'From your own household I am going to bring disaster on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to someone close to you, and he will lie with your wives in the full light of this sun.

12 You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in front of all Israel and in broad daylight.'"

13 David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan replied to David, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You will not die.[2]

14 But because by this deed you have treated the LORD with utter contempt,[3] the son who has been born to you shall surely die."

15 Then Nathan went home. The LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and it became very ill.

16 David pleaded with God for the boy. He fasted, and went in and spent the nights lying on the ground.

17 The elders of his household stood over him to raise him from the ground, but he refused and would not eat any food with them.

18 The child died on the seventh day. David's servants dared not tell him, for they said to one another, "Even while the boy was living, he paid no attention when we spoke to him. If we tell him now that the boy has died, who knows what he may do to himself?"

19 But when David saw his servants whispering together, he realised that the child was dead. "Is the child dead?" he asked them. "Yes," they said, "he is dead."

20 Then David got up from the ground, washed, anointed himself and changed his clothes. He went into the house of the LORD and worshipped. Then he went home, asked for food, and when it was set before him he ate.

21 His servants said to him, "What is this you have done? While the child was alive you fasted and wept for him, but now that the child is dead you get up and eat."

22 He answered, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, because I thought, 'Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let the child live.'

23 Now that he has died, what is the use of fasting? Have I the power to bring him back? One day I will go where he is, but he cannot return to me."

24 Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba. He went to her and lay with her, and she gave birth to a son, and she[4] named him Solomon. The LORD loved him

25 and sent word through Nathan the prophet, and he named him Jedidiah,[5] because of the LORD.

26 Meanwhile Joab fought against Rabbah of the Ammonites and captured the royal city.

27 Joab sent envoys to tell David, "I have attacked Rabbah and seized the city of waters.[6]

28 So now gather the rest of the troops, besiege the city and capture it yourself. Otherwise I shall be the one to take the city, and it will be named after me."

29 So David gathered all the troops, went to Rabbah, attacked it and captured it.

30 He took the crown from the head of their king,[7] and it was placed on David's head. It weighed a talent of gold[8] and was set with a precious stone.

He also brought out a vast amount of plunder from the city.

31 He brought out the people who were in it and set them to work with saws, iron picks and iron axes, and made them labour at the brick kilns.[9] He did the same to all the Ammonite towns. Then David and all the army returned to Jerusalem.

1 As the law requires (Exodus 22:1). The Greek has ‘sevenfold’.

2 Psalm 51 is headed as David’s prayer when Nathan came to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

3 Hebrew ‘the enemies of the LORD’, probably a scribal softening to avoid writing that David scorned the LORD Himself.

4 So the traditional reading; the written Hebrew has ‘he’.

5 ‘Beloved of the LORD’.

6 Probably the lower city by the water supply, as distinct from the citadel.

7 Or ‘of Milcom’, the god of the Ammonites (1 Kings 11:5).

8 A talent was about 34 kilograms (75 pounds).

9 Or, as some older translations take it, ‘put them under saws … and made them pass through the brick kiln’; most now read it as forced labour.

Chapter 13

2 Samuel 13 tells how David’s son Amnon becomes obsessed with his beautiful half-sister Tamar, Absalom’s sister. On the advice of his cunning cousin Jonadab he pretends to be ill and asks the king to send Tamar to make him cakes. When she brings them to his room he seizes her; she pleads with him not to do such an outrage in Israel, but he overpowers and rapes her, then hates her more than he had loved her and has her thrown out. Tamar tears her long robe, puts ashes on her head and goes away weeping, and lives desolate in Absalom’s house. David is very angry but does nothing. Two years later Absalom invites all the king’s sons to his sheep-shearing at Baal-hazor and has his servants kill Amnon when he is merry with wine. A rumour reaches David that all his sons are dead, but Jonadab assures him that only Amnon has died. Absalom flees to Talmai king of Geshur and stays there three years, and David longs to go out to him.

1 Some time later this happened. Absalom son of David had a beautiful sister named Tamar, and Amnon son of David fell in love with her.

2 Amnon was so tormented over his sister Tamar that he made himself ill. She was a virgin, and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her.

3 Now Amnon had a friend named Jonadab, son of David’s brother Shimeah. Jonadab was a very shrewd man.

4 He asked Amnon, “Why are you, the king’s son, so haggard morning after morning? Will you not tell me?” Amnon said to him, “I am in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom’s sister.”

5 Jonadab said to him, “Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill. When your father comes to see you, say to him, ‘Please let my sister Tamar come and give me something to eat. Let her prepare the food in front of me, so that I can watch her and eat it from her hand.’”

6 Amnon took to his bed and played the invalid, and when the king came to visit, Amnon asked him, “Would you send my sister Tamar to bake a few cakes here where I can see, and feed me with her own hands?”

7 David sent word to Tamar at the palace: “Go to your brother Amnon’s house and prepare some food for him.”

8 So Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon, who was lying down. She took dough, kneaded it, made cakes in his sight and baked them.

9 Then she took the pan and served them to him, but he refused to eat. “Send everyone out,” Amnon said, and everyone left him.

10 Then Amnon said to Tamar, “Bring the food into the bedroom, so that I may eat from your hand.” Tamar took the cakes she had made and brought them to her brother Amnon in the bedroom.

11 But when she held them out for him to eat, he caught hold of her and said, “Come to bed with me, my sister.”

12 “No, my brother!” she answered. “Do not force me. Such a thing is not done in Israel. Do not commit this outrage.

13 Where could I go with my disgrace? And you would be counted among the disgraced fools in

Israel. Please, speak to the king; he will not keep me from you."

14 But he would not listen to her. Being stronger than she was, he forced her and raped her.

15 Then Amnon was seized with a loathing for her, a hatred greater than the love he had felt for her. He said to her, "Get up and get out!"

16 "No!" she said to him. "Sending me away would be a greater wrong than what you have already done to me." But he would not listen to her.

17 He called the young man who attended him and said, "Get this woman out of my sight and bolt the door after her."

18 She was wearing a long, ornate robe,[1] for that was how the king's virgin daughters dressed. So his servant put her out and bolted the door behind her.

19 Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornate robe she was wearing. She laid her hand on her head and went away, crying aloud as she went.

20 Her brother Absalom said to her, "Has that brother of yours, Amnon,[2] been with you? Keep quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother. Do not take this to heart." So Tamar lived in her brother Absalom's house, a desolate woman.

21 When King David heard of all this, he was furious.[3]

22 Absalom never said a word to Amnon, good or bad, for he hated Amnon because he had violated his sister Tamar.

23 Two years later, when Absalom had sheep-shearers at Baal-hazor near Ephraim, he invited all the king's sons.

24 Absalom went to the king and said, "Your servant has sheep-shearers at work. Will the king and his officials please come with me?"

25 "No, my son," the king answered Absalom. "We should not all go, or we would be a burden to you." Absalom pressed him, but he would not go, though he gave him his blessing.

26 "In that case," said Absalom, "do let my brother Amnon come with us." "Why should he go?" the king asked.

27 But Absalom kept pressing him until he let Amnon and all the king's other sons go with him.[4]

28 Absalom gave orders to his servants: "Watch, and when Amnon's spirits are high with wine and I say to you, 'Strike Amnon,' then kill him. Do not be afraid. Have I not given you the order? Be strong and be brave."

29 So Absalom's servants did to Amnon as Absalom had ordered. Then all the king's sons got up, mounted their mules and fled.

30 While they were on their way, the report came to David: "Absalom has struck down all the king's sons; not one of them is left."

31 The king stood up, tore his clothes and lay down on the ground, and all his servants stood by with their clothes torn.

32 But Jonadab son of David's brother Shimeah spoke up: "My lord should not think that they have killed all the young men, the king's sons. Only Amnon is dead. Absalom has been set on this ever since the day Amnon violated his sister Tamar.

33 So my lord the king should not take to heart the report that all the king's sons are dead. Only Amnon is dead."

34 Meanwhile Absalom had fled. The young man keeping watch looked up and saw a crowd of people coming along the road behind him,[5] down the side of the hill.

35 Jonadab said to the king, "There, the king's sons have come. It is just as your servant said."

36 As he finished speaking, the king's sons arrived, wailing loudly, and the king and all his servants wept bitterly as well.

37 Absalom had fled to Talmai son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur, while David grieved for his son continually.

38 After Absalom fled and went to Geshur, he stayed there three years.

39 And King David's spirit longed to go out to Absalom,[6] for he had been consoled over Amnon's death.

1 The same rare term as Joseph's robe (Genesis 37:3).

2 Hebrew 'Aminon', perhaps a deliberately scornful form of the name.

3 The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Greek add 'but he would not hurt Amnon, because he loved him, for he was his firstborn'.

4 The Greek adds 'And Absalom prepared a feast like a king's feast'.

5 The Greek adds 'And the watchman went and told the king, "I have seen men coming from the Horonaim road, by the side of the hill."'

6 The Hebrew is difficult; it may also mean that David's anger against Absalom was spent.

Chapter 14

2 Samuel 14 tells how Joab, seeing that the king's heart is set on Absalom, sends for a wise woman of Tekoa and puts words in her mouth. Dressed in mourning, she tells the king a story of two sons, one of whom killed the other, and of a clan that now demands the life of the heir; David promises that not a hair of her son shall fall. She then turns the story on the king: God does not take away life, but devises ways for the banished not to remain cast out, and the king should bring his own banished son home. David sees Joab's hand in it, and tells Joab to bring Absalom back, but Absalom must not see the king's face. Absalom, the most admired man in Israel for his looks and his heavy head of hair, lives two years in Jerusalem without seeing the king. When Joab ignores his messages, Absalom has Joab's barley field set on fire, and Joab arranges an audience. Absalom bows before the king, and the king kisses him.

1 Joab son of Zeruiah knew that the king's heart was drawn towards Absalom.

2 So Joab sent to Tekoa and brought a wise woman from there. He said to her, "Pretend to be a mourner. Put on mourning clothes and do not anoint yourself with oil. Behave like a woman who has been grieving for the dead for a long time.

3 Then go to the king and speak to him like this." And Joab told her what to say.

4 When the woman of Tekoa spoke[1] to the king, she fell with her face to the ground and paid homage, and said, "Help me, O king!"

5 The king asked her, "What is troubling you?" She said, "I am a widow; my husband is dead.

6 Your servant had two sons. They quarrelled with each other out in the fields, and there was no one to separate them. One struck the other and killed him.

7 Now the whole clan has risen against your servant. They say, 'Hand over the man who struck his brother, so that we may put him to death for the life of the brother he killed, and so destroy the heir as well.' They would put out the one coal I have left, and leave my husband neither name nor survivor on the face of the earth."

8 The king told the woman, "Go home, and I will issue an order on your behalf."

9 The woman of Tekoa said to the king, "My lord the king, let the blame fall on me and on my father's family, and let the king and his throne be guiltless."

10 The king said, "If anyone says anything to you, bring him to me, and he will not trouble you again."

11 She said, "Then let the king call to mind the LORD your God, so that the avenger of blood may not add to the destruction, and my son may not be wiped out." He said, "As the LORD lives, not one hair of your son's head shall fall to the ground."

12 The woman then asked, "May your servant say one more thing to my lord the king?" "Go on," he replied.

13 The woman said, "Why then have you planned the very same thing against the people of God? In giving this decision the king condemns himself, since the king has not brought his banished son home.

14 We must all die; we are like water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. But God does not take away life; He devises ways so that one who is banished does not stay an outcast from Him.

15 And now I have come to say this to my lord the king because the people have made me afraid. Your servant thought, 'I will speak to the king. Perhaps the king will do what his servant asks.

16 Surely the king will listen and rescue his servant from the man who would cut off both me and my son from God's heritage.'

17 And your servant thought, 'May the word of my lord the king bring me rest,' for my lord the king

is like the angel of God in discerning good and evil. May the LORD your God be with you!”

18 Then the king answered the woman, “Do not hide from me anything I ask you.” “Let my lord the king speak,” the woman said.

19 The king asked, “Is the hand of Joab with you in all this?” The woman answered, “As surely as you live, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right or to the left from anything my lord the king says. Yes, it was your servant Joab who instructed me, and he put all these words into your servant’s mouth.

20 Your servant Joab did this to change the look of things. But my lord is as wise as the angel of God and knows everything that happens in the land.”

21 Then the king said to Joab, “Very well, I grant this request. Go and bring back the young man Absalom.”

22 Joab fell face down to the ground, paid homage and blessed the king. Joab said, “Today your servant knows that I have found favour in your sight, my lord the king, because the king has granted his servant’s request.”

23 So Joab set off for Geshur and brought Absalom back to Jerusalem.

24 But the king said, “He must go to his own house; he must not see my face.” So Absalom went to his own house and did not see the king’s face.

25 In all Israel there was no one so highly praised for his good looks as Absalom. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was not a flaw in him.

26 Whenever he cut his hair (he used to cut it at the end of every year, because it grew too heavy for him), he would weigh it, and it came to two hundred shekels[2] by the royal weight.

27 Three sons were born to Absalom, and a daughter named Tamar, who was a beautiful woman.

28 Absalom lived in Jerusalem for two full years without seeing the king’s face.

29 Absalom summoned Joab, meaning to send him to the king, but Joab refused to come. A second summons went out, and still Joab refused.

30 So Absalom told his servants, “You know Joab’s plot beside mine, with barley growing on it. Go and burn it.” And Absalom’s servants burned the field.

31 At that Joab came straight to Absalom’s house. “What do you mean by having your servants burn my field?” he demanded.

32 Absalom said to Joab, “I sent word to you: ‘Come here, so that I can send you to the king to ask, “Why have I come back from Geshur? It would be better for me if I were still there.”’ Now let me see the king’s face, and if I am guilty of anything, let him put me to death.”

33 So Joab went to the king and told him, and the king summoned Absalom. He came to the king and bowed with his face to the ground before the king, and the king kissed Absalom.

1 So many manuscripts and the ancient versions; most Hebrew manuscripts have ‘said’.

2 About 2.3 kilograms (5 pounds).

Chapter 15

2 Samuel 15 tells how Absalom provides himself with a chariot and fifty runners, and stands by the city gate each morning, telling everyone who comes with a case that the king will not hear it and kissing those who bow to him, so stealing the hearts of the people of Israel. Then, claiming to fulfil a vow, he goes to Hebron and has himself proclaimed king, and David’s counsellor Ahithophel joins him. David flees Jerusalem with his household, leaving ten concubines to keep the palace. Ittai the Gittite insists on going with him, in life or death. Zadok and Abiathar bring the ark, but David sends it back, trusting the LORD to bring him home if He is pleased with him. David climbs the Mount of Olives weeping, barefoot and with his head covered, and prays that the LORD will turn Ahithophel’s counsel into foolishness. He sends his friend Hushai back to Jerusalem to defeat that counsel and to send news by the priests’ sons.

1 After this Absalom acquired a chariot and horses, with fifty men to run ahead of him.

2 He would get up early and stand beside the road leading to the gate. Whenever anyone came with a dispute to bring before the king for judgement, Absalom would call out to him, “Which town are you from?” And when he answered, “Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel,”

3 Absalom would say to him, “Look, your claims
are good and right, but there is no one appointed
by the king to hear you.”
4 And Absalom would add, “If only someone would
appoint me judge in the land! Then anyone with a
lawsuit or a case could come to me, and I would
see that he got justice.”
5 And whenever a man came near to bow down to
him, Absalom would reach out his hand, take hold
of him and kiss him.
6 Absalom behaved in this way towards every
Israelite who came to the king for judgement, and
so he stole the hearts of the men of Israel.
7 At the end of four[1] years Absalom said to the
king, “Please let me go to Hebron to fulfil a vow I
made to the LORD.
8 While your servant was living at Geshur in Aram,
I made a vow: ‘If the LORD really brings me back
to Jerusalem, I will worship the LORD in
Hebron.’”[2]
9 The king said to him, “Go in peace.” So he set off
for Hebron.
10 But Absalom sent secret agents throughout all
the tribes of Israel to say, “As soon as you hear the
sound of the ram’s horn, say, ‘Absalom has become
king at Hebron.’”
11 Two hundred men from Jerusalem went with
Absalom. They had been invited as guests and
went in all innocence, knowing nothing about the
matter.
12 While he was offering the sacrifices, Absalom
sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David’s
counsellor, from his town of Giloh. So the
conspiracy gathered strength, and the number of
Absalom’s followers kept growing.
13 A messenger came to David and said, “The
hearts of the men of Israel have gone over to
Absalom.”
14 Then David said to all his officials who were with
him in Jerusalem, “Come, we must flee, or none of
us will escape from Absalom. Leave at once, or he
will soon overtake us, bring disaster on us and put
the city to the sword.”
15 “Whatever my lord the king chooses,” his
officials replied, “we are your servants and will do
it.”
16 So the king set out, with his whole household
following him, but he left ten concubines to look
after the palace.
17 The king went out with all the people following
him, and they halted at the last house.
18 All his officials marched past him, along with all
the Cherethites and Pelethites and all the six
hundred Gittites who had followed him from Gath,
filing past the king.
19 The king said to Ittai the Gittite, “Why should
you come with us too? Go back and stay with the
new king, for you are a foreigner, and an exile
from your own country as well.
20 You came only yesterday. Should I make you
wander about with us today, when I do not even
know where I am going? Go back, and take your
kinsmen with you. May loyal kindness and
faithfulness be with you.”[3]
21 But Ittai answered the king, “As the LORD lives,
and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord
the king may be, whether for death or for life,
there your servant will be.”
22 David said to Ittai, “Go on, then, march past.” So
Ittai the Gittite marched on with all his men and
all the children who were with him.
23 The whole countryside wept aloud as all the
people passed by. The king crossed the Kidron
Valley, and all the people moved on towards the
wilderness.
24 Zadok was there too, and all the Levites with
him, carrying the ark of the covenant of God. They
set down the ark of God, and Abiathar offered
sacrifices[4] until all the people had finished leaving
the city.
25 Then the king said to Zadok, “Take the ark of
God back into the city. If I find favour in the
LORD’s eyes, He will bring me back and let me
see both it and His dwelling place again.
26 But if He says, ‘I take no pleasure in you,’ then
here I am; let Him do to me whatever seems good
to Him.”
27 The king also said to Zadok the priest, “You are
a seer,[5] are you not? Go back to the city in peace,
you and Abiathar,[6] with your two sons, your son
Ahimaaz and Abiathar’s son Jonathan.
28 As for me, I will wait by the river crossings in
the wilderness until a message from you reaches
me with news.”
29 So Zadok and Abiathar took the ark of God back
to Jerusalem and stayed there.
30 But David went up the ascent of the Mount of
Olives, weeping as he went. His head was covered

and he walked barefoot. All the people with him also covered their heads and went up weeping as they climbed.

31 David was told, “Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.” So David prayed, “LORD, turn the advice of Ahithophel into folly.”

32 When David reached the summit, where God used to be worshipped, Hushai the Archite was there to meet him, his robe torn and earth on his head.

33 David told him, “Coming with me, you would only weigh me down.

34 But if you go back to the city and say to Absalom, ‘I will be your servant, O king; I was your father’s servant in the past, but now I will be yours,’ then you can help me by defeating the advice of Ahithophel.

35 Zadok and Abiathar the priests will be there with you. Report to them everything you hear from the king’s palace.

36 Their two sons are there with them, Zadok’s son Ahimaaz and Abiathar’s son Jonathan. Send them to me with everything you hear.”

37 So David’s friend Hushai arrived at the city just as Absalom was entering Jerusalem.

1 So the Greek and Syriac; the Hebrew has ‘forty’.

2 ‘In Hebron’ is supplied from the Greek.

3 ‘May … be with you’ follows the Greek; the Hebrew has only ‘loyal kindness and faithfulness’.

4 Or ‘went up’.

5 Or ‘Do you see?’; the Hebrew is uncertain.

6 ‘And Abiathar’ is implied by the rest of the verse.

Chapter 16

2 Samuel 16 tells how Ziba meets David beyond the summit with donkeys and provisions, and claims that his master Mephibosheth has stayed in Jerusalem hoping to regain his grandfather’s kingdom; David gives Ziba all Mephibosheth’s property. At Bahurim, Shimei son of Gera, of Saul’s family, curses David and pelts him with stones, calling him a man of blood. Abishai wants to cut off his head, but David forbids it: if the LORD has told him to curse, who can question it? Perhaps the LORD will repay good for this cursing. In Jerusalem Hushai greets Absalom with “Long live the king!” and offers to serve him as he served his father. On Ahithophel’s advice Absalom goes in to his father’s concubines in a tent on the roof in the sight of all Israel, for in those days Ahithophel’s counsel was treated like a word from God.

1 When David had gone a little beyond the summit, Ziba, Mephibosheth’s steward, was there to meet him with a pair of saddled donkeys, loaded with two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred clusters of raisins, a hundred bunches of summer fruit and a skin of wine.

2 The king asked Ziba, “What are these for?” Ziba answered, “The donkeys are for the king’s household to ride, the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine for anyone who grows faint in the wilderness to drink.”

3 The king asked, “And where is your master’s grandson?” Ziba said to the king, “He is staying in Jerusalem, for he said, ‘Today the house of Israel will give me back my grandfather’s kingdom.’”

4 Then the king said to Ziba, “All that belonged to Mephibosheth is now yours.” “I bow before you,” said Ziba. “May I always find favour in your eyes, my lord the king.”

5 As King David approached Bahurim, a man from the same clan as Saul’s family came out of the town. His name was Shimei son of Gera, and he cursed as he came.

6 He pelted David and all King David’s officials with stones, though all the troops and all the warriors were on David’s right and left.

7 As he cursed, Shimei said, “Get out, get out, you man of blood, you scoundrel!

8 The LORD has paid you back for all the blood of Saul’s family, in whose place you have reigned. The LORD has handed the kingdom over to your son Absalom. Now see how ruin has caught up with you, because you are a man of blood!”

9 Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, “Must my lord the king put up with the curses of this dead dog? Let me cross over and cut his head off.”

10 But the king said, “What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the

LORD said to him, ‘Curse David,’ who can ask, ‘Why have you done this?’”

11 David said to Abishai and all his officials, “My own son, my own flesh and blood, is seeking my life. How much more, then, this Benjaminite! Leave him alone; let him curse, for the LORD has told him to.

12 It may be that the LORD will look on my distress[1] and repay me with good for the curse I receive today.”

13 So David and his men went on along the road, while Shimei kept pace with him on the hillside opposite, cursing as he went, throwing stones at him and flinging dust.

14 The king and all the people with him arrived worn out,[2] and there he refreshed himself.

15 By now Absalom had entered Jerusalem with all the Israelites who followed him, and Ahithophel had come with him.

16 Hushai the Archite, David’s friend, presented himself before Absalom and cried, “Long live the king! Long live the king!”

17 Absalom asked Hushai, “Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?”

18 Hushai said to Absalom, “No; the one chosen by the LORD and by this people and by all the men of Israel, his I will be, and with him I will remain.

19 Besides, whom should I serve? Should it not be his son? As I served your father, so I will serve you.”

20 Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, “Give us your advice. What should we do?”

21 Ahithophel answered Absalom, “Go in to your father’s concubines, whom he left to look after the palace. Then all Israel will hear that you have made yourself odious to your father, and the hands of all who are with you will be strengthened.”

22 A tent was set up for Absalom on the palace roof, and there, with all Israel looking on, he lay with his father’s concubines.[3]

23 In those days the advice Ahithophel gave was regarded as if one had enquired of the word of God. That was how all Ahithophel’s advice was regarded, both by David and by Absalom.

1 So the ancient versions and the traditional reading; the written Hebrew has ‘my guilt’.

2 Perhaps the name of a place, ‘Ayephim’; the Hebrew says ‘arrived weary’ and then ‘refreshed himself there’.

3 Fulfilling Nathan’s word in 12:11–12.

Chapter 17

2 Samuel 17 tells how Ahithophel advises Absalom to let him take twelve thousand men and strike David that night while he is weary, killing only the king. Absalom also asks Hushai, who warns that David and his men are fighters as fierce as a bear robbed of her cubs and that any early setback would cause panic; he urges instead that all Israel be gathered under Absalom himself. Absalom prefers Hushai’s advice, for the LORD had determined to defeat Ahithophel’s good counsel and bring disaster on Absalom. Hushai sends word through the priests’ sons, who hide from Absalom’s men in a well at Bahurim and then warn David, and David crosses the Jordan by daybreak. Ahithophel, seeing his advice not taken, goes home, sets his house in order and hangs himself. Absalom appoints Amasa commander and camps in Gilead, while at Mahanaim Shobi, Machir and Barzillai bring David and his people beds, food and supplies.

1 Ahithophel then said to Absalom, “Allow me to pick twelve thousand men and go after David this very night.

2 I will come upon him while he is weary and disheartened. I will throw him into a panic, and all the people with him will flee. I will strike down only the king,

3 and I will bring all the people back to you. The return of everyone depends on the man you are seeking;[1] then all the people will be at peace.”

4 The advice seemed right to Absalom and to all the elders of Israel.

5 But Absalom said, “Summon Hushai the Archite as well, and let us hear what he too has to say.”

6 When Hushai came to Absalom, Absalom said to him, “This is what Ahithophel has advised. Should we do as he says? If not, give us your opinion.”

7 Hushai replied to Absalom, “This time the advice Ahithophel has given is not good.

8 You know your father and his men,” Hushai went on. “They are warriors, and as savage as a bear in the wild robbed of her cubs. Besides, your father is an experienced soldier; he will not spend the night with the troops.

9 Even now he is hidden in one of the caves or some other place. If some of our troops fall at the first attack, whoever hears of it will say, ‘There has been a slaughter among Absalom’s followers.’

10 Then even the bravest man, whose heart is like a lion’s, will lose his nerve, for all Israel knows that your father is a warrior and that the men with him are valiant.

11 So my advice is this: let all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, be gathered to you, as countless as the sand on the seashore, and lead them into battle in person.

12 Then we will come upon him wherever he may be found, and we will fall on him as the dew settles on the ground. Neither he nor any of his men will be left alive.

13 If he withdraws into a city, all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we will drag it down into the valley until not even a pebble of it can be found.”

14 Absalom and all the men of Israel said, “The advice of Hushai the Archite is better than Ahithophel’s.” For the LORD had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel, in order to bring disaster on Absalom.

15 Then Hushai told Zadok and Abiathar the priests, “Ahithophel advised Absalom and the elders of Israel to do such and such, but I have advised them to do this and that.

16 Now send word quickly and tell David, ‘Do not spend the night at the fords of the wilderness, but be sure to cross over, or the king and all the people with him will be swallowed up.’”

17 Jonathan and Ahimaaz were waiting at En-rogel,[2] for they dared not be seen entering the city. A servant girl would go and pass on messages to them, and they would go and report to King David.

18 But they were spotted by a lad, who reported it to Absalom. So the pair hurried away to Bahurim, to the home of a man with a well in his yard, and let themselves down into it.

19 His wife took a covering, spread it over the mouth of the well and scattered grain on it, so that nobody knew anything about it.

20 When Absalom’s servants came to the woman at the house, they asked, “Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?” The woman told them, “They have crossed over the stream.”[3] The men searched but could not find them, so they returned to Jerusalem.

21 After they had gone, the two came up out of the well and went to report to King David. They told him, “Set out and cross the water at once, for this is what Ahithophel has advised against you.”

22 So David and all the people with him set out and crossed the Jordan. By daybreak not one of them was left who had not crossed the Jordan.

23 When Ahithophel saw that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his donkey and set off for home to his own town. He put his household in order and then hanged himself. So he died and was buried in his father’s tomb.

24 David came to Mahanaim, and Absalom crossed the Jordan with all the men of Israel.

25 Absalom had appointed Amasa over the army in place of Joab. Amasa was the son of a man named Ithra the Israelite,[4] who had married Abigal daughter of Nahash, sister of Zeruiah, Joab’s mother.

26 Israel and Absalom camped in the land of Gilead.

27 When David arrived at Mahanaim, Shobi son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Ammonites, Machir son of Ammiel from Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim

28 brought bedding, basins and earthenware pots, wheat and barley, flour and roasted grain, beans and lentils,[5]

29 honey and curds, sheep, and cheese from the herd for David and the people with him to eat. For they said, “The people have become hungry, weary and thirsty in the wilderness.”

1 The Hebrew is difficult; the Greek has ‘as a bride returns to her husband; you seek the life of only one man’.

2 A spring just outside Jerusalem, in the Kidron Valley.

3 The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain.

4 1 Chronicles 2:17 has ‘Jether the Ishmaelite’.

5 The Hebrew repeats ‘roasted grain’ after ‘lentils’.

Chapter 18

2 Samuel 18 tells how David divides his army into three under Joab, Abishai and Ittai. The people will not let him march out, so he stands by the gate and orders the commanders, in the hearing of all, to deal gently with the young man Absalom for his sake. The battle is fought in the forest of Ephraim, where Israel is routed with twenty thousand dead, and the forest claims more lives than the sword. Absalom, riding his mule, is caught by his head in the branches of a great oak and left hanging. A soldier who sees it will not touch the king's son, but Joab thrusts three spears into Absalom's heart, and his armour-bearers finish him off. They throw him into a pit in the forest under a great heap of stones. Ahimaaz begs to run with the news, but Joab sends a Cushite; Ahimaaz outruns him but does not tell of Absalom's death. When the Cushite tells him, the king goes up to the room over the gate, weeping and wishing that he had died in his son's place.

1 David mustered the people who were with him
and appointed over them commanders of
thousands and commanders of hundreds.
2 David sent the army out, a third under Joab, a
third under Joab's brother Abishai son of Zeruiah,
and a third under Ittai the Gittite. The king said to
the troops, "I will certainly march out with you
myself."
3 But the troops said, "You must not march out. If
we have to flee, they will not care about us. Even
if half of us die, they will not care, but you are
worth ten thousand of us.[1] So it is better for you
to be ready to send us help from the city."
4 "I will do as you think best," the king replied.
Then he took his stand at the side of the gate as
the army filed out in units of a hundred and a
thousand.
5 The king ordered Joab, Abishai and Ittai, "Be
gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake."
And all the troops heard the king give orders to all
the commanders about Absalom.
6 So the army marched out into the field against
Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of
Ephraim.
7 There the army of Israel was routed by David's
men, and the slaughter there that day was great:
twenty thousand men.
8 The fighting spread over the whole countryside,
and the forest swallowed up more people that day
than the sword.
9 Absalom happened to meet David's men. He was
riding his mule, and as the mule went under the
thick branches of a large oak, Absalom's head
caught fast in the oak. He was left hanging
between heaven and earth, while the mule he was
riding went on.
10 One of the men saw it and told Joab, "I have just
seen Absalom hanging in an oak."
11 Joab said to the man who told him, "You saw
him? Then why did you not strike him to the
ground there and then? I would have had to give
you ten pieces of silver[2] and a belt."
12 But the man answered Joab, "Even if a thousand
pieces of silver[3] were weighed out into my hands,
I would not lift a hand against the king's son. In
our hearing the king ordered you and Abishai and
Ittai, 'For my sake protect the young man
Absalom.'
13 And if I had acted treacherously against his life,[4]
nothing is hidden from the king, and you yourself
would have kept your distance."
14 Joab said, "I will not waste time like this with
you." He took three spears[5] in his hand and thrust
them into Absalom's heart while he was still alive
in the oak.
15 And ten young men, Joab's armour-bearers,
surrounded Absalom and struck him and killed
him.
16 Then Joab blew the ram's horn, and the troops
turned back from pursuing Israel, for Joab held
them back.
17 They took Absalom, threw him into a large pit in
the forest and raised over him a very large heap of
stones. And all Israel fled, each to his own home.
18 While he was alive, Absalom had erected a stone
pillar for himself in the King's Valley, reasoning, "I
have no son to carry on my name." He gave the
pillar his own name, and to this day it is known as
Absalom's Monument.[6]
19 Then Ahimaaz son of Zadok said, "Let me run
and take the good news to the king that the LORD
has vindicated him by delivering him from the
power of his enemies."
20 But Joab told him, "You are not the man to take
the news today. You may take the news another
day, but you must not do so today, because the
king's son is dead."

21 Joab then told a Cushite, “Go and report to the king what you saw.” The Cushite bowed before Joab and set off running.

22 Ahimaaz son of Zadok said to Joab once more, “Whatever happens, please let me run too, after the Cushite.” Joab said, “Why should you run, my son? You will get no reward for the news.”

23 “Whatever happens, I will run,” he said. So Joab said to him, “Run.” Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain[7] and overtook the Cushite.

24 David was sitting between the two gates. The watchman went up to the roof over the gate by the wall, and as he looked out he saw a man running alone.

25 The watchman called out and told the king. The king said, “If he is alone, he has news to tell.” As the runner came closer and closer,

26 the watchman saw another man running. He called down to the gatekeeper, “Look, there is another man running alone.” The king said, “He too is bringing news.”

27 The watchman said, “It seems to me that the first one runs like Ahimaaz son of Zadok.” The king said, “He is a good man; he comes with good news.”

28 Then Ahimaaz called out to the king, “All is well!” He bowed down before the king with his face to the ground and said, “Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hands against my lord the king.”

29 The king asked, “Is the young man Absalom safe?” Ahimaaz answered, “When Joab sent the king’s servant, and me your servant, I saw a great commotion, but I do not know what it was.”

30 The king said, “Step aside and stand here.” So he stepped aside and stood still.

31 Then the Cushite arrived and said, “Good news for my lord the king! The LORD has vindicated you today by delivering you from the power of all who rose up against you.”

32 “Is the young man Absalom unharmed?” the king asked the Cushite. He replied, “May every enemy of my lord the king, and everyone who rises against you to do you harm, end up like that young man.”

33 The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he kept saying, “My son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! If only I had died in your place! Absalom, my son, my son!”[8]

1 So two Hebrew manuscripts, the Greek and the Latin; most Hebrew manuscripts have ‘for now there are ten thousand like us’.

2 Ten shekels, about 115 grams (4 ounces).

3 About 11.5 kilograms (25 pounds).

4 So the traditional reading; the written Hebrew has ‘his life’.

5 Hebrew ‘rods’ or ‘sticks’.

6 Compare 14:27, which says he had three sons; perhaps they had died young.

7 That is, the plain of the Jordan.

8 This verse is 19:1 in the Hebrew text, and 19:1–43 in English are 19:2–44 in Hebrew.

Chapter 19

2 Samuel 19 tells how the victory turns to mourning when the troops hear that the king is grieving for his son, and they steal back into the city like men ashamed. Joab rebukes David for loving those who hate him and shaming those who saved his life, and warns that if he does not speak kindly to his men not one will stay with him; so the king takes his seat in the gate. The tribes argue about bringing the king back, and David appeals to the elders of Judah as his own flesh and blood and promises Amasa Joab’s command. As he returns to the Jordan, Shimei falls before him begging forgiveness, and David swears he will not die. Mephibosheth, unwashed since the king left, says Ziba deceived him, and David divides the land between them. The aged Barzillai, who had provided for the king at Mahanaim, declines to come to Jerusalem and sends Chimham in his place. The men of Israel and the men of Judah quarrel over who has the greater claim on the king, and the words of Judah are the fiercer.

1 Joab was told, “The king is weeping and mourning for Absalom.”

2 So for all the troops the victory that day was turned into mourning, for the troops heard that day, “The king is grieving for his son.”

3 The troops stole into the city that day, as soldiers steal in when they are ashamed because they have fled from battle.

4 The king covered his face and cried aloud, “My son Absalom! Absalom, my son, my son!”

5 Then Joab went into the house to the king and said, “Today you have covered with shame the faces of all your servants, who this day have saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters, your wives and your concubines.

6 You love those who hate you and hate those who love you. You have made it plain today that commanders and soldiers mean nothing to you. I can see now that if Absalom were alive today and all of us were dead, you would be pleased.

7 Now get up, go out and speak kindly to your servants. I swear by the LORD that if you do not go out, not a man will remain with you tonight. That would be worse for you than all the trouble that has come upon you from your youth until now.”

8 So the king got up and took his seat in the gateway. When all the troops were told, “The king is sitting in the gateway,” they all came before the king. Meanwhile the Israelites had fled, each to his own home.

9 Throughout all the tribes of Israel the people were arguing among themselves, saying, “The king rescued us from the hand of our enemies, and he saved us from the hand of the Philistines. Now he has fled the country because of Absalom.

10 But Absalom, whom we anointed to rule over us, has died in battle. So why are you saying nothing about bringing the king back?”

11 King David sent word to Zadok and Abiathar the priests: “Ask the elders of Judah, ‘Why should you be the last to bring the king back to his palace, when the talk of all Israel has reached the king at his home?

12 You are my kinsmen, my own flesh and blood. Why should you be the last to bring the king back?’

13 And say to Amasa, ‘Are you not my own flesh and blood? May God deal with me, and more severely still, if from now on you are not commander of my army in place of Joab.’”

14 So he won over the hearts of all the men of Judah as one man, and they sent word to the king, “Return, you and all your servants.”

15 Then the king returned and came as far as the Jordan. And the men of Judah came to Gilgal to meet the king and escort him across the Jordan.

16 Shimei son of Gera, the Benjaminite from Bahurim, hurried down with the men of Judah to meet King David.

17 With him were a thousand men from Benjamin, along with Ziba the steward of Saul’s household, and his fifteen sons and twenty servants. They rushed down to the Jordan ahead of the king.

18 They crossed at the ford[1] to bring the king’s household over and to do whatever he wished. When Shimei son of Gera had crossed the Jordan, he fell down before the king

19 and said to him, “May my lord not hold me guilty. Do not remember the wrong your servant did on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem. May the king put it out of his mind.

20 For your servant knows that I have sinned. But see, today I have come, the first of the whole house of Joseph,[2] to come down to meet my lord the king.”

21 Abishai son of Zeruiah spoke up: “Should Shimei not be put to death for this? He cursed the LORD’s anointed.”

22 But David replied, “Sons of Zeruiah, what business is this of yours? Why turn against me[3] today? Is any man in Israel to be executed on a day like this? Do I not know that today I am king of Israel again?”

23 So the king said to Shimei, “You shall not die.” And the king gave him his oath.[4]

24 Mephibosheth, Saul’s grandson,[5] also went down to meet the king. He had not cared for his feet or trimmed his beard or washed his clothes from the day the king left until the day he came home safely.

25 When he came from Jerusalem[6] to meet the king, the king asked him, “Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?”

26 He answered, “My lord the king, my servant deceived me. Your servant said, ‘I will have my donkey saddled so that I can ride on it and go with the king,’ for your servant is lame.

27 But he slandered your servant to my lord the king. My lord the king is like the angel of God; so do whatever seems good to you.

28 All my grandfather’s family deserved nothing but death from my lord the king, yet you set your

servant among those who eat at your table. What right do I have to make any more appeals to the king?”

29 The king said to him, “Why say any more? I have decided that you and Ziba are to divide the land.”

30 Mephibosheth said to the king, “Let him take it all, now that my lord the king has come home safely.”

31 Barzillai the Gileadite had come down from Rogelim and went on to the Jordan with the king to see him off across the river.

32 Barzillai was a very old man, eighty years old. He had provided for the king while he stayed at Mahanaim, for he was a very wealthy man.

33 The king said to Barzillai, “Come over with me, and I will provide for you at my side in Jerusalem.”

34 But Barzillai answered the king, “How many more years have I to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem?

35 I am now eighty years old. Can I tell what is good from what is bad? Can your servant taste what he eats and drinks? Can I still hear the voices of men and women singing? Why should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king?

36 Your servant will go only a little way across the Jordan with the king. Why should the king repay me with such a reward?

37 Please let your servant go back, so that I may die in my own town near the grave of my father and mother. But here is your servant Chimham.[7] Let him cross over with my lord the king, and do for him whatever seems good to you.”

38 The king said, “Chimham shall cross over with me, and I will do for him whatever seems good to you. Anything you ask of me I will do for you.”

39 So all the people crossed the Jordan, and the king crossed too. The king kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and Barzillai went back home.

40 The king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went with him. All the troops of Judah and half the troops of Israel escorted the king.

41 Then all the men of Israel came to the king and said to him, “Why have our kinsmen, the men of Judah, stolen you away and brought the king and his household across the Jordan, along with all David’s men?”

42 The men of Judah all retorted, “The king is one of our own kin. What is there to be angry about? Have we been living off the king, or has he handed us any reward?”

43 But the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, “We have ten shares in the king, and in David we have more claim than you. Why then do you treat us with contempt? Were we not the first to speak of bringing back our king?” But the men of Judah spoke even more harshly than the men of Israel.

1 The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

2 Meaning the northern tribes, of which Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph’s sons, were the largest.

3 Hebrew ‘a satan’, an opponent or accuser.

4 Compare 1 Kings 2:8–9, 36–46.

5 Hebrew ‘son’.

6 Or ‘came to Jerusalem’.

7 Probably Barzillai’s son; compare 1 Kings 2:7.

Chapter 20

2 Samuel 20 tells how a worthless man named Sheba son of Bichri, a Benjaminite, sounds the horn and calls Israel away from David, and all Israel follows him, while Judah stays loyal. David returns to Jerusalem and keeps his ten concubines in seclusion, widows for the rest of their lives. He tells Amasa to call out Judah within three days, but Amasa is late, so David sends Abishai after Sheba. At Gibeon Joab greets Amasa as a brother, takes him by the beard to kiss him, and kills him with a hidden sword, then takes up the pursuit. Sheba shuts himself up in Abel of Beth-maacah, and as Joab batters the wall a wise woman calls out from the city, pleading for a mother city in Israel. When Joab says he wants only Sheba, the people cut off Sheba’s head and throw it over the wall, and Joab sounds the horn and returns to the king. The chapter closes with a list of David’s officials.

1 Now a worthless man happened to be there, named Sheba son of Bichri, a Benjaminite. He

blew the ram's horn and shouted, "We have no share in David, no inheritance in the son of Jesse! Every man to his tents, Israel!"

2 So all the men of Israel deserted David and followed Sheba son of Bichri. But the men of Judah stood by their king all the way from the Jordan to Jerusalem.

3 When David came to his palace in Jerusalem, the king took the ten concubines he had left to look after the palace and put them in a house under guard. He provided for them but did not sleep with them. They were shut away until the day of their death, living as widows.

4 Then the king said to Amasa, "Call up the men of Judah for me within three days, and be here yourself."

5 So Amasa went to call up Judah, but he took longer than the time the king had set him.

6 David told Abishai, "Sheba son of Bichri is going to be a worse danger to us than Absalom. Take the men who serve your lord and go after him before he reaches some walled town and slips out of our grasp."[1]

7 So Joab's men, together with the Cherethites and the Pelethites and all the warriors, marched out under him. They left Jerusalem to pursue Sheba son of Bichri.

8 When they were at the great stone in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Joab was wearing his military tunic, and over it a belt with a sword in its sheath fastened at his waist. As he stepped forward, it fell out.

9 "Is all well with you, my brother?" Joab asked Amasa, and he reached for Amasa's beard with his right hand as though to kiss him.

10 Amasa was not on his guard against the sword in Joab's hand, and Joab struck him in the belly with it and spilled his entrails on the ground. He did not need to strike again, and Amasa died. Then Joab and his brother Abishai pursued Sheba son of Bichri.

11 One of Joab's young men stood beside Amasa and said, "Whoever is for Joab, and whoever is for David, follow Joab!"

12 Amasa lay wallowing in his blood in the middle of the road, and the man saw that all the troops were stopping. So he dragged Amasa from the road into the field and threw a cloak over him, since he saw that everyone who came by him stood still.

13 Once he had been moved from the road, everyone went on after Joab to pursue Sheba son of Bichri.

14 Sheba passed through all the tribes of Israel to Abel of Beth-maacah, and all the Bichrites[2] assembled and followed him in.

15 Joab's forces came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maacah. They built a siege ramp against the city, and it stood against the outer rampart. All the troops with Joab were battering the wall to bring it down.

16 Then a wise woman called out from the city, "Listen! Listen! Tell Joab, 'Come here, so that I can speak to you.'"

17 He came near to her, and the woman asked, "Are you Joab?" "I am," he answered. She said to him, "Listen to what your servant has to say." "I am listening," he replied.

18 Then she said, "In the old days people used to say, 'Let them ask for advice at Abel,' and that settled the matter.

19 I am one of the peaceful and faithful in Israel. You are trying to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why would you swallow up the LORD's inheritance?"

20 "Never!" Joab replied. "Heaven forbid that I should swallow up or ruin anything!

21 That is not the case. A man from the hill country of Ephraim, named Sheba son of Bichri, has lifted his hand against the king, against David. Hand over this one man, and I will withdraw from the city." The woman said to Joab, "His head will be thrown to you over the wall."

22 Then the woman went to all the people with her wise advice, and they cut off the head of Sheba son of Bichri and threw it to Joab. So he blew the ram's horn, and they dispersed from the city, each to his home. And Joab went back to the king at Jerusalem.

23 Joab commanded the whole Israelite army, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada had charge of the Cherethites and the Pelethites;

24 Adoram[3] was over the forced labour; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder;

25 Sheva was secretary; Zadok and Abiathar were priests;

26 and Ira the Jairite was also David's priest.

1 Or ‘and pluck out our eye’; the Hebrew is uncertain.
2 So the Greek; the Hebrew has ‘Berites’, otherwise unknown.
3 Called Adoniram in 1 Kings 4:6.

Chapter 21

2 Samuel 21 tells how a famine lasts three years in David’s reign, and the LORD reveals that it is because Saul broke Israel’s oath to the Gibeonites and tried to wipe them out. The Gibeonites ask for seven of Saul’s descendants, and David hands over two sons of Rizpah and five grandsons of Saul, sparing Mephibosheth for Jonathan’s sake; they are put to death on the mountain before the LORD at the start of the barley harvest. Rizpah spreads sackcloth on the rock and guards the bodies from birds and beasts until the rains come. Moved by this, David brings the bones of Saul and Jonathan from Jabesh-gilead and buries them with the others in the tomb of Kish, and God answers prayer for the land. The chapter then records four battles with the Philistines in which David’s men kill giants descended from Rapha, including Ishbi-benob, who nearly kills the tired David, and Goliath’s kin; after the first, David’s men swear that he must no longer go out to battle, so that the lamp of Israel will not be put out.

1 In David’s time there was a famine for three
years running, and David sought the face of the
LORD. The LORD said, “It is on account of Saul
and his bloodstained house, because he put the
Gibeonites to death.”

2 So the king summoned the Gibeonites and spoke
to them. The Gibeonites were not Israelites but a
remnant of the Amorites. The Israelites had sworn
an oath to spare them,[1] but Saul in his zeal for
Israel and Judah had tried to wipe them out.

3 David asked the Gibeonites, “What shall I do for
you? How can I make amends, so that you will
bless the LORD’s inheritance?”

4 The Gibeonites answered him, “It is not a matter
of silver or gold between us and Saul or his family,
nor is it for us to put anyone in Israel to death.”
“Whatever you ask,” David said, “I will do for
you.”

5 They replied to the king, “As for the man who
destroyed us and plotted against us, so that we
have been wiped out and have no place anywhere
in Israel’s territory,

6 let seven of his male descendants be handed over
to us, and we will hang them up[2] before the LORD
at Gibeah of Saul, the LORD’s chosen one.”[3] “I will
hand them over,” the king said.

7 But the king spared Mephibosheth son of
Jonathan, the son of Saul, because of the oath
before the LORD between David and Saul’s son
Jonathan.[4]

8 The king took Armoni and Mephibosheth, the two
sons whom Rizpah daughter of Aiah had borne to
Saul, and the five sons of Saul’s daughter Merab,[5]
whom she had borne to Adriel son of Barzillai the
Meholathite.

9 He handed them over to the Gibeonites, who
hanged them on the mountain before the LORD.
All seven of them fell together. They were put to
death in the first days of harvest, at the beginning
of the barley harvest.[6]

10 Rizpah daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and
spread it out for herself on the rock. From the
beginning of the harvest until the rain fell on them
from the sky, she did not let the birds of the air
settle on them by day or the wild animals come at
them by night.

11 When David was told what Rizpah daughter of
Aiah, Saul’s concubine, had done,

12 he went and took the bones of Saul and of his
son Jonathan from the citizens of Jabesh-gilead.
They had stolen them from the public square of
Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hung them
on the day the Philistines struck Saul down at
Gilboa.[7]

13 He brought up the bones of Saul and his son
Jonathan from there, and they gathered the bones
of those who had been hanged.

14 They buried the bones of Saul and his son
Jonathan in the land of Benjamin at Zela, in the
tomb of his father Kish, and did everything the
king commanded. After that, God answered prayer
on behalf of the land.

15 Once more there was war between the
Philistines and Israel. David went down with his
men, and they fought against the Philistines, and
David grew exhausted.

16 Ishbi-benob, one of the descendants of Rapha,[8] whose bronze spearhead weighed three hundred shekels[9] and who was armed with a new sword,[10] said he would kill David.

17 But Abishai son of Zeruiah came to his aid, struck the Philistine and killed him. Then David's men swore to him, "You must never again go out with us to battle, or you will put out the lamp of Israel."

18 Some time after this there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob. Then Sibbecai the Hushathite struck down Saph, who was one of the descendants of Rapha.

19 There was another battle with the Philistines at Gob, and Elhanan son of Jaare-oregim[11] the Bethlehemite struck down Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

20 There was yet another battle, at Gath, where there was a giant of a man with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in all. He too was descended from Rapha.

21 When he taunted Israel, Jonathan son of David's brother Shimeah[12] struck him down.

22 These four were descended from Rapha in Gath, and they fell at the hands of David and his men.

1 See Joshua 9:3–27.

2 The exact form of execution is uncertain; perhaps 'expose' or 'impale'.

3 Perhaps 'on the mountain of the LORD', following the Greek; compare verse 9.

4 See 1 Samuel 20:14–17, 42.

5 So two Hebrew manuscripts and the Greek; most Hebrew manuscripts have 'Michal'. Merab was the wife of Adriel (1 Samuel 18:19).

6 Around April.

7 See 1 Samuel 31:8–13.

8 Or 'of the giants'; Hebrew 'the Rapha', probably the ancestor of the Rephaim (Deuteronomy 2:11). So also in verses 18, 20 and 22.

9 About 3.5 kilograms (7½ pounds).

10 Hebrew 'with a new thing'; the weapon is not named.

11 1 Chronicles 20:5 has 'Elhanan son of Jair struck down Lahmi the brother of Goliath'. The word 'oregim' ('weavers') appears again at the end of the verse and may have been copied twice.

12 So the traditional reading, as in 13:3; the written Hebrew has 'Shimei'.

Chapter 22

2 Samuel 22 records the song David sang to the LORD when He rescued him from all his enemies and from Saul; the same song appears as Psalm 18. The LORD is his rock, fortress and deliverer, his shield and the horn of his salvation. When the cords of death entangled him he cried out, and the LORD heard from His temple: the earth shook, He came down riding on a cherub, thundered from heaven and drew him out of deep waters. The LORD rewarded him for his righteousness, for with the faithful He shows Himself faithful. God's way is perfect and His word is proven; there is no Rock except our God. He trained David's hands for war, gave him the shield of His salvation and made him head of the nations, so that foreigners cringe before him. The LORD lives; therefore David will praise Him among the nations, for He shows loyal kindness to His anointed, to David and his offspring for ever.

1 David spoke to the LORD the words of this song on the day when the LORD rescued him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.[1]

2 He said, "The LORD is my rock, my stronghold and my rescuer;

3 He is my God, the rock where I shelter,[2] the shield that guards me and the horn that saves me,[3] my fortress on the height, my place of escape, my Saviour, who keeps me safe from violence.

4 I call on the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies.

5 For the breakers of death swept round me; the torrents of destruction[4] overwhelmed me with terror.

6 The cords of Sheol[5] coiled about me; the snares of death lay in wait for me.

7 In my distress I called on the LORD; to my God I called. From His temple He heard my voice; my cry for help reached His ears.

8 Then the earth heaved and quaked; the
foundations of the heavens trembled and shook,
because He was angry.

9 Smoke went up from His nostrils, and devouring
fire from His mouth; glowing coals blazed out
from Him.

10 He parted the heavens and came down, with
thick darkness under His feet.

11 Riding a cherub He flew, and appeared[6] borne
along on the wind's wings.

12 He made darkness a canopy around Him, a
gathering of waters, dense clouds of the sky.

13 Out of the brightness before Him coals of fire
flamed up.

14 The LORD thundered from heaven; the Most
High made His voice resound.

15 He shot arrows and scattered them, lightning,
and threw them into confusion.

16 The beds of the sea came into view and the
world's foundations were uncovered when the
LORD rebuked them, when the breath of His
nostrils blasted out.

17 He reached down from on high and took hold of
me; He drew me out of mighty waters.

18 He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from
those who hated me, for they were too strong for
me.

19 They confronted me on the day of my disaster,
but the LORD was my support.

20 He brought me out into an open place; He set
me free because He delighted in me.

21 The LORD has dealt with me according to my
righteousness; He has repaid me according to the
cleanness of my hands.

22 I have walked in the LORD's paths and have not
wickedly abandoned my God.

23 All His rules are before me, and I have not
turned aside from His statutes.

24 I have been blameless before Him and have kept
myself from guilt.

25 So the LORD has repaid me according to my
righteousness, according to my cleanness in His
sight.

26 With the loyal You show Yourself loyal; with the
blameless man You show Yourself blameless.

27 To the pure You show Your purity, but to the
twisted You show Your cunning.

28 You save a humble people, but Your eyes are on
the haughty to bring them low.

29 You, LORD, are my lamp; the LORD lights up my
darkness.

30 With You I can charge against a troop; with my
God I can leap over a wall.

31 This God, His way is perfect; the word of the
LORD has been tested in the fire. He is a shield to
all who take refuge in Him.

32 Who but the LORD is God? Who but our God is a
rock?

33 God is my strong fortress, and He has made my
way blameless.[7]

34 He makes my feet like the feet of a deer and sets
me secure on the heights.

35 He trains my hands for battle, so that my arms
can bend a bow of bronze.

36 You have handed me Your shield of salvation,
and Your help[8] has raised me up.

37 You have widened the path beneath my steps,
and my ankles have not given way.

38 I pursued my enemies and destroyed them; I did
not turn back until they were finished off.

39 I finished them off and crushed them, so that
they could not rise; they fell beneath my feet.

40 You armed me with strength for the battle; You
made my attackers sink beneath me.

41 You made my enemies turn their backs to me,
and those who hated me I destroyed.

42 They looked for help, but there was no one to
save them; they cried to the LORD, but He did not
answer them.

43 I beat them as fine as the dust of the earth; I
crushed and trampled them like mud in the
streets.

44 You delivered me from the quarrels of my
people; You kept me as head of the nations. A
people I did not know serve me.

45 Foreigners come cringing to me; as soon as they
hear of me, they obey me.

46 Foreigners lose heart, and come trembling[9] out
of their strongholds.

47 The LORD is alive! Praise to my rock! Let God
be lifted high, the rock who saves me,

48 the God who gives me vengeance and brings
peoples down beneath me,

49 who brings me out from my enemies. You lift me
high above those who rise against me; You rescue

me from violent men.

50 Therefore I will praise You, LORD, among the nations, and sing to Your name.[10]

51 He is a tower of salvation[11] for His king, and shows loyal kindness to His anointed, to David and his offspring for ever."

1 The song appears again, with small differences, as Psalm 18.
2 The Greek of this line is quoted in Hebrews 2:13, "I will put My trust in Him"; the same words occur in Isaiah 8:17.
3 The horn is a picture of strength; compare 1 Samuel 2:1, 10.
4 Hebrew 'of Belial', worthlessness or ruin.
5 The place of the dead.
6 Many manuscripts and Psalm 18:10 have 'He soared'; the two Hebrew words differ by one letter.
7 So the traditional reading and Psalm 18:32; the written Hebrew has 'His way'. The first half of the verse is uncertain.
8 Or 'Your answering'; Psalm 18:35 has 'Your gentleness'.
9 So Psalm 18:45; the Hebrew here may mean 'come limping'.
10 Quoted in Romans 15:9 of the Gentiles praising God.
11 So the traditional reading; the written Hebrew, like Psalm 18:50, has 'He gives great victories'.

Chapter 23

2 Samuel 23 opens with the last words of David, the man raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob and the sweet singer of Israel: the Spirit of the LORD spoke through him, and one who rules justly in the fear of God is like the morning sun after rain; God has made with his house an everlasting covenant, ordered and secure, while the worthless are like thorns to be burned. Then come the exploits of David's mighty men: the Three, Josheb-basshebeth, Eleazar and Shammah, who each stand their ground against the Philistines when the LORD brings about a great victory; the three who break through the Philistine lines to bring David water from the well of Bethlehem, which he pours out to the LORD rather than drink the blood of men who risked their lives; Abishai, chief of the Thirty; and Benaiah, who kills a lion in a pit on a snowy day. The chapter closes with the names of the Thirty, ending with Uriah the Hittite, thirty-seven in all.

1 These are David's final words: "Thus speaks David son of Jesse; thus speaks the man whom God exalted, the one anointed by Jacob's God, Israel's beloved singer:[1]

2 The Spirit of the LORD speaks through me; His word is on my tongue.

3 The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel said to me: When one rules over people in righteousness, ruling in the fear of God,

4 he is like the light of morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, like the gleam after rain that makes the grass spring from the earth.

5 Is not my house like this with God? For He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in every part and secure. Will He not bring to fruit all my salvation and all my desire?

6 But worthless men are all like thorns that are thrown away, for they cannot be picked up by hand.

7 Whoever touches them arms himself with iron or the shaft of a spear, and they are utterly burned up with fire where they lie."

8 These are the names of David's mighty men: Josheb-basshebeth[2] the Tahchemonite was chief of the Three.[3] He wielded his spear[4] against eight hundred men, whom he killed at one time.

9 Next to him among the three mighty men was Eleazar son of Dodo, son of Ahohi. He was with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle, and the men of Israel withdrew.

10 But he stood his ground and struck down the Philistines until his hand grew tired and stuck to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day, and the troops came back to him only to strip the dead.

11 Next to him was Shammah son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines had gathered at Lehi,[5] where there was a plot of ground full of lentils, and the troops fled from the Philistines.

12 But he took his stand in the middle of the plot, defended it and struck down the Philistines, and the LORD brought about a great victory.

13 At harvest time three of the thirty chiefs went down to David at the cave of Adullam, while a band of Philistines was camped in the Valley of Rephaim.

14 David was then in the stronghold, and a
Philistine garrison was then at Bethlehem.
15 David said longingly, “If only someone would
give me water to drink from the well by the gate
of Bethlehem!”
16 So the three mighty men broke through the
Philistine camp, drew water from the well by the
gate of Bethlehem and brought it to David. But he
would not drink it; he poured it out to the LORD
17 and said, “LORD, far be it from me to do this! Is
this not the blood of the men who went at the risk
of their lives?” So he would not drink it. These
were the things the three mighty men did.
18 Abishai the brother of Joab, son of Zeruiah, was
chief of the Thirty.[6] He wielded his spear against
three hundred men and killed them, and he won a
name beside the Three.
19 Was he not the most honoured of the Thirty? He
became their commander, but he did not attain to
the Three.
20 Benaiah son of Jehoiada was a valiant man[7] from
Kabzeel, who did great deeds. He struck down two
champions[8] of Moab. He also went down into a pit
on a snowy day and killed a lion.
21 And he struck down an Egyptian, an impressive
man. The Egyptian had a spear in his hand, but
Benaiah went down to him with a staff, snatched
the spear out of the Egyptian’s hand and killed
him with his own spear.
22 These were the things Benaiah son of Jehoiada
did, and he won a name beside the three mighty
men.
23 He was honoured above the Thirty, but he did
not attain to the Three. And David put him in
charge of his bodyguard.
24 Among the Thirty were Asahel the brother of
Joab; Elhanan son of Dodo of Bethlehem;
25 Shammah the Harodite; Elika the Harodite;
26 Helez the Paltite; Ira son of Ikkesh of Tekoa;
27 Abiezer of Anathoth; Mebunnai[9] the Hushathite;
28 Zalmon the Ahohite; Maharai of Netophah;
29 Heleb son of Baanah of Netophah; Ittai son of
Ribai from Gibeah of the Benjaminites;
30 Benaiah of Pirathon; Hiddai of the ravines of
Gaash;
31 Abi-albon the Arbathite; Azmaveth of Bahurim;
32 Eliahba the Shaalbonite; the sons of Jashen;
Jonathan,
33 son of Shammah the Hararite;[10] Ahiam son of
Sharar the Hararite;
34 Eliphelet son of Ahasbai the Maacathite; Eliam
son of Ahithophel the Gilonite;
35 Hezro[11] of Carmel; Paarai the Arbite;
36 Igal son of Nathan of Zobah; Bani the Gadite;
37 Zelek the Ammonite; Naharai of Beeroth, the
armour-bearer of Joab son of Zeruiah;
38 Ira the Ithrite; Gareb the Ithrite;
39 and Uriah the Hittite. There were thirty-seven in
all.[12]

1 Or ‘the favourite of the Strong One of Israel’.

2 1 Chronicles 11:11 has ‘Jashobeam’.

3 Or ‘of the officers’; the Hebrew words for ‘three’ and ‘officer’ are very alike, and the manuscripts vary here and in verses 18–19.

4 So 1 Chronicles 11:11 and the Greek; the Hebrew here has ‘He was Adino the Eznite’.

5 Or ‘in a troop’.

6 So two Hebrew manuscripts and the Syriac; most have ‘the Three’. So also in verse 19.

7 So the traditional reading; the written Hebrew has ‘a living man’.

8 Hebrew ‘two Ariel’; the meaning is uncertain.

9 Called Sibbecai in 21:18 and 1 Chronicles 11:29.

10 Compare 1 Chronicles 11:34, ‘Jonathan son of Shagee the Hararite’.

11 So the traditional reading; the written Hebrew has ‘Hezrai’.

12 The total probably includes the Three, Abishai, Benaiah and the thirty-two names that follow (counting ‘the sons of Jashen’ as one), with Joab as commander-in-chief.

Chapter 24

2 Samuel 24 tells how the LORD's anger burns against Israel again, and He incites David to count Israel and Judah. Joab objects but is overruled, and after nearly ten months he reports eight hundred thousand fighting men in Israel and five hundred thousand in Judah. David's conscience strikes him and he confesses that he has sinned and acted very foolishly. The prophet Gad offers him a choice of three punishments: famine, flight from his enemies, or three days of plague. David chooses to fall into the hands of the LORD, whose mercy is great, rather than into human hands. Seventy thousand die in the plague, but as the angel reaches out to destroy Jerusalem the LORD relents, and the angel stops at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. David asks that the punishment fall on him and his family rather than on the sheep. At Gad's word he goes to build an altar there; Araunah offers everything as a gift, but David insists on paying, for he will not offer the LORD burnt offerings that cost him nothing. He buys the threshing floor and the oxen, sacrifices, and the plague is stopped.

1 Again the anger of the LORD burned against
Israel, and He incited David against them, saying,
"Go and count Israel and Judah."[1]

2 So the king said to Joab, the commander of the
army, who was with him,[2] "Go through all the
tribes of Israel from Dan to Beersheba and
register the people, so that I may know how many
there are."

3 Joab answered the king, "May the LORD your
God make the nation a hundred times as large as
it is, and may my lord the king live to see it with
his own eyes. But why should my lord the king set
his heart on such a thing?"

4 The king's word prevailed over Joab and the
commanders of the army, so Joab and the
commanders left the king's presence to register
the people of Israel.

5 They crossed the Jordan and began at Aroer,[3]
south of the town in the middle of the valley, and
went on through Gad to Jazer.

6 Then they went to Gilead and to the region of
Tahtim-hodshi,[4] and they came to Dan-jaan and
round towards Sidon.

7 They came to the fortress of Tyre and all the
towns of the Hivites and the Canaanites, and
finally went out to the Negev of Judah at
Beersheba.

8 After travelling throughout the land for nine
months and twenty days, they returned to
Jerusalem.

9 Joab reported the number of those registered to
the king: in Israel there were eight hundred
thousand able-bodied men who could draw the
sword, and in Judah five hundred thousand.[5]

10 But afterwards David was stricken in conscience
for having counted the people. David said to the
LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done.
Now, LORD, please take away the guilt of Your
servant, for I have acted very foolishly."

11 When David got up in the morning, the word of
the LORD had come to the prophet Gad, David's
seer:

12 "Go and tell David, 'This is what the LORD says:
I am offering you three things. Choose one of
them, and I will carry it out against you.'"

13 So Gad went to David and told him. He said to
him, "Shall seven years[6] of famine come upon
your land? Or three months of fleeing from your
enemies while they pursue you? Or three days of
plague in your land? Now consider and decide
what answer I should give to the One who sent
me."

14 David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Let us
fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercy is
great; but let me not fall into human hands."

15 So the LORD sent a plague on Israel from that
morning until the appointed time, and seventy
thousand of the people died, from Dan to
Beersheba.

16 But when the angel stretched out his hand
towards Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD
relented concerning the disaster, and said to the
angel who was destroying the people, "Enough!
Now hold back your hand." The angel of the LORD
was then by the threshing floor of Araunah[7] the
Jebusite.

17 When David saw the angel who was striking
down the people, he said to the LORD, "It is I who
have sinned, I who have done wrong. But these
sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand be
against me and against my father's family."

18 That day Gad came to David and said to him,
"Go up and set up an altar to the LORD on the
threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite."

19 So David went up as Gad had said, as the LORD had commanded.

20 When Araunah looked down and saw the king and his servants coming towards him, he went out and bowed to the king with his face to the ground.

21 Araunah asked, “Why has my lord the king come to his servant?” David answered, “To buy the threshing floor from you, so that I can build an altar to the LORD and the plague on the people may be stopped.”

22 Araunah said to David, “Let my lord the king take it and offer up whatever seems good to him. Here are the oxen for the burnt offering, and the threshing sledges and the oxen’s yokes for the wood.

23 All this, O king, Araunah gives to the king.” And Araunah said to the king, “May the LORD your God accept you.”

24 “No,” the king told Araunah. “I must pay you the full price. I will not present to the LORD my God burnt offerings I have been given for free.” So David paid fifty shekels of silver for the threshing floor and the oxen.[8]

25 David built an altar to the LORD there and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. Then the LORD answered prayer for the land, and the plague on Israel was stopped.

1 1 Chronicles 21:1 says that Satan incited David; compare Job 1–2, where the accuser acts only by God’s permission.

2 The Greek and 1 Chronicles 21:2 have ‘to Joab and the commanders of the army’; compare verse 4.

3 So the Greek; the Hebrew has ‘camped in Aroer’.

4 The name is uncertain; perhaps ‘the land of the Hittites, to Kadesh’.

5 1 Chronicles 21:5 has 1,100,000 for Israel and 470,000 for Judah.

6 The Greek and 1 Chronicles 21:12 have ‘three years’.

7 Called Ornan in 1 Chronicles 21:15. The site later became the place of the temple (2 Chronicles 3:1).

8 About 575 grams (1¼ pounds). 1 Chronicles 21:25 has 600 shekels of gold, probably for the whole site.