

2 Chronicles

¹ Solomon, son of David, strengthened his hold over the kingdom, and the Lord God was with him and made him extremely powerful. ² Solomon sent for all the Israelite leaders, to the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, to the judges, and to every family leader. ³ Solomon went with the whole assembly to the high place at Gibeon, for this was the site of God's Tent of Meeting that Moses, the Lord's servant, had made in the wilderness.

⁴ David had brought up the Ark of God from Kiriath-jearim to the place in Jerusalem where he had set up a tent for it. ⁵ However, the bronze altar made by Bezalel, son of Uri, son of Hur, was there* in front of the Tent of the Lord, so that is where Solomon and the assembly went to worship. ⁶ Solomon went up to the bronze altar before the Lord, in front of the Tent of Meeting. There he presented one thousand burnt offerings.

⁷ That night God appeared to Solomon and told him, "Ask what you want me to give you."

⁸ Solomon responded to God, "You showed trustworthy love without limit to my father David, and you have made me king in his place. ⁹ Lord God, please keep the promise you made to my father David. You have made me king over a nation that has as many people as the

* **1:5** In Gibeon.

dust of the earth. ¹⁰ Please give me wisdom and knowledge to lead[†] this people—for who can rule with justice[‡] this great people of yours?”

¹¹ God told Solomon: “Because this is what you really wanted, and you didn’t ask for wealth, possessions, or honor, or the death of those who hate you, or for a long life, but instead you asked for wisdom and knowledge so you can rule with justice my people that I have made you king over; ¹² wisdom and knowledge is given to you. I will give you wealth, possessions, and honor as well, much more than any king who came before you has had, or who comes after you will ever have.” ¹³ Then Solomon returned to Jerusalem from the Tent of Meeting in Gibeon, and he ruled over Israel.

¹⁴ Solomon built up an army of chariots and horses. He had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horses, which he placed in the chariot cities, and also with him in Jerusalem. ¹⁵ The king made silver and gold as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar wood as plentiful as sycamore-figs trees in the foothills. ¹⁶ Solomon imported horses for himself from Egypt and Kue; the king’s traders bought them in Kue. ¹⁷ A chariot could be imported from Egypt for six hundred silver shekels, and a horse for a hundred and fifty. In the same way they exported them to all the Hittite kings and the Aramean kings.

[†] **1:10** “Lead this people”: literally, “go out and come in before this people.” [‡] **1:10** “Rule with justice”: the word here really means “judge.”

2

¹ Solomon ordered the building of a Temple* to honor the Lord and a royal palace for himself.

² He allocated 70,000 men as laborers, 80,000 as stone cutters in the mountains, and 3,600 as foremen.

³ Solomon sent a message to Hiram,[†] king of Tyre, telling him, ⁴ “Please do as you did with my father David when you sent him cedar timber for him to build a palace to live in. I’m about to start building a Temple to honor the Lord my God, dedicated to him, where he will be offered sweet-smelling incense, where the showbread will be always set out in rows, and where burnt offerings will be made every morning and evening, on the Sabbaths, at new moon festivals, and at the feasts of the Lord our God—this to be done forever in Israel. ⁵ This Temple I am about to build must be impressive, because our God is greater than all gods. ⁶ But who can build a Temple for him to live in, for the heavens, even highest heaven, cannot contain him, and who am I that I should dare to build him a house, except to burn incense to him?

⁷ So please send me a master craftsman who is skilled in working with gold, silver, bronze, and iron; and in purple, scarlet, and blue fabrics. He must also know how to engrave, working together with my expert craftsmen from Judea and Jerusalem provided by my father David.

* **2:1** The words “Temple” and “palace” translate the usual word for “house.” † **2:3** “Hiram,” here spelled “Huram,” also 2:11. (See 1 Kings 5).

⁸ Also send me cedar, cypress, and alnum timber from Lebanon, for I know that your workers are skillful in cutting down the trees of Lebanon. I will send men to help your workers ⁹ to produce a large quantity of timber because the Temple I'm building will be really large and very impressive. ¹⁰ I will pay your workers, the woodcutters, 20,000 cors of crushed wheat, 20,000 cors of barley, 20,000 baths of wine, and 20,000 baths of olive oil."

¹¹ King Hiram of Tyre responded to Solomon by letter: "It's because the Lord loves his people that he has made you their king." ¹² Hiram went on, "Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, who made the heavens and the earth! He has given King David a wise son with insight and understanding who is going to build a Temple for the Lord and a royal palace for himself.

¹³ I'm sending you Hiram-Abi, a master craftsman who knows and understands what he's doing. ¹⁴ His mother is from the tribe of Dan and his father is from Tyre. He's an expert in working with gold and silver, bronze and iron, stone and wood, purple, blue, and crimson fabric, and fine linen. He can do all kinds of engraving and can make any design he's given. He'll work with your craftsmen and with the craftsmen of my lord, your father David.

¹⁵ Now my lord, please send to us his servants the wheat, barley, olive oil, and wine he spoke about. ¹⁶ We will cut all timber you need from Lebanon and take it to you by sea in rafts

to Joppa. From there you can transport it to Jerusalem.”

¹⁷ Solomon had a census taken of all the foreigners in the land of Israel, like the census his father David had conducted, and found there were 153,600. ¹⁸ He allocated 70,000 as laborers, 80,000 as stonemasons in the mountains, and 3,600 as foremen.

3

¹ Then Solomon began building the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared to his father David. This was the place that David had provided—the former threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. ² Solomon began construction on the second day of the second month in his fourth year as king.

³ The size of the foundation Solomon laid for the Temple of God was sixty cubits long and twenty cubits wide, (according to the old cubit measurement). ⁴ The front porch that ran across the width of the Temple was twenty cubits long and twenty* cubits high. He covered the inside of the porch with pure gold. ⁵ He paneled the main room with cypress overlaid with fine gold, with images of palm trees and chains. ⁶ He decorated the Temple with beautiful gems, and with gold he imported from Parvaim. ⁷ He covered the beams, thresholds, walls, and doors of the Temple with gold, and he carved cherubim on the walls.

* **3:4** The Hebrew reads “one hundred and twenty” but this is surely a scribal error, since the height of the main Temple according to 1 Kings 6:2 was 30 cubits.

⁸ He made the room of the Most Holy Place to correspond with the width of the Temple—twenty cubits long and twenty cubits wide. He covered the interior with six hundred talents of fine gold. ⁹ The weight of the nails was one shekel for every fifty shekels of gold.†

¹⁰ He made for the Most Holy Place two wooden cherubim covered with gold. ¹¹ The wingspan of the cherubim together was twenty cubits. One wing of the first cherub was five cubits long and touched one Temple wall, while its other wing, also five cubits long, and touched the second cherub. ¹² In similar fashion, one wing of the second cherub was five cubits long and touched one Temple wall, while its other wing, also five cubits long, and touched the first cherub. ¹³ So the wingspan of these cherubim together was twenty cubits. They stood on their feet, facing the main room.

¹⁴ He made the veil‡ of blue, purple, and crimson embroidery on fine linen, with images of cherubim on it. ¹⁵ He made two columns for the front of the Temple, thirty-five cubits, each having a capital five cubits high. ¹⁶ He made chains like in the Most Holy Place and he placed them on top of the columns. He also made one hundred ornamental pomegranates and attached them to each chain.§ ¹⁷ He set up

† **3:9** “One shekel for every fifty shekels of gold”: Septuagint reading. ‡ **3:14** “Veil”: a curtain separating the Most Holy Place from the main room. § **3:16** It seems there were four chains each holding one hundred ornamental pomegranates (see 4:13, 1 Kings 7:42).

the columns in front of the Temple, one on the south, and one on the north. The column on the south he named Jachin, and the column on the north he named Boaz.

4

¹ Solomon made a bronze altar twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and ten cubits high.

² He made a “Sea” from cast metal,* ten cubits in diameter, five cubits in height, and thirty cubits in circumference. ³ Below it were ornamental bulls† all around it, ten per cubit. They were in

two rows when it was all cast. ⁴ The Sea was supported by twelve statues of bulls three facing

north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east. The Sea was placed on them, with their rears toward the center. ⁵ It was as

thick as the width of a hand, and its edge was like the flared edge of a cup or a lily flower. It held three thousand baths.‡ ⁶ He also made ten basins on carts for washing. He placed five on the south

side, and five on the north. They were used for cleaning what was used in burnt offerings, but the Sea was used by the priests for washing.

⁷ He made ten gold lampstands as had been specified,§ and placed them in the Temple, five on the south side and five on the north. ⁸ In addition he made ten tables and placed them in

* **4:2** This was a large basin filled with water. The metal used was probably bronze, but is not specifically identified as such in the text. † **4:3** See 1 Kings 7:24 which reads “gourds.” ‡ **4:5** See 1 Kings 7:26 which lists the capacity as two thousand baths.

§ **4:7** See 1 Chronicles 28:15.

the Temple, five on the south side and five on the north. He also made a hundred gold basins.

⁹ Solomon also built a courtyard of the priests, and the large courtyard and doors for the courtyard, and he covered the doors with bronze.

¹⁰ He placed the Sea on the south side, by the southeast corner.

¹¹ Hiram also made the pots, shovels, and basins. Hiram completed the work that he had been doing for King Solomon on the Temple of God: ¹² the two columns; the two bowl-shaped capitals on top of the columns; the two sets of network* that covered both bowls of the capitals on top of the columns; ¹³ the four hundred ornamental pomegranates for the two sets of network—two rows of pomegranates for each network covering both the bowl-shaped capitals on top of the columns; ¹⁴ the water carts and the basins on the water carts; ¹⁵ the Sea and the twelve bull statues that supported it; the pots, shovels, forks, and everything else.

¹⁶ All the metalwork Hiram made for King Solomon for the house of the Lord was of polished bronze. ¹⁷ The king cast them in clay molds in the plain of the Jordan between Succoth and Zeredah. ¹⁸ Solomon made so many of these things that the weight of the bronze used could not be measured.

¹⁹ Solomon also made everything used in the Temple of God: the golden altar; the tables where the Bread of the Presence was displayed; ²⁰ the

* **4:12** Presumably a network of chains, already mentioned.

lampstands of pure gold and their lamps that were to burn in front of the Most Holy Place as specified; ²¹ the decorative flowers, lamps, and tongs—all made of solid gold; ²² the wick trimmers, basins, dishes and censers—all made of gold; and the doors of the Temple: the inner doors to the Most Holy Place, and the doors of the main hall—all covered with gold.

5

¹ Once Solomon had finished all the work on the house of the Lord, he brought the holy items of his father David had dedicated—the silver, the gold, and all the various worship items—and he placed them in the treasuries of God's Temple.

² Then Solomon summoned to Jerusalem the elders of Israel—all the heads of the tribes and family leaders of the Israelites—to bring the Ark of the Lord's Agreement from Zion, the City of David. ³ So all the Israelites gathered to be with the king at the feast which is in the seventh month.* ⁴ When all the elders of Israel had arrived, the Levites lifted up the Ark. ⁵ The priests and Levites brought up the Ark, the Tent of Meeting, were with him were there in front of the Ark. ⁶ They sacrificed so many sheep and cattle that they couldn't be counted! ⁷ Then the priests brought the Ark of the Lord's Agreement and put placed it in the inner sanctuary of the Temple, the Most Holy Place, beneath the wings of the cherubim. ⁸ The cherubim were spreading their wings over the place where the Ark was,

* **5:3** The Festival of Shelters.

so that the cherubim made a covering above the Ark and its poles. ⁹ The poles were so long that their ends could be seen from the Holy Place in front of the Most Holy Place, but not from outside. They are there to this day. ¹⁰ Inside the Ark there was nothing except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed in it at Mount Sinai,[†] where the Lord had made an agreement with the people of Israel when they came out of Egypt.

¹¹ Then the priests came out of the Holy Place. All the priests who were there had purified themselves, whatever their division. ¹² All the Levites who were singers—Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and their sons and relatives—stood on the east side of the altar. They were dressed in fine linen, striking cymbals, playing harps and lyres, and accompanied by one hundred and twenty priests sounding trumpets. ¹³ The trumpeters and singers joined together with one voice to praise and thank the Lord. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals, and musical instruments, the singers raised their voices, praising the Lord: “For he is good; his trustworthy love lasts forever.”

Then the Temple, the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud. ¹⁴ The priests could not stand up to continue with the service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the Temple of God.

[†] **5:10** “Mount Sinai”: literally, “Horeb,” an alternative name.

6

¹ Then Solomon spoke, “The Lord said that he lives in deep darkness. ² However, I have built you a magnificent Temple, a place for you to live forever.”

³ Then the king turned and blessed the whole assembly of Israel, as they all stood. ⁴ He said, “Praise the Lord God of Israel, who has kept the promise he made to my father David when he said, ⁵ ‘Ever since the day I brought my people out of the land of Egypt, I have not chosen a town from any tribe of Israel where a Temple could be built to honor me, and I have not chosen anyone to be ruler over my people Israel. ⁶ But now I have chosen Jerusalem so that I will be honored there, and I have chosen David to rule over my people Israel.’

⁷ My father David really wanted to build this Temple to honor the Lord, the God of Israel. ⁸ But the Lord told my father David, ‘You really wanted to build me a Temple to honor me—and it was good for you to want to do this. ⁹ But you are not going to build the Temple. Your son, one of your children, will build the Temple to honor me.’

¹⁰ Now the Lord has kept the promise he made. For I have taken the place of my father, and I sit on the throne of Israel as the Lord said, and I have built the Temple to honor the Lord God of Israel. ¹¹ I have placed the Ark there, which has inside it the agreement the Lord made with the sons of Israel.”

¹² Then Solomon stood in front of the altar of the Lord before the whole assembly of Israel and

spread out his hands in prayer. ¹³ Solomon had made a bronze platform five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high. He had set it in the middle of the courtyard, and he was standing on it. Then he knelt down before the whole assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven. ¹⁴ He said, "Lord God of Israel, there is no god like you in heaven or on earth, keeping your agreement of trustworthy love with your servants who follow you with complete devotion. ¹⁵ You have kept the promise you made to your servant, my father David. With your own mouth you made that promise, and with your own hands you have fulfilled it today.

¹⁶ So now, Lord God of Israel, please keep the promise you made to your servant David, my father, when you told him, 'If your descendants pay close attention to follow my way, and to keep my law as you have done, you will never fail to have one of them to sit on the throne of Israel.' ¹⁷ Now, Lord God of Israel, please fulfill this promise you made to your servant David.

¹⁸ But will God really live here on earth among people? The heavens, even highest heaven, cannot contain you, much less this Temple I have built! ¹⁹ Please listen to the prayer of your servant and his request, Lord my God. Please hear the appeals and the prayers that your servant is presenting before you. ²⁰ May you watch over this Temple day and night, caring for the place where you said you would be honored. May you hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place, ²¹ and hear the request of

your servant and your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Please hear from heaven where you live. May you hear and forgive.

²² When someone sins against another and is required to take an oath declaring the truth* before your altar in this Temple, ²³ listen from heaven, act and judge your servants. Pay back the guilty; vindicate and reward those who do right.

²⁴ When your people Israel are defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against you, and if they come back in repentance to you, praying for forgiveness in this Temple, ²⁵ then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel, and bring them back to the land you gave them and their forefathers.

²⁶ If the skies are closed shut and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, if they pray toward this place and if they come back in repentance to you, turning away from their sin because you have punished them, ²⁷ then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them the good way so that they can walk on it, and send rain on the earth that you have given to your people as their possession.

²⁸ If there is famine in the land, or disease, or blight or mildew on the crops, or if there are locusts or caterpillars, or if an enemy comes to lay siege to the towns in the land—it can be whatever kind of plague or whatever kind

* **6:22** “Declaring the truth”: implied.

of disease— ²⁹ then whatever kind of prayer or whatever kind of appeal is made by anyone or all your people Israel, in fact anyone who, knowing their problems and pains, prays toward this Temple, ³⁰ then hear from heaven, the place where you live, and forgive. Give according to the way they live their lives, for you know what people are really like inside, and you alone know the true character of people. ³¹ Then they will respect you and follow your ways all the time they live in the land you gave to our forefathers.

³² As for the foreigners who do not belong to your people Israel but who come from a distant land, having heard of your great nature and power and ability to help, when they come and pray toward this Temple, ³³ then hear from heaven, the place where you live, and give them what they're asking. That way, everyone on earth will come to know and respect you, just as your own people Israel do. They will also know that this Temple I have built honors you.

³⁴ When your people go to fight against their enemies, wherever you send them, and when they pray to you towards the city you have chosen and the house I have built to honor you, ³⁵ then hear from heaven what they are praying and asking for, and support their cause.

³⁶ If they sin against you—and there is nobody who does not sin—you may become angry with them and hand them over to an enemy who takes them away as prisoners to a foreign land, near or far. ³⁷ But if they think again in their

land of captivity and repent and plead for mercy from you, saying, ‘We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly,’³⁸ and they come back to you with complete sincerity in their thoughts and attitudes there in their land of captivity; and they pray towards the land you gave their forefathers and the city you chose and the Temple I have built to honor you,³⁹ then hear from heaven, the place where you live, respond and support their cause. Forgive your people who have sinned against you.

⁴⁰ Now my God, please open your eyes, and may your ears pay attention to the prayers offered in this place.

⁴¹ ‘Come, Lord, and enter your home,[†] together with your Ark of power. May your priests wear salvation like clothing; may your faithful people shout for joy in your goodness.

⁴² Lord God, don't reject the king you have chosen. Remember your trustworthy love for your servant David.’[‡]

7

¹ When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and burned up the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the Temple. ² The priests couldn't enter the Temple of the Lord because the Lord's glory filled the Lord's Temple. ³ When all the

[†] **6:41** Literally, “resting place,” but with the sense that this is the usual place where someone resides, hence “home.” [‡] **6:42** Verses 41 and 42 come from Psalms 132.

Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the Lord in the Temple, they knelt down and bowed their faces to the ground. They worshiped and praised the Lord, saying, “He is good! His trustworthy love lasts forever!”

⁴ Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices to the Lord. ⁵ King Solomon offered a sacrifice of 22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep. In this way the king and all the people dedicated the Temple of God. ⁶ The priests stood at their posts, and the Levites too, with the musical instruments that King David had made for giving praise, and which David had used for praise. They sang, “For his trustworthy love lasts forever!” Opposite them the priests blew trumpets, and all the Israelites stood up.

⁷ After that Solomon dedicated the middle of the courtyard in front of the Temple of the Lord. There he presented burnt offerings and the fat of the friendship offerings, since the bronze altar he had made couldn't hold all the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the fat of the offerings.

⁸ Then over the next seven days Solomon observed the feast* with all of Israel, a huge gathering that came from Lebo-hamath to the Wadi of Egypt. ⁹ On the eighth day† they held a final assembly, for the dedication of the altar had lasted seven days, and the feast another seven days. ¹⁰ On the twenty-third day of the seventh month, Solomon sent the people home. They were still celebrating and really happy for the

* **7:8** The Festival of Shelters. † **7:9** The eighth day of the Festival.

goodness that the Lord had shown to David, for Solomon, and for his people Israel.

¹¹ After Solomon had finished the Temple of the Lord and the royal palace, having successfully accomplished everything he'd wanted to do for the Temple of the Lord and for his own palace, ¹² the Lord appeared to him at night and told him: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a Temple of sacrifice. ¹³ If I were to close shut the sky so there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send a plague among my people, ¹⁴ and if my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and return to me, and turn away from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sins, and heal their land. ¹⁵ Now my eyes will be open, and my ears will pay attention to the prayers offered in this place, ¹⁶ for I have chosen and consecrated this Temple so that I may be honored there forever. I will always watch over it and take care of it for it really matters to me.

¹⁷ As for you, if you follow my ways as your father David did, doing everything I've told you to do, and if you keep my laws and regulations, ¹⁸ then I will make sure your reign is secure. I made this agreement with your father David, telling him, 'You will always have a descendant to rule over Israel.' ¹⁹ But if you turn away and ignore the laws and the commandments I have given you, and if you go and serve and worship other gods, ²⁰ then I will pull you up from the

land I gave you. I will banish from my presence this Temple I have dedicated to my honor, and I will make it an object lesson of ridicule among the nations. ²¹ This Temple that now is so respected will become so spoiled that passers-by will say, ‘Why has the Lord acted in such a way to this land and this Temple?’ ²² The answer will come, ‘Because they abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers, who brought them out of Egypt, and have clung to other gods, worshiping them and serving them. That’s why the Lord has brought all this trouble upon them.’ ”

8

¹ It had taken twenty years for Solomon to build the Temple of the Lord and his own palace. ² Solomon rebuilt the towns Hiram had given him, and sent Israelites to live there. ³ Then Solomon attacked Hamath-zobah and captured it. ⁴ He built Tadmor in the wilderness and also built all the storehouse towns in Hamath. ⁵ He rebuilt Upper and Lower Beth-horon, fortified cities with walls and barred gates, ⁶ and also Baalath. He built all the storehouse towns that belonged to him, and all the towns where he kept his chariots and horses. He built everything he wanted to in Jerusalem, Lebanon, and throughout his entire kingdom.

⁷ There were some people who remained in the land: the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites—people who were not Israelites. ⁸ They were the remaining descendants of the peoples that the Israelites had not destroyed.

Solomon made them work as forced laborers, as they are to this day. ⁹ But Solomon did not make any of the Israelites work as slaves. Instead, they were his military men, his officers, and commanders of his chariots and horsemen. ¹⁰ They were also King Solomon's chief officers, 250 men who supervised the people.*

¹¹ Solomon moved Pharaoh's daughter from the City of David to the palace he had built for her. For he said, "My wife cannot live in the palace of David king of Israel, because wherever the Ark of the Lord has gone are holy places."

¹² Then Solomon presented burnt offerings to the Lord on the altar of the Lord he had built in front of the Temple's porch. ¹³ He followed the requirement for daily offerings as Moses had ordered for Sabbaths, new moons, and the three annual festivals—the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Weeks, and the Festival of Shelters.

¹⁴ Following the instructions of his father David, he assigned the divisions of the priests for their service, and the Levites in their responsibilities to offer praise, and to help the priests in their daily duties. He also assigned gatekeepers by their divisions at each gate as David, the man of God, had instructed. ¹⁵ They followed David's instructions exactly regarding the priests, the Levites, and anything to do with the treasuries.

¹⁶ This is how all Solomon's work was carried out, from the day the foundation was laid for the

* **8:10** "The people": or, "his workers."

Lord's Temple until it was finished. So the Lord's Temple was completed.

¹⁷ After this Solomon went to Ezion-geber and to Eloth on the coast of the land of Edom.

¹⁸ Hiram sent him ships under the command of his own officers, along with experienced sailors. They went with Solomon's men to Ophir where they loaded 450 talents of gold, which they then brought back to King Solomon.

9

¹ The queen of Sheba heard how famous Solomon was, so she came to Jerusalem to test him with tough questions. She brought with her a very large entourage, with camels loaded with spices, large amounts of gold, and precious gemstones. She came to Solomon and asked him about everything she had on her mind.

² Solomon answered all her questions. There was nothing he couldn't explain to her. ³ When the queen of Sheba saw Solomon's wisdom, and the palace he had built, ⁴ the food on the table, how his officials lived, how his servants operated and how they were dressed, the clothes of the waiters, and the burnt offerings he presented at the Lord's Temple, she was so astonished* she could hardly breathe.

⁵ She told the king, "It's true what I heard in my own country about your proverbs† and your wisdom! ⁶ But I didn't believe what they told me

* **9:4** "She was so astonished": implied by the phrase (literally) "there was no longer breath in her." † **9:5** "Proverbs": literally, "words."

until I came and saw with my own eyes. In fact, I wasn't told the half of it—the extent of your wisdom far exceeds what I heard! ⁷ How happy your people must be! How happy those who work for you, who stand here every day listening to your wisdom! ⁸ Praise the Lord your God who is so pleased with you, who placed you on his throne as king to rule on his behalf. Because of the love of your God for Israel he has made them secure forever, and he has made you king over them to do what is fair and right.”

⁹ She presented the king with one hundred and twenty talents of gold, huge amounts of spices and precious stones. Never before had there been spices like those the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

¹⁰ (Hiram and of Solomon's men, who brought gold from Ophir, also brought algum wood and precious stones. ¹¹ The king used the algum wood to make steps for the Temple and for the royal palace, and into lyres and harps for the musicians. Nothing like them had ever been seen before in the land of Judah.)

¹² King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all wanted, whatever she asked for. This was far more than she had brought the king. Then she and her attendants returned home to her own country.

¹³ The weight of gold that Solomon received each year was 666 talents, ¹⁴ not including that received from traders and merchants. All the kings of Arabia and governors of the land also brought gold and silver to Solomon.

¹⁵ King Solomon made two hundred shields of hammered gold. Each shield required six hundred shekels of hammered gold. ¹⁶ He also made three hundred small shields of hammered gold. Each of these shields required three hundred gold coins. The king placed them in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon.

¹⁷ The king also made a great throne of ivory, and covered it with pure gold. ¹⁸ The throne had six steps, with a golden footstool attached. There were armrests on both sides of the seat, with lions standing beside the armrests. ¹⁹ Twelve lions stood on the six steps, one on opposite ends of each step. Nothing like this had ever been made for any kingdom.

²⁰ All of King Solomon's drinking cups were gold, and all the utensils of the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. No silver was used, because it was not valued in the days of Solomon.

²¹ The king had a fleet of ships from Tarshish crewed by Hiram's sailors. Once every three years the ships of Tarshish would arrive with a cargo of gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.

²² King Solomon was greater than any other king on earth in wealth and wisdom. ²³ All the kings of the earth wanted to meet Solomon to hear the wisdom that God had placed in his mind. ²⁴ Year after year, every visitor would bring gifts—articles of silver and gold, clothes, weapons, spices, horses, and mules.

²⁵ Solomon had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen.† He kept them in the chariot towns, and also with him in Jerusalem. ²⁶ He ruled over all the kings from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines, and to the border with Egypt. ²⁷ The king made silver as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar wood as plentiful as sycamore-figs in the foothills.§ ²⁸ Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and from many other lands. ²⁹ The rest of the acts of Solomon, from start to finish, are written in the Records of Nathan the Prophet, in the Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the Visions of Iddo the Seer about Jeroboam, son of Nebat. ³⁰ Solomon ruled in Jerusalem over all of Israel for forty years. ³¹ Then Solomon died and was buried in the city of his father David. His son Rehoboam took over as king.

10

¹ Rehoboam went to Shechem, because all the Israelites had gone to Shechem to make him king. ² Jeroboam, son of Nebat, was still in Egypt when he heard about this. (He had run away to Egypt to escape from King Solomon and was living there.) ³ The Israelite leaders sent for him. Jeroboam and all the Israelites went to talk with Rehoboam. ⁴ “Your father placed a heavy

† **9:25** “Horsemen”: or, “horses,” (the word in Hebrew is the same). However, since the number of stalls for the horses has already been given, it is more likely that this refers to horsemen.

§ **9:27** See 1:15.

burden on us,” they told him. “But now if you lighten the load your father imposed and the heavy demands he laid on us, we will serve you.”

⁵ Rehoboam answered, “Come back in three days time.” So the people left.

⁶ King Rehoboam asked for advice from the elders who had served his father Solomon when he was alive. “How do you advise me to reply to these people about this?” he asked.

⁷ They replied, “If you treat these people well, and please them by speaking kindly to them, they will always serve you.”

⁸ But Rehoboam dismissed the advice of the elders. He instead asked advice from the young men who he had grown up with, and who were close to him. ⁹ He asked them, “What response do you advise that we send back to these people who have told me, ‘Lighten the burden your father put on us?’”

¹⁰ The young men who he had grown up with told him, “This is what you have to tell these people who said to you, ‘Your father made our burden heavy, but you should make it lighter.’ This is what you should answer them: ‘My little finger is thicker than my father's waist! ¹¹ My father placed a heavy burden on you, and I will make it even heavier. My father punished you with whips; I will punish you with scorpions.’”

¹² Three days later, Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam, because the king had told them, “Come back in three days time.”

¹³ The king answered them sharply. Dismissing the advice of the elders, ¹⁴ he replied using the

advice of the young men. He said, “My father placed a heavy burden on you, and I will make it even heavier. My father punished you with whips; I will punish you with scorpions.”

¹⁵ The king did not listen to what the people said, for this change in circumstances was from God, to fulfill what Lord had told Jeroboam son of Nebat through Ahijah the Shilonite.

¹⁶ When all the Israelites saw that the king wasn't listening to them, they told the king: “What share do we have in David, and what part do we have in the son of Jesse? Go home, Israel! You're on your own, house of David!”

So all the Israelites went home. ¹⁷ However, Rehoboam still ruled over the Israelites who lived in Judah.

¹⁸ Then King Rehoboam sent out Hadoram, who was in charge of forced labor,* but the Israelites stoned him to death. King Rehoboam quickly jumped into his chariot and raced back to Jerusalem.

¹⁹ As a result, Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

11

¹ When Rehoboam arrived in Jerusalem, he gathered the men from the households of Judah and Benjamin— 180,000 chosen warriors—to go and fight against Israel to bring the kingdom back to Rehoboam. ² But a message from the Lord came to Shemaiah the man of God that

* **10:18** He was sent out to put down the rebellion.

said, ³ “Tell Rehoboam, son of Solomon, king of Judah, and of all the Israelites living in Judah and Benjamin: ⁴ ‘This is what the Lord says. Don't fight against your relatives. Every one of you, go home! For what has happened is down to me.’” So they obeyed what the Lord told them and did not fight against Jeroboam.

⁵ Rehoboam stayed in Jerusalem, and he strengthened the defenses of the towns in Judah. ⁶ He built up Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, ⁷ Bethzur, Soco, Adullam, ⁸ Gath, Mareshah, Ziph, ⁹ Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, ¹⁰ Zorah, Aijalon and Hebron. These are the fortified towns in Judah and in Benjamin. ¹¹ He strengthened their fortresses and put commanders in charge of them, together with supplies of food, olive oil, and wine. ¹² He stored shields and spears in all the towns and made them very strong. So he held Judah and Benjamin under his rule.

¹³ However, the priests and Levites throughout Israel chose to side with Rehoboam. ¹⁴ The Levites even left their pasturelands and properties behind, and came to Judah and Jerusalem, because Jeroboam and his sons refused to allow them to serve as priests of the Lord. ¹⁵ Jeroboam chose his own priests for the high places* and for the goat and calf idols he had made. ¹⁶ Those from every tribe of Israel who were committed to worshiping their God followed the Levites to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Lord, the God of their forefathers. ¹⁷ So they supported the

* **11:15** “High places”: associated with pagan shrines.

kingdom of Judah and for three years they were loyal to Rehoboam, son of Solomon, because they followed the way of David and Solomon.

¹⁸ Rehoboam married Mahalath, who was the daughter of David's son Jerimoth and of Abihail, the daughter[†] of Eliab, son of Jesse. ¹⁹ She was the mother his sons Jeush, and Shamariah, and Zaham. ²⁰ After her he married Maacah Absalom's daughter,[‡] and she was the mother of his sons Abijah, Attai, Ziza, and Shelomith. ²¹ Rehoboam loved Maacah Absalom's daughter more than all his other wives and concubines. He had a total of eighteen wives and sixty concubines, twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters.

²² Rehoboam made Abijah son of Maacah crown prince among his brothers, planning to make him king. ²³ Rehoboam was also wise to place some of his sons throughout the land of Judah and Benjamin, and to all the fortified towns. He gave them plenty of supplies and sought many wives for them. He worked to arrange many wives for them.

12

¹ Once Rehoboam was secure on the throne and was sure of his power, he together with all the Israelites abandoned the law of the Lord. ² In the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign, Shishak, king of Egypt, came and attacked Jerusalem because they had been unfaithful to God. ³ He came from Egypt with 1,200 chariots, 60,000 horsemen,

[†] **11:18** Probably granddaughter.

[‡] **11:20** Probably granddaughter.

and an army that couldn't be counted Egypt—Libyans, Sukkites, and Cushites. ⁴ He conquered the fortified towns of Judah and then approached Jerusalem.

⁵ Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and the leaders of Judah who had run for safety Jerusalem because of Shishak. He told them, “This is what the Lord says: ‘You have abandoned me, so I have abandoned you to Shishak.’”

⁶ The leaders of Israel and the king admitted they were wrong and said, “The Lord is right.”

⁷ When the Lord saw that they had repented, he sent a message to Shemaiah, saying, “They have repented. I won't destroy them, and I will soon save them. My anger won't be poured out on Jerusalem through Shishak. ⁸ Even so they will become his subjects, so that they can learn the difference between serving me and serving the kings of earth.”

⁹ King Shishak of Egypt attacked Jerusalem and took the treasures of the Lord's Temple and the treasures of the royal palace. He took away everything, including the gold shields that Solomon had made. ¹⁰ Later Rehoboam replaced them with bronze shields and gave them to be looked after by the commanders of the guard stationed at the entrance to the royal palace. ¹¹ Whenever the king would enter the Temple of the Lord the guards would go with him, carrying the shields, and then take them back to the guardroom. ¹² Because Rehoboam repented, the anger of the Lord did not fall on him, and the

Lord did not destroy him completely. Things went well in Judah.

¹³ King Rehoboam became powerful in Jerusalem. He was forty-one when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city the Lord had chosen from all the tribes of Israel where he would be honored. The name of his mother was Naamah the Ammonite. ¹⁴ But Rehoboam did what was evil because he did not commit himself to following the Lord.

¹⁵ What Rehoboam did, from beginning to end, is written down in the records of Shemaiah the Prophet and of Iddo the Seer dealing with genealogies. However, Rehoboam and Jeroboam were always at war with each other.

¹⁶ Rehoboam died and was buried in the City of David. His son Abijah took over as king.

13

¹ Abijah became king of Judah in the eighteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam. ² He reigned in Jerusalem for three years. His mother's name was Micaiah, daughter of Uriel—she was from Gibeah. Abijah and Jeroboam were at war. ³ Abijah went out to fight with an army of 400,000 brave warriors, while Jeroboam opposed him with his army of 800,000 chosen warriors of great strength.

⁴ Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim, in the hill country of Ephraim, and said, “Listen to me, Jeroboam and all of Israel! ⁵ Don't you understand that the Lord, the God of Israel,

gave the kingdom of Israel to David and his descendants forever by a binding agreement?*

⁶ Yet Jeroboam, son of Nebat, just a servant of Solomon, son of David, had the audacity to rebel against his master. ⁷ Then some good-for-nothing evil men gathered round him and defied Rehoboam, son of Solomon, when he was young and inexperienced, and couldn't confront them.

⁸ Now do you really think you can oppose the kingdom of the Lord, held by David's descendants? You may be a large horde, and have with you the golden calves that Jeroboam made for you as gods. ⁹ But didn't you drive out the priests of the Lord, Aaron's descendants, and the Levites, and make priests for yourselves just like people in other nations do? Now anyone who wants to can come and dedicate himself, sacrificing a young bull and seven rams, and he can become a priest of things that really are not gods.

¹⁰ But for us, the Lord is our God! We have not abandoned him. We have priests serving the Lord who are descendants of Aaron, and we have Levites who help them in their ministry. ¹¹ Morning and evening they present burnt offerings and burn fragrant incense to the Lord. They place the rows of showbread on the purified table, and light the lamps of the gold lampstand every evening. We are doing what the Lord our God told us to do, while you have abandoned him. ¹² God is leading us! His priests

* **13:5** "Binding agreement": literally, "a covenant of salt."

blow their trumpets to go into battle against you. People of Israel, don't fight against the Lord, the God of your fathers, for you won't win!"

¹³ But Jeroboam had sent troops around to attack from the rear, so that while he and the main force was in front of Judah,[†] the ambush was behind them. ¹⁴ Judah turned around and realized that they were having to fight front and rear. They cried out to the Lord for help. Then the priests blew their trumpets, ¹⁵ and the men of Judah gave a loud shout. When they shouted, God struck Jeroboam and all Israel in front of Abijah and Judah.

¹⁶ The Israelites ran away from Judah, and God handed them over to Judah, defeated. ¹⁷ Abijah and his men hit them hard, and 500,000 of Israel's best warriors were killed. ¹⁸ So the Israelites were subdued at that time, and the people of Judah were victorious because they relied on the Lord, the God of their forefathers. ¹⁹ Abijah chased Jeroboam and captured some towns from him: Bethel, Jeshanah, and Ephron, along with their villages. ²⁰ Jeroboam never regained his power during Abijah's reign. Eventually the Lord struck him down and he died. ²¹ But Abijah grew stronger and stronger. He married fourteen wives and had twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters. ²² The rest of what Abijah did—what he said and what he accomplished—is recorded in the history written by Iddo the Prophet.

[†] **13:13** Here Judah refers to the southern kingdom, and Israel to the northern.

14

¹ Abijah died and was buried in the City of David. His son Asa took over as king. For ten years of his reign the country was at peace. ² Asa did what was good and right in the Lord's sight. ³ He took down the foreign altars and high places, smashed their sacred pillars, and cut down the Asherah poles.* ⁴ He ordered Judah to worship the Lord, the God of their forefathers, and to observe the law and the commandments. ⁵ He also took down the high places and the incense altars from all the towns of Judah. Under his rule the kingdom was at peace. ⁶ Because the country was at peace he was able to rebuild the fortified towns of Judah. There were no wars during these years because the Lord had granted him peace.

⁷ Asa told the people of Judah, "Let us build up these towns and surround them with walls and towers and barred gates. The land is still ours, because we continue to worship the Lord our God. We worship him, and he has given us peace from all our enemies." So they began the building projects, and completed them successfully.

⁸ Asa had an army made up of three hundred thousand men from Judah who carried large shields and spears, and two hundred eighty thousand men from Benjamin who carried regular shields and bows. All of them were brave

* **14:3** Images dedicated to the Canaanite fertility goddess Asherah. Whether "pole" should be added is debated.

warriors. ⁹ Zerah the Ethiopian attacked them with an army of a thousand times a thousand[†] men and three hundred chariots, advancing as far as Mareshah. ¹⁰ Asa went out to confront him, lining up for battle in the Valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. ¹¹ Asa called out for help to the Lord his God: “Lord, there is no one apart from you who can help the powerless against the powerful. Please help us, Lord our God, for we trust in you. We have come against this horde because we stand for you,[‡] Lord. You are our God. Do not let a mere human being beat[§] you.”

¹² The Lord struck the Ethiopians in front of Asa and Judah, and the Ethiopians ran away. ¹³ Asa and his army chased them as far as Gerar. The Ethiopians were killed—there were none who survived, for they were caught between the Lord and his army. The men of Judah carried off a large amount of plunder. ¹⁴ They also attacked all the towns around Gerar, because the inhabitants were terrified of the Lord. The men of Judah took a large amount of plunder from all the towns. ¹⁵ Then they attacked the camps of the herdsmen and took many sheep and camels. Then they went back to Jerusalem.

[†] **14:9** “Thousand times a thousand”: though this equates to one million, it may simply mean a very large number. [‡] **14:11** “Stand for you”: literally, “in your name.” In other words, Asa is saying that the battle is the Lord's, not theirs. [§] **14:11** “Beat”: the word here means to “restrain, hold back.”

15

¹ The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. ² He went out to meet Asa and said to him, “Listen to me, Asa and all of Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you while you are with him. If you look for him, you will find him; but if you abandon him, he will abandon you.

³ For many years Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach them, and without the law. ⁴ But when they were in trouble they returned to the Lord, the God of Israel—they looked for him, and they found him.

⁵ During those times travel was dangerous, for all the inhabitants of the lands were in great turmoil. People everywhere had terrible problems. ⁶ Nation fought nation, and town fought town, for God threw them into a panic with all kinds of trouble. ⁷ But you need to be strong, not weak, for you will be rewarded for the work you do.”

⁸ When Asa heard these words of prophecy from Azariah the prophet, son of Oded, he was encouraged. He removed the vile idols from the whole territory of Judah and Benjamin and from the towns he had captured in the hill country of Ephraim. Then he repaired the altar of the Lord that stood in front of the porch of the Lord's Temple.

⁹ Then Asa summoned all of Judah and Benjamin, along with those Israelites from the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who were living among them, for many people had deserted Israel and come over to Asa when they

saw that the Lord his God was with him. ¹⁰ They gathered in Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa's reign.

¹¹ That day they sacrificed to the Lord seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep from the plunder they had brought back. ¹² Then they made an agreement to conscientiously and completely follow the Lord, the God of their forefathers. ¹³ They also agreed that anyone who refused to follow the Lord, the God of Israel, would be put to death, whether young or old, man or woman. ¹⁴ They declared their oath with a loud shout, accompanied by trumpets and blasts from rams' horns. ¹⁵ The whole of Judah was happy at the oath they had conscientiously sworn. They looked for him sincerely, and they found him. The Lord gave them peace from all their enemies.

¹⁶ King Asa also removed Maacah from her position as queen mother* for making an offensive Asherah pole. Asa cut down her vile idol, crushed it up, and burned it in the Kidron Valley. ¹⁷ While the high places were not removed from Israel,† Asa was completely devoted to the Lord all his life. ¹⁸ He brought into God's Temple the silver and gold articles he and his father had dedicated. ¹⁹ There was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign.

* **15:16** Actually she was Asa's grandmother. † **15:17** In 14:3 and 14:5 the removal of the high places is recorded. Of course this did not refer to Israel, the northern kingdom, but only the territory over which Asa had authority.

16

¹ In the thirty-sixth year of Asa's reign,* Baasha, king of Israel, invaded Judah. He fortified Ramah to stop anyone coming from or going to Asa, king of Judah.†

² Asa took the silver and gold from the treasuries of the Lord's Temple and the king's palace and sent them to Ben-hadad, king of Syria, who lived in Damascus, with a message that said:

³ "Make an alliance between me and you like the one between my father and your father. Look at the silver and gold I've sent you. Go ahead and break your agreement with Baasha, king of Israel, so that he will leave me and go home."

⁴ King Ben-hadad did as Asa had asked, and he sent his armies and their commanders to attack the towns of Israel. They conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel-maim, and all the storehouse towns of Naphtali. ⁵ When Baasha heard about it, he stopped fortifying Ramah and gave up his project. ⁶ So King Asa went with all the men of Judah, and they carried away from Ramah the stones and the timbers Baasha had used for building, and with them he built up Geba and Mizpah.

⁷ But right then Hanani the seer came to Asa, king of Judah, and told him, "Because you have put your trust in the king of Aram and have

* **16:1** Probably calculated from the beginning of the southern kingdom, rather than Asa's personal reign. See 1 Kings 15. This would also apply to the preceding verse. † **16:1** This action was presumably mainly to prevent the continued exodus of people to the southern kingdom.

not put your trust in the Lord your God, your opportunity to destroy the army of the king of Aram has gone. ⁸ Didn't the Ethiopians and Libyans have a huge army with many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you trusted in the Lord, he made you victorious over them. ⁹ For the Lord looks all over the earth for the opportunity to show his power on behalf of those who are completely and sincerely devoted to him. You have acted stupidly in doing this. So from now on you will always be at war.”

¹⁰ Asa was angry with the seer. He was so angry with him over this that he put him in prison. At this same time Asa started to mistreat some of the people.

¹¹ The rest of what Asa did, from beginning to end, is written down in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. ¹² In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa had trouble with disease in his feet, which only became worse and worse. Yet even in his sickness he did not turn to the Lord, but only the physicians. ¹³ Asa died in the forty-first year of his reign. ¹⁴ He was buried in the tomb that he had prepared for himself in the City of David. They placed him on a bed full of spices, perfumed oils, and fragrances. Then they made a great fire to honor him.

17

¹ Asa's son Jehoshaphat took over as king. He strengthened his country's defenses against Israel. ² He assigned troops to every fortified city of Judah and placed garrisons throughout Judah

and in the towns of Ephraim that his father Asa had captured.

³ The Lord supported Jehoshaphat because he followed the ways of his father David. He did not believe in the Baals, ⁴ but worshiped the God of his father and obeyed his commandments, unlike what the kingdom of Israel was doing. ⁵ So the Lord made Jehoshaphat's hold on the kingdom secure, and all the people of Judah paid their dues to him. As a result he became very wealthy and highly honored. ⁶ He was sincerely committed to what the Lord wanted. He also he removed the high places and Asherah poles from Judah.

⁷ In the third year of his reign, Jehoshaphat sent his officials Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah to teach in the towns of Judah. ⁸ He sent along with them Levites named Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tobadonijah, and with them the priests Elishama and Jehoram. ⁹ Taking with them the Book of the Law of the Lord they taught as they went around Judah. They visited all the towns of Judah, teaching the people.

¹⁰ All the surrounding kingdoms were in awe of the Lord, so that they did not attack Jehoshaphat. ¹¹ Some of the Philistines even brought him gifts and silver, while the Arabians brought him 7,700 rams and 7,700 goats.

¹² Jehoshaphat grew increasingly powerful, and he built fortresses and storehouse towns in Judah. ¹³ He maintained a great deal of supplies

in the towns of Judah. He also had troops, experienced warriors, in Jerusalem.

¹⁴ This is a count of them, according to their family lines: from Judah, the commanders of thousands: Adnah the commander, and 300,000 mighty warriors with him; ¹⁵ then Jehohanan the commander, and 280,000 with him; ¹⁶ then Amasiah, son of Zichri, who volunteered to serve the Lord, and 200,000 mighty warriors with him; ¹⁷ from Benjamin, Eliada, a mighty warrior, and 200,000 with him armed with bows and shields; ¹⁸ then Jehozabad, and 180,000 with him ready for battle; ¹⁹ These were the men who served the king, in addition those he assigned to the fortified towns throughout Judah.

18

¹ Now Jehoshaphat was very wealthy and highly honored, and he made a marriage alliance with Ahab. ² Some years later he went to pay Ahab a visit in Samaria. Ahab sacrificed many sheep and cattle for him and the people who accompanied him, and encouraged him to attack Ramoth-gilead.

³ Ahab, king of Israel, asked Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, “Would you go with me against Ramoth-gilead?” Jehoshaphat replied, “You and I are as one, and my men and your men are as one. We will join forces with you in this war.” ⁴ Then Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, “But first though, please find out what the Lord says.”

⁵ So the king of Israel brought out the prophets—four hundred of them—and he asked them,

“Should we go up and attack Ramoth-gilead, or should I not?”

“Yes, go ahead,” they replied, “for God will hand it over to the king.”

⁶ But Jehoshaphat asked, “Isn't there another prophet of the Lord here that we can ask?”

⁷ “Yes, there's another man who could consult the Lord,” the king of Israel replied, “but I don't like him because he never prophesies anything good for me—it's always bad! His name is Micaiah, son of Imlah.”

“You shouldn't talk like that,” said Jehoshaphat.

⁸ The king of Israel called over one of his officials and told him, “Bring me Micaiah, son of Imlah, right away.”

⁹ Dressed in their royal robes, the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah, were sitting on their thrones at the threshing floor beside the gate of Samaria, with all of the prophets prophesying in front of them. ¹⁰ One of them, Zedekiah, son of Chenaanah, had made himself iron horns. He announced, “This is what the Lord says: ‘With these horns you will gore the Arameans until they're dead!’”

¹¹ All the prophets were prophesying the same thing, saying, “Go ahead, attack Ramoth-gilead; you will be successful, for the Lord will hand it over to the king.”

¹² The messenger who went to call Micaiah told him, “Look, all the prophets are unanimous in prophesying positively to the king. So please make sure to speak positively like them.”

13 But Micaiah replied, “As the Lord lives, I can only say what my God tells me.”

14 When he came before the king, the king asked him, “Should we go up and attack Ramoth-gilead, or should I not?”

“Yes, go ahead and be victorious,” Micaiah replied, “for they will be handed over to the king.”*

15 But the king said to him, “How many times must I make you swear to tell me only the truth in the name of the Lord?”

16 So Micaiah answered, “I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains like sheep without a shepherd. The Lord said, ‘These people have no master;† let each of them go home in peace.’”

17 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Didn't I tell you he never prophesies anything good for me, only bad?”

18 Micaiah went on to say, “So listen to what the Lord says. I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, surrounded by the whole army of heaven standing to his right and to his left. 19 The Lord asked, ‘Who will trick Ahab, king of Israel, into attacking Ramoth-gilead so he will be killed there?’

One said this, another said that, and another said something else. 20 Finally a spirit came and approached the Lord and said, ‘I will trick him.’

‘How are you going to do that?’ the Lord asked.

* **18:14** Clearly there is something in the tone of this statement that led Ahab to respond as he did in the next verse. † **18:16** “No master”: implying that their master is dead.

21 'I will go and be a lying spirit and make all his prophets tell lies,' the spirit replied.

'That will work,' the Lord responded. 'Go and do it.'

22 As you see, the Lord has put a lying spirit into these prophets of yours, and the Lord has pronounced your death sentence."

23 Then Zedekiah, son of Chenaanah, went and slapped Micaiah in the face, and demanded, "Which way did the Spirit of the Lord go when he left me to speak to you?"

24 "You'll soon find out when you try and find some secret place to hide!" Micaiah replied.

25 The king of Israel ordered, "Place Micaiah under arrest and take him back to Amon the governor of the city and to my son Joash. 26 Tell them these are the king's instructions: 'Put this man in jail. Give him only bread and water until my safe return.'"

27 "If you do in fact return safely then the Lord has not spoken through me," Micaiah declared. "Pay attention everyone to all I've said!"

28 The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, went to attack Ramoth-gilead. 29 The king of Israel told Jehoshaphat, "When I go into battle I will be in disguise, but you should wear your royal robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle.

30 The king of Aram had already given these orders to his chariot commanders: "Head straight for the king of Israel alone. Don't fight with anyone else, whoever they are."

³¹ So when the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they shouted, “There’s the king of Israel!” So they turned to attack him, but Jehoshaphat called out for help, and the Lord did help him. God redirected them away from him, ³² for when the chariot commanders realized that he wasn’t the king of Israel, they stopped chasing him. ³³ However, an enemy archer shot an arrow at random, hitting the king of Israel between the joints of his armor by his breastplate. The king told his charioteer, “Turn around and get me out of the fight, because I’ve been wounded!” ³⁴ The battle lasted all day. The king of Israel propped himself up in his chariot to face the Arameans until the evening. But he died at sunset.

19

¹ Once Jehoshaphat had arrived safely home in Jerusalem, ² Jehu, son of Hanani, the seer went out to face him. He said to King Jehoshaphat, “Why are you helping the wicked? Why do you love those who hate the Lord? The Lord is angry with you because of this. ³ Even so you’ve done some good things such as destroying the Asherah poles throughout the country, and you have made a sincere commitment to follow God.”

⁴ Jehoshaphat continued living in Jerusalem, and once again he traveled among the people, from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim, to encourage them to serve the Lord, the God of their fathers. ⁵ He appointed judges throughout the country, in all of the fortified towns of Judah.

⁶ He told the judges, “Be careful about what you’re doing as judges, because you’re not looking for the approval of people, but the approval of the Lord. He is the One with you when you give your verdict. ⁷ So then, be sure to have reverence for God, obeying him and doing what he wants, for God does not permit any kind of injustice, favoritism, or bribery.”

⁸ Jehoshaphat also appointed in Jerusalem some of the Levites, priests, and family heads to act as judges regarding the law of Lord and to settle disputes. They were to have their courts in Jerusalem.* ⁹ He gave them these orders, “You must honor God, and act with faithfulness and complete commitment. ¹⁰ In every case that comes before you from your people living in other towns, whether it involves murder or violations of the law, commandment, statutes, or judgments, you are to warn them not to offend† the Lord so that punishment does not come upon you and your people. If you do this you will not be held guilty.

¹¹ Amariah, the chief priest, will make the final decision for you in everything that relates to the Lord, and Zebadiah, son of Ishmael, the leader of the tribe of Judah, in all that relates to the king.

* **19:8** Clearly the priests and Levites would have jurisdiction over religious law, while other leaders would be involved in civil disputes. The second mention of Jerusalem in the verse, together with the verses that follow, suggest that they were to operate as a national tribunal, a court of appeal. † **19:10** This would include such sins as perjury or bearing false witness.

The Levites will serve as officers to assist you. Be firm, and may the Lord be with those who do what is right.”

20

¹ Then, after this, the Moabites and Ammonites, as well as some of the Meunites,* came to attack Jehoshaphat. ² Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, “A large army is coming to fight you from Edom,† from the other side of the Dead Sea. They have already reached Hazazon-tamar;” (otherwise called En-gedi).

³ Jehoshaphat was afraid, and went to ask the Lord what to do. He also ordered everyone throughout Judah to fast. ⁴ So the people of Judah gathered in Jerusalem to pray to the Lord—in fact, they came from all the towns of Judah to commit themselves to him. ⁵ Jehoshaphat stood before the assembled people of Judah and Jerusalem at the Temple, in front of the new courtyard, ⁶ and said, “Lord, God of our forefathers, aren't you the God of heaven? Don't you rule over all earthly kingdoms? You possess strength and power, and no one can stand against you! ⁷ Our God, didn't you drive out before your people Israel those who living in this land? Didn't you give this land to the descendants of your friend Abraham forever? ⁸ They are living in the land and have built

* **20:1** “Meunites”: according to some manuscripts of the Septuagint. The Hebrew repeats the word “Ammonites.” † **20:2** “From Edom,” more likely than “from Aram,” as most Hebrew manuscripts read.

a Temple for you here to honor you, saying,
9 ‘If disaster strikes us, whether it's invasion or judgment, disease or famine, we will stand in front of this Temple and before you, for this Temple is yours. We will cry out to you to help us in our suffering, and you will hear us and save us.’[†]

10 Look, here come the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, those very countries you did not let Israel invade when they came out of Egypt. Israel left them alone and did not destroy them. 11 See how they're rewarding us, coming to steal the land you gave us to possess forever! 12 Our God, won't you punish them, because we don't have the power to confront such a great army that is marching against us? We don't know what to do. We're looking to you for help.”

13 All the men of Judah stood before the Lord, together with their wives and children and babies. 14 Then the Spirit of the Lord came over Jahaziel while he was standing there in the assembly. He was the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite from the descendants of Asaph. 15 He said, “Listen, everyone from Judah, people of Jerusalem, and King Jehoshaphat. This is what the Lord has to say to you: Don't be afraid or discouraged because of this large army. This isn't your battle—it's God's! 16 Tomorrow march down to face them. You will see them coming up the pass at Ziz—you'll find them at the end of the

[†] 20:9 See 6:24-30.

valley in front of the desert of Jeruel. ¹⁷ But you do not need to fight this battle. Just stand still and watch the Lord's victory. He is with you, Judah and Jerusalem! Don't be afraid or discouraged! March down to face them, for the Lord is with you!"

¹⁸ Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell to the ground before the Lord, worshipping him. ¹⁹ Then the Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites stood to praise the Lord, the God of Israel, shouting loudly.

²⁰ They got up early the next morning and went to the desert of Tekoa. As they left, Jehoshaphat stood up and said, "Listen to me, people of Judah and Jerusalem. Trust in the Lord your God, and you will be vindicated; trust in his prophets, and you will be successful."

²¹ After discussion with the people, he appointed singers to praise the Lord for his glorious, holy goodness. They led the way at the front of the army, singing, "Praise the Lord, for his trustworthy love lasts forever!"

²² As soon as they started singing and praising, the Lord ambushed the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir who were coming to attack Judah, and they were defeated. ²³ The men of Ammon and Moab turned on the men from Mount Seir, killing all of them. Once they'd finished wiping out the army from Seir, they

turned on each other, destroying themselves. §
 24 So when the men of Judah came to the watchtower in the desert, they looked out to see the enemy army and all they saw were corpses lying on the ground! No one had escaped.

25 When Jehoshaphat and his people came to collect the plunder, they found a great deal of cattle, equipment, clothing,* and other valuable articles, more than they could carry. It took three days to collect the plunder because there was so much of it. 26 On the fourth day they gathered in the Valley of Blessing. They gave it this name because this was where they blessed the Lord. It is still called the Valley of Blessing to this day.

27 Then all the men of Judah and Jerusalem celebrated as they returned to Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat leading them, full of joy for the Lord's victory over their enemies. 28 They entered Jerusalem and went straight to the Temple of Lord, accompanied by music from harps, lyres, and trumpets.

29 All the kingdoms around were in awe of God when they heard that the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel. † 30 Jehoshaphat and his kingdom were at peace, for God gave him rest—there were no attacks from any direction.

31 So Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah, having become king when he was thirty-five years, and

§ 20:23 “They turned on each other, destroying themselves”: literally, “each helped his neighbor to destruction.”

* 20:25 “Clothing”: Some manuscripts and the Vulgate. Most manuscripts have “corpses.” † 20:29 See 17:10.

he reigned in Jerusalem for twenty-five years. His mother's name was Azubah, daughter of Shilhi. ³² Jehoshaphat followed the way of his father Asa and did not turn away from it. He did what was right in the Lord's sight. ³³ However, the high places were not removed, and the people were not committed to the God of their forefathers. ³⁴ The rest of what Jehoshaphat did, from beginning to end, is written down in the chronicles of Jehu, son of Hanani, recorded in the Book of the Kings of Israel.

³⁵ Later in his life, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, allied himself with Ahaziah, king of Israel, who did wicked things. ³⁶ They agreed to work together and send ships to Tarshish.† The ships were built in Ezion-geber. ³⁷ But Eliezer, son of Dodavahu of Mareshah, prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because you have made an alliance with Ahaziah, the Lord will destroy what you're doing." The ships were wrecked and couldn't sail to Tarshish.

21

¹ Jehoshaphat died was buried with his fore fathers in the City of David, and his son Jehoram took over as king. ² His brothers, the sons of Jehoshaphat, were Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah, Michael, and Shephatiah. All were sons

† **20:36** A joint trading venture.

of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.* ³ Their father had given them many gifts of silver and gold and valuable items, as well as the fortified towns in Judah; but he gave the kingdom to Jehoram because he was the firstborn. ⁴ But once Jehoram had secured the kingdom, he made sure of his position by killing all his brothers, along with some of the princes of Judah.

⁵ Jehoram was thirty-two when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for eight years. ⁶ He followed the evil ways of the kings of Israel, and was as bad as Ahab, for he had married one of Ahab's daughters. He did evil in the Lord's sight. ⁷ However, Yet the Lord did not want to destroy David's line because of the agreement he had made with David, and he had promised that David's descendants would rule forever like an ever-burning lamp.

⁸ During Jehoram's reign, Edom rebelled against Judah's rule and chose their own king. ⁹ So Jehoram crossed into Edom with his officers and all his chariot army. The Edomites surrounded him and his chariot commanders, but he broke through during the night.† ¹⁰ From this time on Edom was in rebellion against Judah's

* **21:2** "Judah," following some Hebrew manuscripts, the Septuagint, and the Vulgate. Most Hebrew manuscripts have "Israel," perhaps reflecting the Chronicler's intent that Judah should be seen as being the real inheritor of the title "kingdom of Israel." Similarly verse 4. † **21:9** The Hebrew is unclear as to whether this was a night attack, or merely that Jehoram escaped. In any event, the following verses reveal that the rebellion was not put down by Jehoram.

rule, and remains so to this day. At the same time Libnah also rebelled against his rule, because he had abandoned the Lord, the God of his forefathers. ¹¹ He also built high places on the mountains of Judah; he made the people of Jerusalem unfaithful to God and led Judah away from him.

¹² Jehoram received a letter from Elijah the prophet that said, “This is what the Lord, the God of David your forefather says, ‘You have not followed the ways of your father Jehoshaphat, or Asa, king of Judah, ¹³ but instead you have followed the ways of the kings of Israel, and have made the people of Jerusalem unfaithful, and the people of Jerusalem as unfaithful as the family of Ahab. You have even killed your brothers, your father’s family, who were better than you. ¹⁴ Watch out, for the Lord is going to hit your people hard—your sons, your wives, and all that you own. ¹⁵ You yourself will be struck with a terrible illness—a disease of the bowels which will get worse day by day until they come out.’”

¹⁶ The Lord stirred up the hostility of the Philistines and of the Arabians (who live near the Ethiopians) against Jehoram. ¹⁷ They came and invaded Judah, and took away everything they found in the king’s palace, along with his sons and his wives, so that only the youngest son Jehoahaz[‡] was left.

¹⁸ After all this, the Lord struck Jehoram with a disease of the bowels for which there was no cure. ¹⁹ Day after day it grew worse, until

[‡] **21:17** “Jehoahaz”: also called Azariah.

after two full years passed his bowels came out because of his disease, and he died in agony. His people did not make a fire to honor him as they had done for his forefathers. ²⁰ Jehoram was thirty-two when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for eight years. When he died, no one mourned him. He was buried in the City of David, but not in the royal tombs.

22

¹ The people of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, Jehoram's youngest son, king in succession to his father, since the invaders who had entered the camp with the Arabians had killed all the older sons. So Ahaziah, son of Jehoram, became king of Judah. ² Ahaziah was twenty-two* when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for one year. His mother's name was Athaliah, the granddaughter of Omri. ³ Ahaziah also followed the evil ways of the family of Ahab, for his mother encouraged him to do wicked things. ⁴ He did what was evil in the Lord's sight, just as the family of Ahab had done. For after his father's death they were his counselors, to his ruin.

⁵ He also followed their advice in joining with Joram, son of Ahab, king of Israel, in attacking Hazael, king of Aram, in Ramoth Gilead. The Arameans wounded Joram, ⁶ and he returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds he'd received

* **22:2** "Twenty-two": according to 2 Kings 8:26. Here his age is given in the Hebrew text as forty-two.

in Ramah fighting against Hazael king of Aram. Ahaziah, son of Jehoram, king of Judah, went to Jezreel to visit Joram, son of Ahab, because Joram was wounded. ⁷ Azariah's downfall came from God when he went to see Joram. When Azariah got there, he went with Joram to meet Jehu, son[†] of Nimri. The Lord had anointed Jehu to destroy Ahab and his family.

⁸ While Jehu was carrying out judgment on the family of Ahab, he came across the leaders of Judah and Azariah's relatives[‡] who were assisting Ahaziah, and he killed them. ⁹ Then Jehu went looking for Ahaziah. His men found him in Samaria and captured him, and took him to Jehu where they killed him. They buried him, for they said, "He is the grandson of Jehoshaphat, who was completely committed to following the Lord." There was no one left from Ahaziah's family to rule the kingdom.

¹⁰ When Athaliah Ahaziah's mother found out that her son was dead, she proceeded to kill all who remained of the royal family of Judah.

¹¹ But Jehoshabeath, daughter of King Jehoram, grabbed Joash, son of Ahaziah, and took him from the sons of the king who were about to be killed, and she placed him and his nurse in a bedroom. Because Jehoshabeath, the daughter of King Jehoram and the wife of Jehoiada the priest, was Ahaziah's sister, she hid Joash from Athaliah

[†] 22:7 Actually "grandson." His father was Jehoshaphat. [‡] 22:8 "Azariah's relatives": Septuagint reading. See also 2 Kings 10:13. Hebrew: "sons of Ahaziah's brothers."

so she couldn't kill him. ¹² And they kept Joash hidden with them in God's Temple for six years while Athaliah ruled the country.

23

¹ But in the seventh year, Jehoiada had the courage to act. He made a pledge with the commanders of hundreds: Azariah, son of Jeroham, Ishmael, son of Jehohanan, Azariah, son of Obed, Maaseiah, son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat, son of Zichri. ² They traveled all over Judah and brought together the Levites from all the cities of Judah and the family leaders of Israel. When they came to Jerusalem, ³ they all assembled at God's Temple and made a solemn agreement with the king.

Jehoiada announced to them, "Look, here is the king's son and he must reign, just as the Lord promised the descendants of David would. ⁴ Here's what you have to do. One third of you priests and Levites who enter on the Sabbath shall guard the entrances. ⁵ Another third shall go over to the king's palace, while the last third shall be at the Foundation Gate. Everyone else stay in the courtyards of the Lord's Temple. ⁶ No one should enter the Lord's Temple except the priests and those Levites are serving. They can enter because they have been made holy, but everyone else must follow the Lord's commands. ⁷ The Levites shall surround the king, weapons in hand. Kill anyone who enters the Temple. Stay close to the king wherever he goes."

⁸ The Levites and all the people of Judah did everything that Jehoiada the priest told them. The commanders each brought his men, both those coming on duty on the Sabbath and those going off duty, for Jehoiada the priest had not dismissed any of the divisions. ⁹ Jehoiada the priest provided the commanders with the spears and the large and small shields of King David that were in God's Temple. ¹⁰ He placed them all, with their weapons in hand, to surround the king from the south side of the Temple to the north side, and near the altar and the Temple.

¹¹ Jehoiada and his sons then brought out the king's son, placed the crown on him, presented him with a copy of God's law,* and proclaimed him king. They anointed him, and shouted out, "Long live the king!"

¹² When Athaliah heard the noise of people running and shouting praise to the king, she rushed to the crowds at the Lord's Temple. ¹³ She saw the king standing by his pillar at the entrance. The commanders and trumpeters were with the king, and everyone was celebrating and blowing trumpets as the singers with musical instruments led the praise. Athaliah ripped her clothes and screamed out, "Treason! Treason!"

¹⁴ Jehoiada ordered the army commanders, "Bring her to the men standing in front of the Temple, and kill anyone who follows her." Earlier the priest had made it clear, "She must not be killed in the Lord's Temple." ¹⁵ They

* **23:11** "God's law": literally, "testimony."

grabbed hold of her and took her to the entrance of the Horse Gate of the king's palace, and killed her there.

¹⁶ Then Jehoiada made a solemn agreement between himself and all the people and the king that they would be the Lord's people.

¹⁷ Everyone went to the Temple of Baal and tore down its altars and smashed the idols. They killed Mattan, the priest of Baal, right in front of the altar.

¹⁸ Jehoiada placed the responsibility for the Lord's Temple in the hands of the Levitical priests. They were the ones whom David had appointed over the Lord's Temple to offer burnt offerings to the Lord, as is required by the Law of Moses, with celebration and singing, as David instructed. ¹⁹ He placed gatekeepers at the entrances to the Lord's Temple, so that no one unclean for any reason could enter.

²⁰ Along with the commanders, the nobles, the governors of the people, and all the people, he led the king in a procession down from the Lord's Temple through the upper gate to the royal palace. There they set the king on the royal throne.

²¹ All throughout the land people celebrated, and Jerusalem was at peace, because Athaliah had been killed by the sword.

24

¹ Joash was seven when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for forty years. His mother's name was Zibiah of Beersheba. ² Joash

did what was right in the Lord's sight during the lifetime of Jehoiada the priest. ³ Jehoiada arranged for him to marry two wives, and he had sons and daughters.

⁴ Some time later, Joash decided to repair the Lord's Temple. ⁵ He summoned the priests and Levites and told them, "Go to the towns of Judah and collect the yearly dues from everyone in Israel to repair the Temple of your God. Do it right away." But the Levites did not go right away.

⁶ So the king called for Jehoiada the high priest and asked him, "Why haven't you ordered the Levites to collect from Judah and Jerusalem the tax that Moses, the Lord's servant, and the assembly of Israel imposed to maintain the Tent of the Law?"*

⁷ (The supporters of that wicked woman Athaliah had broken into God's Temple and had stolen the holy objects of the Lord's Temple and used them to worship the Baals.)†

⁸ The king ordered a collection chest to be made and placed outside the entrance to the Lord's Temple. ⁹ A decree was proclaimed throughout Judea and Jerusalem to bring to the Lord the tax that Moses, the Lord's servant, imposed on Israel in the wilderness. ¹⁰ All the leaders and all the people were glad to do so and brought their taxes. They dropped them in the chest until it was full.

* **24:6** "Tent of the Law": or, "Tent of the Testimony." † **24:7** "Baals": different pagan gods.

¹¹ Every so often the Levites took the chest to the king's officials. When they saw that it contained a large amount of money, the king's secretary and the chief officer of the high priest would come and empty the chest. Then they would carry it back to its place. They did this every day and collected a great deal of money. ¹² Then the king and Jehoiada would allocate the money of those supervising the work on the Lord's Temple to hire stonemasons and carpenters to restore the Lord's Temple and craftsmen in iron and bronze to repair the Lord's Temple.

¹³ The men doing the repairs worked hard and made good progress. They restored God's Temple to its original condition and strengthened it. ¹⁴ When they finished, they returned the money that was left to the king and Jehoiada, and with it utensils were made for the Lord's Temple, both for the worship services and for the burnt offerings, also bowls for incense and vessels of gold and silver. Burnt offerings were regularly offered in the Lord's Temple regularly throughout Jehoiada's lifetime. ¹⁵ Jehoiada grew old and died at the age of 130, having lived a full life. ¹⁶ He was buried with the kings in the City of David, for all the good he had done in Israel for God and his Temple.

¹⁷ But after the death of Jehoiada, the leaders of Judah came to swear their loyalty to the king, and he listened to their advice. ¹⁸ They abandoned the Temple of the Lord, the God of their forefathers, and worshiped Asherah poles

and idols. Judah and Jerusalem were punished because of their sin.

¹⁹ The Lord sent prophets to bring the people back to him and to warn them; but they refused to listen.

²⁰ Then the Spirit of God came to Zechariah, son of Jehoiada the priest. He stood before the people and told them, “This is what God says: ‘Why do you break the Lord’s commandments so that you cannot be successful? Since you have abandoned the Lord, he has abandoned you.’”

²¹ Then the leaders hatched a plot to kill Zechariah, and on the orders of the king they stoned him to death in the courtyard of the Lord’s Temple. ²² King Joash showed he had forgotten all about the loyalty and love shown to him by Jehoiada, Zechariah’s father, by killing his son. As he died, Zechariah cried out, “May the Lord see what you’ve done and pay you back!”

²³ At the end of the year, the Aramean army came to attack Joash. They invaded Judah and Jerusalem and killed all the people’s leaders, and sent all their plunder back to the king of Damascus. ²⁴ Even though the Aramean army had come with only a few men, the Lord gave them the victory over a very large army, because Judah had abandoned the Lord, the God of their forefathers. In this way they punished Joash.

²⁵ When the Arameans departed, they left Joash badly wounded. But then his own officers plotted against him for murdering the son of Jehoiada the priest, and they killed him in his bed. He was buried in the City of David, but

not in the cemetery of the kings. ²⁶ Those who plotted against him were Zabad, son of Shimeath, an Ammonite woman, and Jehozabad, son of Shimrith, a Moabite woman.

²⁷ The story of the sons of Joash, as well as the many prophecies about him and about the restoration of God's Temple, are recorded in the Commentary on the Book of the Kings. His son Amaziah took over as king.

25

¹ Amaziah was twenty-five when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for twenty-nine years. His mother's name was Jehoaddan and she came from Jerusalem. ² He did what was right in the Lord's sight but not with complete commitment. ³ After he had made sure his rule was secure, he executed the officers who had murdered his father the king. ⁴ However, he did not kill their sons, as is written in the Law, in the book of Moses, where the Lord commanded: "Fathers must not be executed for their children, and children must not be executed for their fathers. Everyone is to die for their own sin."

⁵ Then Amaziah called up the people of Judah for military service, and assigned them by families to commanders of thousands and of hundreds. He also took a census of those twenty years of age and older throughout Judah and Benjamin, and found there was 300,000 first-rate fighting men who could use spear and shield. ⁶ He also hired 100,000 battle-ready fighting men from Israel for a hundred talents of silver.

⁷ But a man of God came to him and said, “Your Majesty, don’t let this army of Israel join you, for the Lord is not with Israel, with these sons of Ephraim! ⁸ Even if you fight bravely, God will let you stumble and fall before the enemy, for God has the power to help you or let you fall.”

⁹ Amaziah asked the man of God, “But what about the hundred talents of silver I paid the army of Israel?”

“The Lord can give you much more than that!” replied the man of God.

¹⁰ So Amaziah dismissed the army he’d hired from Ephraim and sent them home. They became very angry with Judah, and returned home furious.

¹¹ Amaziah then bravely led his army to the Valley of Salt, where they attacked the Edomite army from Seir, and killed ten thousand of them.

¹² The army of Judah also captured another ten thousand, took them to the top of a cliff and threw them off, killing them all.

¹³ But the men of the army Amaziah sent home, refusing to let them go with him to battle, raided the towns of Judah, from Samaria to Beth-horon. They killed 3,000 of their inhabitants and took a great deal of plunder.

¹⁴ When Amaziah returned from killing the Edomites, he brought back the gods of the people of Seir and set them up as his own gods, worshiped them, and offered sacrifices to them.

¹⁵ The Lord became angry with Amaziah and he sent a prophet to him, who said to him, “Why

would you worship the gods of a people who couldn't even save their own people from you?"

¹⁶ But while he was still speaking, the king said to him, "Have we made you a counselor to the king? Stop right now! Do you want to be struck down?"

So the prophet stopped, but said, "I know that God has decided to destroy you, because you have acted like this and have refused to listen to my advice."

¹⁷ Then Amaziah, king of Judah, took advice from his counselors and sent a message to the king of Israel, Jehoash, son of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu. "Come and face me in battle," he challenged.

¹⁸ Joash, king of Israel, replied to Amaziah, king of Judah, "A thistle on Lebanon sent a message to a cedar on Lebanon, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son for a wife,' but a wild animal of Lebanon passed by and trampled down the thistle. ¹⁹ You're telling yourself how great you are for defeating Edom, boasting about it. But just stay at home. Why should you stir up trouble that will bring you down, and Judah with you?"

²⁰ But Amaziah didn't listen, for God was going to hand him over to his enemies because he had chosen to worship the gods of Edom.

²¹ So Joash king of Israel prepared for battle. He and Amaziah, king of Judah, faced one another at Beth-shemesh in Judah. ²² Judah was defeated by Israel—they all ran away home.

²³ Joash, king of Israel, captured Amaziah, king of Judah, son of Joash, son of Ahaziah, at Beth-shemesh. He took him to Jerusalem, and demolished the wall of Jerusalem for 400 cubits, from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate. ²⁴ He carried away all the gold and silver, and all the articles found in God's Temple that had been looked after by Obed-edom and in the treasuries of the king's palace, as well as some hostages, and then returned to Samaria.

²⁵ Amaziah, son of Joash, king of Judah, lived for fifteen years after the death of Joash, son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel. ²⁶ The rest of what Amaziah did, from beginning to end, is written down in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel.

²⁷ After Amaziah gave up following the Lord, a plot was hatched against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish. But the plotters sent men to Lachish to hunt him down, and they killed him there. ²⁸ They brought him back by horse and buried him with his fathers in the city of Judah.

26

¹ All the people of Judah took Uzziah, sixteen years old, and made him king in succession to his father Amaziah. ² He rebuilt Eloth and brought it back into the kingdom of Judah after Amaziah died. ³ Uzziah was sixteen when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for fifty-two years. His mother's name was Jecoliah and she came from Jerusalem. ⁴ He did what was right in the Lord's sight as his father Amaziah had done. ⁵ He

worshiped God during the lifetime of Zechariah, who taught him to respect God. As long as he followed the Lord, God made him successful.

⁶ Uzziah went to war against the Philistines, and he demolished the walls of Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod. Then he built cities around Ashdod and in other Philistine areas. ⁷ God helped him against the Philistines, against the Arabians living in Gurbaal, and against the Meunites. ⁸ The Meunites* brought gifts as tribute to Uzziah. His reputation spread as far as the border of Egypt, for he became very powerful.

⁹ Uzziah built defensive towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate and the Valley Gate, and at the corner, and strengthened them. ¹⁰ He also built towers in the desert and cut many water cisterns out of the rock, because he had a great deal of livestock in the foothills and on the plains. He had farmers and vineyard workers in the hills and in the fertile lowlands, for he loved the soil. ¹¹ Uzziah had an army of battle-ready soldiers, in divisions according to the numbers in the listing made by Jeiel the secretary and Maaseiah the official, under the direction of Hananiah, one of the king's commanders. ¹² The total number of family leaders was 2,600 fighting men. ¹³ Under their command was an army of 307,500 trained for battle, who had the power to help the king fight against the enemy.

¹⁴ Uzziah supplied shields, spears, helmets, armor, bows, and slingstones for the whole army.

* **26:8** “Meunites”: Septuagint reading. Hebrew has “Ammonites.”

¹⁵ He also made skillfully designed war machines to fire arrows and large stones from the towers and corners of the wall. His reputation spread far and wide, for he received extraordinary help until he became really powerful. ¹⁶ But because he was powerful he became arrogant, and this led to his ruin. For he was unfaithful to the Lord his God, and he himself entered the Lord's Temple to burn incense on the altar of incense. ¹⁷ Azariah the priest went in after him, with eighty brave priests of the Lord. ¹⁸ They stood up to him, and told him, "It's not your place to burn incense to the Lord. Only the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who have been set apart as holy may burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have sinned, and the Lord God will not bless you."

¹⁹ Uzziah, who was holding a censer in his hand to offer incense, became furious. But as he raged at the priests in the Lord's Temple in front of the altar of incense, leprosy appeared on his forehead. ²⁰ When Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him and saw the leprosy on his forehead, they rushed him out. In fact he too was in a hurry to leave, because the Lord had struck him. ²¹ King Uzziah was a leper until the day he died. He lived by himself as a leper, barred from entering the Lord's Temple, while his son Jotham was placed in charge of the king's affairs and governed the country.

²² The rest of what Uzziah did, from beginning to end, was written down by the prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz. ²³ Uzziah died and was buried near

them in a cemetery belonging to the kings, for people said, “He was a leper.” His son Jotham took over as king.

27

¹ Jotham was twenty-five when he became king, and he reigned in for Jerusalem sixteen years. His mother's name was Jerushah, daughter of Zadok. ² He did what was right in the Lord's sight as his father Uzziah had done, and he did not enter the Lord's Temple as his father had.* But the people still acted corruptly.

³ Jotham rebuilt the Upper Gate of the Lord's Temple, and did extensive building work on the wall at Ophel. ⁴ He built towns in the hill country of Judah, and fortresses and towers in the mountains and forests.

⁵ Jotham fought with the king of the Ammonites and defeated them. The Ammonites gave him every year for three years one hundred talents of silver, and ten thousand cors of wheat and ten thousand of barley.

⁶ Jotham grew powerful because he made sure what he did followed the ways of the Lord his God. ⁷ The rest of what Jotham did, his wars and other events, were written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah. ⁸ He was twenty-five when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for sixteen years. ⁹ Jotham died and was buried in the City of David. His son Ahaz took over as king.

* **27:2** “As his father had”: implied.

28

¹ Ahaz was twenty when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for sixteen years. He did not do what was right in the Lord's sight as his forefather David had. ² He followed the example of the kings of Israel, and also cast metal idols for worshiping the Baals. ³ He burned sacrifices in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, and sacrificed his children in the fire, following the disgusting practices of the peoples the Lord had driven out before the Israelites. ⁴ He presented sacrifices and burned incense offerings on the high places, on the mountain tops, and under every living tree.

⁵ As a result, the Lord his God let the king of Aram to conquer Ahaz. The Arameans attacked him and captured many of his people, taking them to Damascus. Ahaz was also defeated by the king of Israel in a massive attack. ⁶ In just one day, Pekah, son of Remaliah, killed 120,000 fighting men in Judah, because they had abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers. ⁷ Zichri, a warrior from Ephraim, killed Maaseiah, the son of the king; Azrikam, the palace governor; and Elkanah, the king's second-in-command. ⁸ The Israelites captured 200,000 of their “brothers”^{*}—women, sons, and daughters. They also took a great deal of plunder and brought it to Samaria.

⁹ But a prophet of the Lord named Oded was there in Samaria, and he went out to meet the

* **28:8** “Brothers”: the text does actually say brothers, to make the point that the people of Israel and Judah were related to one another.

returning army. He told them, “It was because the Lord, the God of your fathers, was angry with Judah that he allowed you to defeat them. But you have killed them with such fury that it has upset heaven. ¹⁰ Now you're planning to turn these people from Judah and Jerusalem into slaves. But aren't you also guilty of sinning against the Lord your God? ¹¹ Listen to me! Return the prisoners you've taken from your brothers, the fierce anger of the Lord is falling upon you!”

¹² Some of the leaders of the people of Ephraim[†]—Azariah, son of Jehohanan, Berechiah, son of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah, son of Shallum, and Amasa, son of Hadlai—stood up in opposition against those returning from the war. ¹³ “Don't you bring those prisoners here!” they told them. “If you do you will only add to our sins and wrongdoing against the Lord. Our guilt is already great, and his fierce anger is falling upon Israel.”

¹⁴ So the armed men left the prisoners and the plunder before the leaders and all the people gathered there. ¹⁵ The men named above got up and took clothes from the plunder to those that had none, gave them sandals to wear, and food and drink, and put olive oil on their wounds. Those who couldn't walk any more they put on donkeys, and took them all to Jericho, the town of palms, to be close to the people of Judah.[‡]

[†] **28:12** “Ephraim”: meaning Israel. [‡] **28:15** “The people of Judah” added for clarity. The Hebrew simply says “their brothers.”

¹⁶ It was then that King Ahaz asked the king of Assyria for help. ¹⁷ The armies of Edom had once again invaded Judah and taken people prisoner, ¹⁸ while the Philistines had attacked the towns in the foothills and the Negev of Judah. They had captured and occupied Beth-shemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, along with Soco, Timnah, and Gimzo and their villages. ¹⁹ The Lord had brought Judah down because Ahaz, king of Israel, was out of control in Judah, sinning terribly against the Lord.

²⁰ So Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, came to Ahaz but attacked rather than helped him. ²¹ Ahaz took what was valuable from the Lord's Temple, the king's palace, and from his officials and gave them to the king of Assyria as tribute. But it didn't help him.

²² Even at this time when he was having so much trouble, King Ahaz sinned more and more against the Lord. ²³ He sacrificed to the gods of Damascus, whose army had defeated him, for he said to himself, "Since the gods of the kings of Aram helped them, I'll sacrifice to them so they can help me." But this led to the ruin of Ahaz and of all Israel.

²⁴ Ahaz took the sacred items from the Lord's Temple and smashed them to pieces. He barred the doors of the Lord's Temple and set up pagan altars on every corner in Jerusalem. ²⁵ In every town throughout Judah he set up high places to make offerings to pagan gods, angering the Lord, the God of his forefathers.

²⁶ The rest of what Ahaz did, from beginning to end, is written down in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. ²⁷ Ahaz died, and they buried him in the city, in Jerusalem. They did not bury him in the tombs of the kings of Israel. Hezekiah his son took over as king.

29

¹ Hezekiah was twenty-five when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for twenty-nine years. His mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. ² He did what was right in the Lord's sight, just as his forefather David had done. ³ In the first month of the first year of his reign, Hezekiah opened the doors of the Lord's Temple and repaired them. ⁴ He summoned the priests and the Levites, and had them gather on the square to the east.*

⁵ He told them, "Listen to me, Levites. Purify yourselves now and purify the Temple of the Lord, the God of your forefathers. Take away from the Holy Place everything that is filthy.†
⁶ For our fathers were sinful, and did what was evil in the Lord's sight. They abandoned him and paid no attention to the Lord's Temple, turning their backs on him. ⁷ They shut the doors at the entrance to the Temple and put out the lamps. They didn't burn incense or present burnt offerings at the sanctuary of the God of Israel.

* **29:4** To the east of the Temple. † **29:5** "Filthy": this is not so much concerned with cleaning, but removing anything related to idol worship.

⁸ So the Lord's anger fell on Judah and Jerusalem, and he made them into something appalling, terrifying, and ridiculous, as you can see for yourselves. ⁹ As a result, our fathers have died in battle, and our sons and our daughters and our wives have been captured. ¹⁰ But now I'm going to make an agreement with the Lord, the God of Israel, so that his fierce anger will no longer fall on us. ¹¹ My sons, don't neglect your responsibilities, for the Lord has chosen you to stand in his presence to serve him, and to be his ministers presenting burnt offerings.”

¹² Then the Levites went to work. They were Mahath, son of Amasai, and Joel, son of Azariah, from the Kohathites; Kish, son of Abdi, and Azariah, son of Jehallelel, from the Merarites; Joah, son of Zimmah, and Eden, son of Joah, from the Gershonites; ¹³ from the sons of Elizaphan, Shimri and Jeiel; and from the sons of Asaph, Zechariah and Mattaniah; ¹⁴ from the sons of Heman, Jehiel and Shimei; and from the sons of Jeduthun, Shemaiah and Uzziel.

¹⁵ They called together the other Levites and all of them purified themselves. Then they went in to clean the Lord's Temple, as the king had commanded, following the instructions as required by the Lord. ¹⁶ The priests went into the inner sanctuary of the Lord's Temple to clean it. They removed all the unclean things that they found in the Lord's Temple and placed them in the Temple courtyard. Then the Levites took them out and carried them to the Kidron Valley.

¹⁷ They started the work of purification on the first day of the first month, and by the eighth day of the month they had reached the Temple porch. For eight more days they worked on purifying the Temple itself, and finished on the sixteenth day of the first month.

¹⁸ Then they went in to tell King Hezekiah, “We have cleaned the entire Temple of the Lord, the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the table of the showbread with all its utensils. ¹⁹ We have recovered and purified all the items that King Ahaz threw away during his reign when he was unfaithful. They are now before the Lord's altar.”

²⁰ King Hezekiah got up early, summoned the city officials, and went to the Lord's Temple.

²¹ They brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven male lambs, and seven male goats as a sin offering for the kingdom, for the sanctuary, and for Judah. The king ordered the priests, the descendants of Aaron, to offer them on the altar of the Lord. ²² So they killed the bulls, and the priests took the blood and sprinkled it on the altar. They killed the rams and sprinkled the blood on the altar. They killed the lambs and sprinkled the blood on the altar. ²³ Then they brought the goats for the sin offering before the king and the assembly, who placed their hands on them. ²⁴ Then the priests killed the goats and placed their blood on the altar for a sin offering, to make atonement for the whole of Israel, because the king had ordered that the burnt offering and sin offering were for the

whole of Israel.

²⁵ Hezekiah had the Levites stand in the Lord's Temple with cymbals, harps, and lyres, following the instructions of David, Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet. The instructions had come from the Lord through His prophets. ²⁶ The Levites stood with the musical instruments provided by David, with the priests holding their trumpets.

²⁷ Then Hezekiah gave the order for the burnt offering to be offered on the altar. As the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began at the same time, the trumpets sounded, and music was played on the instruments of David, once king of Israel. ²⁸ All the people in the assembly were worshiping, the singers were singing, and the trumpeters were playing. This continued until the burnt offering was finished. ²⁹ Once the offerings were completed, the king and everyone there with him bowed down and worshiped. ³⁰ Then King Hezekiah and his officials ordered the Levites to sing praises to the Lord using the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with joy, and bowed their heads and worshiped.

³¹ Then Hezekiah told them, "Now that you have dedicated yourselves to the Lord, come and bring your sacrifices and thank offerings to the Lord's Temple." So the people in the assembly brought their sacrifices and thank offerings, and everyone who wanted to brought burnt offerings. ³² The total number of burnt offerings they brought was seventy bulls, a hundred rams,

and two hundred lambs; all these were to be a burnt offering to the Lord. ³³ In addition there were dedicated offerings of six hundred bulls and three thousand sheep.

³⁴ Since there weren't enough priests to skin all the burnt offerings, their Levite relatives helped them until the work was finished and the priests had been purified. (The Levites had been more conscientious in purifying themselves than the priests had.) ³⁵ Apart from the large number of burnt offerings, there was the fat of the friendship offerings, as well as the drink offerings that went with the burnt offerings.

In this way the service of the Lord's Temple was restored. ³⁶ Hezekiah and everyone there were so happy at what God done for the people, because everything had been achieved so quickly.

30

¹ Then Hezekiah sent an announcement to everyone in Israel and Judah, and also sent letters to Ephraim and Manasseh,* inviting them to come to the Lord's Temple in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover of the Lord, the God of Israel. ² The king and his officials and the whole assembly in Jerusalem had decided to

* **30:1** "Ephraim and Manasseh": by this time the northern kingdom of Israel no longer existed, having been destroyed and its people taken away as prisoners by the Assyrian king Shalmanesar. By his invitation Hezekiah is appealing for those who are left in the north to "return home."

observe the Passover in the second month,[†]
³ because they hadn't been able to observe it at the usual time since not enough priests had purified themselves and the people hadn't had time to get to Jerusalem.

⁴ The plan seemed right to both the king and the whole assembly. ⁵ So they decided to send an announcement to everyone in Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, inviting people to come and keep the Passover to the Lord, the God of Israel, in Jerusalem, for many had not done as the Law required.

⁶ So messengers went to all of Israel and Judah carrying letters from the king and his officials and with the king's authorization. They said, "Children of Israel, return to the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, so that he may return to you who are left, who have escaped the oppression of the kings of Assyria. ⁷ Don't be like your fathers and those of you who sinned against the Lord, the God of your forefathers. He made them into something horrifying, as you can see. ⁸ So don't be proud and obstinate like your fathers, but give yourselves to the Lord and come to his sanctuary, which he has made holy forever, and serve the Lord your God, that his fierce anger may no longer fall on you.

⁹ If you come back to the Lord, your relatives and children will receive mercy from their captors and will return to this land. For the Lord

[†] **30:2** Deferring the Passover in special circumstances was permitted, see Numbers 9:6-11.

your God is gracious and merciful. He will not reject you if you come back to him.”

¹⁰ The messengers went from town to town all over the land of Ephraim and Manasseh as far as Zebulun; but the people laughed at them and mocked them. ¹¹ Only some men from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun weren't too proud to go to Jerusalem.

¹² At this time the power of God was helping the people in Judah to all have the same desire to follow the orders of the king and his officials, as indicated by the word of the Lord.

¹³ Many people gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month—a really large crowd. ¹⁴ They went and removed the pagan altars in Jerusalem as well as the incense altars and threw them into the Kidron Valley. ¹⁵ On the fourteenth day of the second month they killed the Passover lamb. The priests and Levites were ashamed,[†] and they purified themselves and brought burnt offerings to the Lord's Temple. ¹⁶ They stood at their assigned positions, according to the law of Moses, the man of God. The priests sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices, which the Levites gave to them.

[†] **30:15** “Ashamed”: perhaps because there had not been enough of them at the previous celebration, and that they had not take seriously the responsibility to purify themselves. Alternatively the devotion shown by those who were attending the Feast of Unleavened Bread may have prompted the priests and Levites to action.

¹⁷ Since many people in the assembly had not purified themselves, the Levites had to kill the Passover lambs on behalf of every unclean person to dedicate the lambs to the Lord. ¹⁸ Most of the people, many of those from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not purified themselves. Yet they ate the Passover meal even though this was not what the Law required, for Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying, “May the good Lord forgive everyone ¹⁹ who sincerely wants to follow the Lord God, the God of their forefathers, even though they're not clean according to the sanctuary requirements.” ²⁰ The Lord accepted Hezekiah's prayer and permitted them this violation. §

²¹ The people of Israel who were there in Jerusalem celebrated the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with great enthusiasm, and every day the Levites and priests praised the Lord, accompanied by loud instruments. ²² Hezekiah spoke positively to all the Levites who showed a good understanding of the Lord. For seven days they ate the food that was assigned to them, presented friendship offerings, and gave thanks to the Lord, the God of their forefathers. ²³ Everyone then agreed to continue to celebrate the festival for seven more days. So for another seven days they celebrated, full of

§ **30:20** “Permitted them this violation”: the word here is “healed,” but this is in a metaphorical sense, since they were not “sick.” It is in response to Hezekiah's request that they would not be held guilty for breaking the ceremonial Law.

joy.

²⁴ Hezekiah, king of Judah, gave a thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep as offerings on behalf of the assembly. The officials in turn gave a thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep on as offerings on behalf of the assembly. A large number of priests purified themselves.

²⁵ The whole assembly of Judah celebrated, together with the priests and Levites, and also with the whole assembly that had come from Israel, including the foreigners from Israel and those living in Judah. ²⁶ There was such tremendous happiness in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel, nothing like this had happened in the city. ²⁷ The priests and the Levites stood up to bless the people, and God heard them—their prayer ascended to where he lived in heaven.

31

¹ When all this had finished, the Israelites who were there went to the towns of Judah and smashed the pagan pillars, cut down the Asherah poles, and destroyed the high places and altars throughout Judah and Benjamin, as well as in Ephraim and Manasseh, until they had completely demolished all of them. After that they all went home to their respective towns.

² Then Hezekiah reallocated the divisions of the priests and Levites, each according to their service: presenting burnt offerings and friendship offerings, serving, giving thanks, and singing praises at the entrances of the Lord's

Temple. ³ The king contributed personally towards the morning and evening burnt offerings, and for the burnt offerings on the Sabbaths, new moons, and special feasts, as required by the Law of the Lord. ⁴ He also ordered the people living in Jerusalem to provide for the priests and Levites so that they could dedicate themselves to studying and teaching the Law of the Lord.

⁵ As soon as the message went out, the Israelites generously gave the firstfruits of the grain, new wine, olive oil, and honey, and of all the crops. They brought plenty, a tithe of everything. ⁶ The people of Israel now living in Judah, and the people of Judah brought a tithe of their herds and flocks. They also brought a tithe of what had been dedicated to the Lord their God, and piled them up. ⁷ They started doing this in the third month, and they finished in the seventh month.

⁸ When Hezekiah and his officials came and saw what had been collected, they thanked the Lord and his people Israel. ⁹ Hezekiah asked the priests and Levites about what had been collected.

¹⁰ Azariah, the chief priest of the family of Zadok, answered, "Ever since the people began to bring their contributions into the Lord's Temple, we have had enough to eat and plenty to spare. Because the Lord has blessed his people there is so much left over."

¹¹ Hezekiah ordered the construction of storehouses in the Lord's Temple. Once they were ready, ¹² the people faithfully brought in their

offerings, tithes, and dedicated gifts. Conaniah the Levite was the one who was responsible for them, and his brother Shimei was second in command. ¹³ They were in charge of the following officers: Jehiel, Azaziah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismachiah, Mahath, and Benaiah were overseers who assisted Conaniah and Shimei his brother. They were appointed by King Hezekiah and Azariah, the chief officer of God's Temple.

¹⁴ Kore, son of Imnah, the Levite, the gatekeeper of the East Gate, was responsible for receiving the freewill offerings given to God. He also distributed the offerings given to the Lord, together with the consecrated gifts. ¹⁵ Under him were his assistants Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, She-maiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah. They faithfully made the allocations to their fellow Levites in their towns, according to the priestly divisions, sharing equally with the old and young. ¹⁶ They also gave allowances to the males listed in the genealogy who were three years of age or older, to all who would enter the Lord's Temple to perform their daily duties of serving according to the responsibilities of their divisions. ¹⁷ They also gave allowances to the priests listed by family in the genealogy, and to the Levites twenty years of age or older, according to the responsibilities of their divisions. ¹⁸ The genealogy included all the babies, wives, sons, and daughters of the whole community, for they were faithful in making sure they dedicated themselves as holy.

¹⁹ In the case of the priests, the descendants of Aaron, those who lived on the farmlands around their towns, men were appointed by name in all the towns to distribute an allocation to every male among the priests and to every Levite as listed in the genealogies. ²⁰ This is what Hezekiah did throughout the whole of Judah. He did what was good, right, and true before the Lord his God. ²¹ In everything he did in working for God's Temple and in following God's laws and commandments, Hezekiah was sincere in his commitment to God. So he was successful in all he did.

32

¹ After Hezekiah's faithful work, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, invaded Judah and attacked its fortified towns, planning to conquer them for himself. ² When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come to attack Jerusalem, ³ he talked with his army commanders about blocking up the water sources that lay outside the city. This is what they did. ⁴ They directed a large group of workers to block all the springs as well as the stream flowing nearby. "Why should the kings of Assyria come here and find plenty of water?" they asked.

⁵ Hezekiah set to work and rebuilt all the parts of the wall that had fallen down and constructed towers on it. He also built another wall outside the first wall. He reinforced the Millo* in the city of David. He also made a large quantity

* **32:5** "Millo": the meaning of this term is uncertain, perhaps "terraces." See 1 Chronicles 11:8.

of weapons and shields. ⁶ Hezekiah put army commanders in charge of the people.

Then he summoned the people to gather in the square at the city gate. He spoke to them confidently, telling them, ⁷ “Be strong and be brave! Don't be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria with his large army, for there are more with us than with him. ⁸ He has human help, but we have the Lord God on our side to help us and fight our battles.” The people were encouraged by this speech of Hezekiah, king of Judah.

⁹ Some time later, when Sennacherib was attacking the town of Lachish with his armies, he sent his officers to Jerusalem with this message for Hezekiah, king of Judah, and for everyone from Judah living there.

¹⁰ “This is what Sennacherib, king of Assyria, says. What are you going to trust in to help you survive when I come to attack Jerusalem?

¹¹ Can't you see that in reality Hezekiah is telling you to die from starvation and thirst when he tells you, ‘The Lord our God will save us from the king of Assyria’? ¹² Wasn't it Hezekiah who destroyed the high places and altars of this god and told Judah and Jerusalem,† ‘You must

† **32:12** Some have argued that the Assyrians misunderstood the nature of Hezekiah's religious reforms. However, it may be that the removal of local “shrines,” even those dedicated to the true God, was not appreciated by some since instead of worshiping locally they all had to go to Jerusalem. This may have caused resentment against Hezekiah which the Assyrians are trying to capitalize on.

worship at this one altar, and offer sacrifices on it alone’?

¹³ Don't you know what I and my fathers have done to all the nations of the earth? None of their gods could save them or their lands from me! ¹⁴ Which one of all these gods of these nations that my fathers destroyed has been able to save them from me? So why would you think your god can save you from me? ¹⁵ So don't let Hezekiah fool you, and don't let him mislead you like this. Don't trust him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to save their people from me or from my fathers. So it's even less possible for your god to save you from me!”

¹⁶ Sennacherib's officers continued criticizing the Lord God and his servant Hezekiah.

¹⁷ Sennacherib also wrote letters insulting the Lord, the God of Israel, taunting him by saying, “In the same way the gods of the nations did not save their people from me, so the god of Hezekiah will not save his people from me either.”

¹⁸ The Assyrians also shouted this out in Hebrew to the people of Jerusalem standing on the wall to frighten and to terrify them so that the city would be surrendered. ¹⁹ They talked about the God of Jerusalem like they did about the gods of the other nations, gods made by human beings.

²⁰ King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz, appealed about this in prayer to the God of heaven. ²¹ The Lord sent an angel who wiped out every warrior, leader, and commander in the

camp of the Assyrian king. So he returned home in disgrace. When he went into the temple of his god, some of his own sons killed him with their swords.

²² The Lord saved Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem from King Sennacherib of Assyria and all other enemies, giving them peace in every direction. ²³ From then on he was very well respected by all the nations, and many brought offerings to Jerusalem for the Lord and valuable gifts for Hezekiah, king of Judah.

²⁴ Around that time Hezekiah fell sick and was about to die. So he prayed to the Lord, who replied by healing him and giving him a miraculous sign.[‡] ²⁵ But because he had become proud, Hezekiah did not acknowledge the gift he'd been given. So the Lord's anger fell on him, and on Judah and Jerusalem. ²⁶ Then Hezekiah apologized for his arrogance, as did the people of Jerusalem, and the Lord's anger no longer fell on them during Hezekiah's lifetime.

²⁷ Hezekiah was very rich and highly honored, and he built treasury storerooms to hold silver, gold, precious stones, spices, shields, and all kinds of valuable things. ²⁸ He constructed buildings to store supplies of grain, new wine, and olive oil, and stalls for all kinds of animals, including cattle and sheep. ²⁹ He built many towns, and he owned large herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, for God had made him very wealthy. ³⁰ Hezekiah blocked off the outlet of

[‡] **32:24** The sundial shadow moving backwards, see 2 Kings 20:8-11.

the upper Gihon spring and made the water flow down to the west side of the City of David. Hezekiah was successful in everything he did.

³¹ But when ambassadors of the rulers of Babylon came to him to ask about the miraculous signs that had happened in the country, God left him to himself to test him, so he could know Hezekiah's true thinking.*

³² The rest of what Hezekiah did, including his acts of loyalty, are recorded in the vision of the prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz, in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. ³³ Hezekiah died and was buried in the upper cemetery of David's descendants. All Judah and the people of Jerusalem honored him at his death. His son Manasseh took over as king.

33

¹ Manasseh was twelve when he became king, and he reigned in for Jerusalem fifty-five years.

² He did evil in the Lord's sight by following the disgusting religious practices of the nations that the Lord had driven out before the Israelites.

³ He rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had destroyed, and he made altars for the Baals and set up Asherah poles. He worshiped the sun, moon, and stars and served them.

§ **32:31** See verse 24. * **32:31** This is surely in reference to Hezekiah's previous pride and failure to acknowledge God's miracle on his behalf. Here in human language we see God making sure Hezekiah is no longer proud.

⁴ He built altars in the Lord's Temple, about which the Lord had said, "I shall be honored in Jerusalem forever." ⁵ He built these altars to worship the sun, moon, and stars in both courtyards of the Lord's Temple. ⁶ He sacrificed his children by burning them to death in the Valley of Ben-hinnom. He practiced sorcery, divination, and witchcraft, and visited mediums and spiritists. He did a great deal of evil in the Lord's sight, making him angry.

⁷ He took a pagan idol he had made and set it up in God's Temple, about which God had told David and his son Solomon, "I will be honored forever in this Temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel." ⁸ If the Israelites are careful to follow everything I have instructed them to do—all the laws, commandments, and regulations, given through Moses—then I will not make them leave the land I granted your forefathers." ⁹ But Manasseh seduced Judah and the people of Jerusalem, leading them to commit even worse sins than the nations the Lord had destroyed before Israelites.

¹⁰ The Lord warned Manasseh and his people, but they ignored him. ¹¹ So the Lord sent the armies of Assyria with their commanders to attack them. The Assyrians captured Manasseh, put a hook through his nose, put bronze shackles on him, and took him away to Babylon. ¹² In his misery, asked the Lord God for help, repenting for his arrogance before the God of his forefathers. ¹³ He prayed and prayed, and the Lord listened to his pleadings, so the Lord brought

Manasseh back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh was convinced that the Lord is God.

¹⁴ After this, Manasseh rebuilt the outer wall of the City of David from west of Gihon in the valley to the Fish Gate, and around the hill of Ophel, and made it much higher. He also assigned army commanders to all the fortified towns of Judah. ¹⁵ He disposed of the foreign gods and the idol from the Lord's Temple, together with all the altars he had built on the Temple hill and in Jerusalem, throwing all of them outside the city. ¹⁶ Then he restored the altar of the Lord, and sacrificed friendship offerings and thank offerings on it, and he instructed Judah to worship the Lord, the God of Israel. ¹⁷ But the people still sacrificed on the high places, but only to the Lord their God.

¹⁸ The rest of what Manasseh did, along with his prayer to his God and what he was told by the seers who spoke on the Lord's behalf are recorded in the Book of the Kings of Israel. ¹⁹ His prayer and how God answered him, as well as all his sins and unfaithfulness, and where he built high places and set up Asherah poles and idols before he admitted he was wrong, are recorded in the Records of the Seers. ²⁰ Manasseh died and was buried at his palace. His son Amon took over as king.

²¹ Amon was twenty-two when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for two years. ²² He did evil in the Lord's sight just as his father Manasseh had. Amon worshiped and sacrificed

to all the idols his father Manasseh had made. ²³ However, he did not admit his pride before the Lord as his father Manasseh had done—in fact Amon made his guilt even worse. ²⁴ Then Amon's officials plotted against him and killed him in his palace. ²⁵ But the people of the land* killed everyone who had plotted against King Amon, and they made his son Josiah king.

34

¹ Josiah was eight when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for thirty-one years. ² He did what was right in the Lord's sight and followed the ways of his forefather David—he did not deviate to the right or to the left.

³ In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, Josiah began to publicly worship the God of David his forefather, and in the twelfth year of his reign he began to cleanse Judah and Jerusalem by removing the high places, the Asherah poles, the carved idols, and the metal images. ⁴ He had the altars of Baal torn down in front of him, and the incense altars above them cut down. In addition, the Asherah poles, the carved idols, and the metal images were smashed to pieces and scattered over the graves of those who had been sacrificing to them. ⁵ He burned the bones of the idolatrous priests on their altars. In this way he cleansed Judah and Jerusalem.

* **33:25** “People of the land”: nothing more specific is given, but this could refer to land-owning nobles. If so, they probably were regents during the time Josiah was a child.

⁶ Josiah repeated this in the towns of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, all the way to Naphtali, and in their surrounding areas.* ⁷ He tore down the altars and crushed the Asherah poles and the images to dust, and cut down all the incense altars across the whole land of Israel. Then he went back to Jerusalem.

⁸ In the eighteenth year of his reign, once he had finished cleansing the land and the Temple, Josiah sent Shaphan, son of Azaliah, Maaseiah the city governor, and Joah, son of Joahaz, the record-keeper, to repair the Temple of the Lord his God. ⁹ They went to Hilkiah the high priest and gave him the money that had been brought to God's Temple. The Levites at the entrances had collected this money from the people of Manasseh and Ephraim, from what was left of the people of Israel, as well as contributions from Judah, Benjamin, and the people of Jerusalem.

¹⁰ They handed it over to those who were supervising the repair work on Lord's Temple, who in turn paid the workmen doing the restoring and repairing. ¹¹ They also paid carpenters and builders to buy cut stone, as well as timber for joists and beams for the buildings that the kings of Judah had let deteriorate. ¹² The men did good, honest work. In charge of them were Jahath and Obadiah, Levites from the sons of Merari; and Zechariah and Meshullam, Levites from the sons of the Kohathites. The Levites, all skilled

* **34:6** "And in their surrounding areas": as one ancient version. Another possibility is "and in their ruins," on account of the destruction caused by the Assyrian invasion.

musicians, ¹³ were in charge of the workmen and directed everyone involved, depending on what was required. Some of the Levites were scribes, some officers, and some gatekeepers.

¹⁴ In the process of taking out the money donated to the Lord's Temple, Hilkiah the priest discovered the Book of the Lord's Law written down by Moses. ¹⁵ Hilkiah told Shaphan the scribe, "I've found the Book of the Law in the Lord's Temple." He gave it to Shaphan. ¹⁶ Shaphan took the book to the king and told him, "We your servants are doing everything we were instructed to do. ¹⁷ The money collected at the Lord's Temple has been handed over to those who are supervising the workers, paying them to do the repairs." ¹⁸ Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, "Hilkiah the priest gave me this book." Shaphan read it to the king.

¹⁹ When the king heard what the Law said, he tore his clothes.† ²⁰ Then he issue the following orders to Hilkiah, Ahikam, son of Shaphan, Abdon, son of Micah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah, the king's assistant: ²¹ "Go and talk to the Lord for me, and also for those who still live in Israel and Judah, about what is said in the book that's been found. For the Lord must be really angry with us because our forefathers have not obeyed the Lord's instructions by following all that's written in this book."

²² Hilkiah and those the king had selected went and talked with Huldah the prophetess,

† **34:19** "Tore his clothes": a demonstration of great emotional distress.

the wife of Shallum, son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah, custodian of the wardrobe.† She lived in Jerusalem, in the city's second quarter.

²³ Huldah told them, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Tell the man who sent you to me, ²⁴ this is what the Lord says: I am about to bring disaster down on this place and on its people, in accordance with all the curses written in the book that has been read to the king of Judah. ²⁵ They have abandoned me and offered sacrifices to other gods, making me angry by everything they've done. My anger will be poured out upon this place and will not be stopped.

²⁶ But tell the king of Judah who sent you to ask the Lord, tell him this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: As for the what you heard read to you— ²⁷ because you were receptive and repentant before God when you heard his warnings against this place and against its people, and because you have repented, tearing your clothes and weeping before me, I have also heard§ you, declares the Lord. ²⁸ All this will not happen until after you have died, and you will die in peace.* You will not see all the disaster that I'm going to bring down on this place and on its inhabitants.” They went back to the king and gave him her response.

† **34:22** “Wardrobe”: either the king's clothes, or those of the priest (s). § **34:27** “Heard”: in the sense of a positive response.

* **34:28** “Die in peace”: of course this did not happen, because Josiah chose to confront the Egyptian Pharaoh in battle and was killed. See 35:20-24.

²⁹ Then the king summoned all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. ³⁰ He went to the Lord's Temple with all the people of Judah and Jerusalem, together with the priests and the Levites, all the people from the least to the greatest, and he read to them the whole Book of the Agreement that had been discovered in the Lord's Temple. ³¹ The king stood by the pillar and made a solemn agreement before the Lord to follow him and to keep his commandments, laws, and regulations with total dedication, and to observe the requirements of the agreement as written in the book. ³² Then he had everyone present from Jerusalem and Benjamin stand up to show they agreed to it. So all the people of Jerusalem accepted and followed the agreement with God, the God of their forefathers.

³³ Josiah demolished all the vile idols from the whole territory belonging to the Israelites, and he made everyone in Israel serve the Lord their God. During his reign they did not give up worshiping the Lord, the God of their fathers.

35

¹ Josiah held a Passover for the Lord in Jerusalem, and the Passover lamb was killed on the fourteenth day of the first month. ² He assigned the priests to their respective duties and encouraged them in their ministry at the Lord's Temple. ³ Josiah told the Levites who taught all Israel and were holy to the Lord, "Place the holy Ark in the Temple built by Solomon, son of David, king of Israel. It's not necessary for you to carry

it around on your shoulders any more. Your responsibility now is to serve the Lord your God and his people Israel. ⁴ Get yourselves ready for service in your divisions, by families, according to the instructions given by David, king of Israel, and his son Solomon.

⁵ Then you are to stand in the sanctuary to assist the lay people according to family divisions, following the assignments according to your Levite family divisions. ⁶ Sacrifice the Passover lambs, purify yourselves, and be ready to help the people who come to fulfill the requirements given by the Lord through Moses.”

⁷ Josiah contributed as Passover offerings for all the people who were present 30,000 lambs and goats, and 3,000 bulls, all from his own flocks and herds. ⁸ His officials contributed freely to the people, to the priests, and to the Levites. Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, who were in charge of God's Temple, gave the priests as Passover offerings 2,600 Passover lambs and 300 bulls. ⁹ The leaders of the Levites, Conaniah, and Shemaiah and Nethanel his brothers, and Hashabiah and Jeiel and Jozabad, gave the Levites as Passover offerings 5,000 lambs and young goats and 500 bulls.

¹⁰ Once the preparations had been completed, the priests stood where they had been assigned and the Levites took their places in their divisions as the king had ordered. ¹¹ They killed the Passover lambs, the priests sprinkled the blood they were given on the altar, while the Levites skinned the sacrifices. ¹² They put to

one side the burnt offerings to be given to the families of the lay people, by division, to offer to the Lord, as required in the Book of Moses. They did the same thing with the bulls. ¹³ They roasted the Passover sacrifices on the fire as requires, and they boiled the holy offerings in pots, caldrons, and pans, and took them quickly to the lay people. ¹⁴ After that they prepared food from the offerings for themselves and for the priests, because the priests, the descendants of Aaron, were busy presenting burnt offerings and fat until night came. So the Levites did this work for themselves and for the priests, the descendants of Aaron. ¹⁵ The singers, the descendants of Asaph, were in their places following the instructions given by David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, the king's seer. The gatekeepers in charge at each gate did not need to leave, because their fellow Levites provided for them.

¹⁶ So on that day the whole Passover service of the Lord was took place, including the presenting of burnt offerings on the altar of the Lord, as King Josiah had ordered. ¹⁷ The Israelites who were there also celebrated Passover at that time, and also the Feast of Unleavened Bread for the following seven days. ¹⁸ No Passover like this had been held in Israel since the time of Samuel the prophet. None of the kings of Israel had ever held a Passover like the one that Josiah observed with the priests, the Levites, all of Judah, the Israelites who were there, and the people of Jerusalem. ¹⁹ This Passover was observed in the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah.

²⁰ After all this work that Josiah had carried out in restoring the Temple, King Neco of Egypt was leading his army to fight at Carchemish near the Euphrates, and Josiah went to confront him.

²¹ Neco sent messengers to him, saying, “What argument is there between you and me, king of Judah? I have not come to attack you today, because I’m fighting with another kingdom. God told me I should hurry, so stop obstructing God, who is with me, or he’ll destroy you!”

²² But Josiah did not turn away and leave. Instead, he disguised himself so he could fight Neco in battle. He ignored Neco’s message that came from God, and went to fight him on the Plain of Megiddo. ²³ There archers shot King Josiah. He called out those beside him, “Get me out of the battle, because I’m badly wounded!”

²⁴ So they carried him out of his chariot, and took him back in his second chariot to Jerusalem, where he died. Josiah was buried in the tomb of his forefathers. All Judah and Jerusalem wept for him.

²⁵ Then Jeremiah wrote a lament over Josiah, and to this day male and female choirs sing sad songs about Josiah. They have become a part of what is regularly sung in Israel, and they are recorded in the Book of Laments.

²⁶ The rest of what Josiah did, along with his acts of loyalty following what is written in the Law of the Lord, ²⁷ all his actions, from beginning to end, are recorded in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

36

¹ The people of the land took Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, and made him king in Jerusalem in succession to his father. ² Jehoahaz was twenty-three when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for three months. ³ Then the king of Egypt removed him from the throne in Jerusalem and imposed a tax on Judah of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. ⁴ Neco, king of Egypt, made Eliakim, Jehoahaz's brother, king over Judah and Jerusalem, and he changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. Neco took Eliakim's brother Jehoahaz back with him to Egypt.

⁵ Jehoiakim was twenty-five when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for eleven years. He did evil in the sight of the Lord his God. ⁶ Then Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, attacked Jehoiakim. He captured him* and put bronze shackles on him, and brought him to Babylon. ⁷ Nebuchadnezzar also took some items from the Lord's Temple, and he put them in his temple† in Babylon.

⁸ The rest of what Jehoiakim, the disgusting sins he committed, and all the evidence against him, are written down in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah. His son Jehoiachin took over as king.

⁹ Jehoiachin was eighteen when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for three

* **36:6** "He captured him": implied. † **36:7** "Temple": or, "palace."

months and ten days. He did evil in the Lord's sight. ¹⁰ In the spring of the year, King Nebuchadnezzar summoned him and brought him to Babylon, along with valuable items from the Lord's Temple, and he made Jehoiachin's uncle[†] Zedekiah king over Judah and Jerusalem.

¹¹ Zedekiah was twenty-one when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for eleven years. ¹² He did evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and he refused to admit his pride when the prophet Jeremiah warned him directly from the Lord. ¹³ He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear an oath of loyalty by God. Zedekiah was arrogant and hard-hearted, and refused to come back to the Lord, the God of Israel.

¹⁴ All the leaders of the priests and the people were also totally faithless and sinful, following all the disgusting practices of the heathen nations. They defiled the Lord's Temple that he had set apart as holy in Jerusalem. ¹⁵ Again and again the Lord, the God of their fathers, warned his people through his prophets, because he wanted to show mercy to them and to his Temple. ¹⁶ But they ridiculed God's messengers, they despised his warnings and mocked his prophets, until the Lord's anger against his people was provoked to such an extent it couldn't be stopped.

¹⁷ So the Lord brought the king of Babylon to attack them. His army killed by the sword their best young men even in the sanctuary. The

[†] **36:10** "Uncle": see 2 Kings 24:17.

Babylonians did not spare young men or young women, the sick or the elderly. God handed them all over to Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁸ He took back to Babylon all the articles, large and small, from God's Temple, and from the Temple treasury, and from the king and from his officials. ¹⁹ Then the Babylonians burned down God's Temple and demolished Jerusalem's walls. They set fire to all the palaces and destroyed everything that had any value. ²⁰ Nebuchadnezzar took into exile in Babylon those who had not been killed. They were slaves for himself and his sons, until the kingdom of Persia took over.

²¹ So to fulfill the Lord's prophecy given through Jeremiah, the land enjoyed its Sabbaths as rest all the time it was left desolate, keeping the Sabbath until seventy years were completed.

²² In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, to fulfill the Lord's prophecy given through Jeremiah, the Lord encouraged Cyrus, king of Persia, to issue a proclamation throughout his kingdom and also to put it in writing, saying, ²³ "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: 'The Lord, the God of heaven, who has given to me all the kingdoms of the earth, has given me the responsibility to build a Temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone among you who belongs to his people can go there. May the Lord your God be with you.' "§

§ 36:23 This proclamation of Cyrus is also found at the beginning of Ezra 1.

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Version translation in American English

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