

2 Samuel

BEREAN STANDARD BIBLE

Chapter 1

SAUL'S DEATH REPORTED TO DAVID

¹After the death of Saul, David returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites and stayed in Ziklag two days. ²On the third day a man with torn clothes and dust on his head arrived from Saul's camp. When he came to David, he fell to the ground to pay him homage. ³"Where have you come from?" David asked. "I have escaped from the Israelite camp," he replied. ⁴"What was the outcome?" David asked. "Please tell me." "The troops fled from the battle," he replied. "Many of them fell and died. And Saul and his son Jonathan are also dead." ⁵Then David asked the young man who had brought him the report, "How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?" ⁶"I happened to be on Mount Gilboa," he replied, "and there was Saul, leaning on his spear, with the chariots and the cavalry closing in on him. ⁷When he turned around and saw me, he called out to me, and I answered, 'Here I am!' ⁸'Who are you?' he asked. So I told him, 'I am an Amalekite.' ⁹Then he begged me, 'Stand over me and kill me, for agony has seized me, but my life still lingers.' ¹⁰So I stood over him and killed him, because I knew that after he had fallen he could not survive. And I took the crown that was on his head and the band that was on his arm, and I have brought them here to my lord." ¹¹Then David took hold of his own clothes and tore them, and all the men who were with him did the same. ¹²They mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the people of the LORD and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword. ¹³And David inquired of the young man who had brought him the report, "Where are you from?" "I am the son of a foreigner," he answered. "I am an Amalekite." ¹⁴So David asked him, "Why were you not afraid to lift your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?" ¹⁵Then David summoned one of the young men and said, "Go, execute him!" So the young man struck him down, and he died. ¹⁶For David had said to the Amalekite, "Your blood be on your own head because your own mouth has testified against you, saying, 'I killed the LORD's anointed.'"

DAVID'S SONG FOR SAUL AND JONATHAN

¹⁷Then David took up this lament for Saul and his son Jonathan, ¹⁸and he ordered that the sons of Judah be

taught the Song of the Bow. It is written in the Book of Jashar: ¹⁹"Your glory, O Israel, lies slain on your heights. How the mighty have fallen! ²⁰Tell it not in Gath; proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, and the daughters of the uncircumcised exult. ²¹O mountains of Gilboa, may you have no dew or rain, no fields yielding offerings of grain. For there the shield of the mighty was defiled, the shield of Saul, no longer anointed with oil. ²²From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not retreat, and the sword of Saul did not return empty. ²³Saul and Jonathan, beloved and delightful in life, were not divided in death. They were swifter than eagles; they were stronger than lions. ²⁴O daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and luxury, who decked your garments with ornaments of gold. ²⁵How the mighty have fallen in the thick of battle! Jonathan lies slain on your heights. ²⁶I grieve for you, Jonathan, my brother. You were delightful to me; your love to me was extraordinary, surpassing the love of women. ²⁷How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war have perished!"

Chapter 2

DAVID ANOINTED KING OF JUDAH

¹Some time later, David inquired of the LORD, "Should I go up to one of the towns of Judah?" "Go up," the LORD answered. Then David asked, "Where should I go?" "To Hebron," replied the LORD. ²So David went there with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel. ³David also took the men who were with him, each with his household, and they settled in the towns near Hebron. ⁴Then the men of Judah came to Hebron, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, "It was the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul." ⁵So David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead to tell them, "The LORD bless you, because you showed this kindness to Saul your lord when you buried him. ⁶Now may the LORD show you loving devotion and faithfulness, and I will also show you the same favor because you have done this. ⁷Now then, be strong and courageous, for though Saul your lord is dead, the house of Judah has anointed me as their king."

ISH-BOSHETH MADE KING OF ISRAEL

⁸Meanwhile, Abner son of Ner, the commander of Saul's army, took Saul's son Ish-bosheth, moved him to Mahanaim, ⁹and made him king over Gilead, Asher, Jezreel, Ephraim, and Benjamin—over all Israel. ¹⁰Saul's son Ish-bosheth was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned for two years. The house of Judah, however, followed David. ¹¹And the length of time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

THE BATTLE OF GIBEON

¹²One day Abner son of Ner and the servants of Ish-bosheth son of Saul marched out from Mahanaim to Gibeon. ¹³So Joab son of Zeruiah and the servants of David marched out and met them by the pool of Gibeon. And the two groups took up positions on opposite sides of the pool. ¹⁴Then Abner said to Joab, "Let us have the young men get up and compete before us." "Let them get up," Joab replied. ¹⁵So they got up and were counted off—twelve for Benjamin and Ish-bosheth son of Saul, and twelve for David. ¹⁶Then each man grabbed his opponent by the head and thrust his sword into his opponent's side, and they all fell together. So this place, which is in Gibeon, is called Helkath-hazzurim. ¹⁷The battle that day was intense, and Abner and the men of Israel were defeated by the servants of David. ¹⁸The three sons of Zeruiah were there: Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Now Asahel was fleet of foot like a wild gazelle, ¹⁹and he chased Abner, not turning to the right or to the left in his pursuit. ²⁰And Abner glanced back and said, "Is that you, Asahel?" "It is," Asahel replied. ²¹So Abner told him, "Turn to your right or to your left, seize one of the young men, and take his equipment for yourself." But Asahel would not stop chasing him. ²²Once again, Abner warned Asahel, "Stop chasing me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How could I show my face to your brother Joab?" ²³But Asahel refused to turn away. So Abner thrust the butt of his spear into his stomach, and it came out his back, and he fell dead on the spot. And every man paused when he came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died. ²⁴But Joab and Abishai pursued Abner. By sunset, they had gone as far as the hill of Ammah opposite Giah on the way to the wilderness of Gibeon. ²⁵The Benjamites rallied to Abner, formed a single unit, and took their stand atop a hill. ²⁶Then Abner called out to Joab: "Must the sword devour forever? Do you not realize that this will only end in bitterness? How long before you tell the troops to stop pursuing their brothers?" ²⁷"As surely as God lives," Joab replied, "if you had not spoken up, the troops would have continued pursuing their

brothers until morning." ²⁸So Joab blew the ram's horn, and all the troops stopped; they no longer pursued Israel or continued to fight. ²⁹And all that night Abner and his men marched through the Arabah. They crossed the Jordan, marched all morning, and arrived at Mahanaim. ³⁰When Joab returned from pursuing Abner, he gathered all the troops. In addition to Asahel, nineteen of David's servants were missing, ³¹but they had struck down 360 Benjamites who were with Abner. ³²And they took Asahel and buried him in his father's tomb in Bethlehem. Then Joab and his men marched all night and reached Hebron at daybreak.

Chapter 3**THE HOUSE OF DAVID STRENGTHENED**

¹Now the war between the house of Saul and the house of David was protracted. And David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker. ²And sons were born to David in Hebron: His firstborn was Amnon, by Ahinoam of Jezreel; ³his second was Chileab, by Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel; his third was Absalom, the son of Maacah daughter of King Talmai of Geshur; ⁴his fourth was Adonijah, the son of Haggith; his fifth was Shephatiah, the son of Abital; ⁵and his sixth was Ithream, by David's wife Eglah. These sons were born to David in Hebron.

ABNER JOINS DAVID

⁶During the war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner had continued to strengthen his position in the house of Saul. ⁷Now Saul had a concubine named Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah. So Ish-bosheth questioned Abner, "Why did you sleep with my father's concubine?" ⁸Abner was furious over Ish-bosheth's accusation. "Am I the head of a dog that belongs to Judah?" he asked. "All this time I have been loyal to the house of your father Saul, to his brothers, and to his friends. I have not delivered you into the hand of David, but now you accuse me of wrongdoing with this woman! ⁹May God punish Abner, and ever so severely, if I do not do for David what the LORD has sworn to him: ¹⁰to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and to establish the throne of David over Israel and Judah, from Dan to Beersheba." ¹¹And for fear of Abner, Ish-bosheth did not dare to say another word to him. ¹²Then Abner sent messengers on his behalf to say to David, "To whom does the land belong? Make your covenant with me, and surely my hand will be with you to bring all Israel over to you." ¹³"Good," replied David, "I will make a covenant with you. But there is one thing I require of you: Do not appear before me unless you bring Saul's

daughter Michal when you come to see me.” ¹⁴Then David sent messengers to say to Ish-bosheth son of Saul, “Give me back my wife, Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for a hundred Philistine foreskins.” ¹⁵So Ish-bosheth sent and took Michal from her husband Paltiel son of Laish. ¹⁶Her husband followed her, weeping all the way to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, “Go back.” So he returned home. ¹⁷Now Abner conferred with the elders of Israel and said, “In the past you sought David as your king. ¹⁸Now take action, because the LORD has said to David, ‘Through My servant David I will save My people Israel from the hands of the Philistines and of all their enemies.’” ¹⁹Abner also spoke to the Benjamites. Then he went to Hebron to tell David all that seemed good to Israel and to the whole house of Benjamin. ²⁰When Abner and twenty of his men came to David at Hebron, David held a feast for them. ²¹Then Abner said to David, “Let me go at once, and I will gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may rule over all that your heart desires.” So David dismissed Abner, and he went in peace.

JOAB MURDERS ABNER

²²Just then David’s soldiers and Joab returned from a raid, bringing with them a great plunder. But Abner was not with David in Hebron, because David had sent him on his way in peace. ²³When Joab and all his troops arrived, he was informed, “Abner son of Ner came to see the king, who sent him on his way in peace.” ²⁴So Joab went to the king and said, “What have you done? Look, Abner came to you. Why did you dismiss him? Now he is getting away!” ²⁵Surely you realize that Abner son of Ner came to deceive you and to track your movements and all that you are doing.” ²⁶As soon as Joab had left David, he sent messengers after Abner, who brought him back from the well of Sirah. But David was unaware of it. ²⁷When Abner returned to Hebron, Joab pulled him aside into the gateway, as if to speak to him privately, and there Joab stabbed him in the stomach. So Abner died on account of the blood of Joab’s brother Asahel. ²⁸Afterward, David heard about this and said, “I and my kingdom are forever guiltless before the LORD concerning the blood of Abner son of Ner. ²⁹May it whirl over the head of Joab and over the entire house of his father, and may the house of Joab never be without one having a discharge or skin disease, or one who leans on a staff or falls by the sword or lacks food.” ³⁰(Joab and his brother Abishai murdered Abner because he had killed their brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon.)

DAVID MOURNS FOR ABNER

³¹Then David ordered Joab and all the people with him, “Tear your clothes, put on sackcloth, and mourn before Abner.” And King David himself walked behind the funeral bier. ³²When they buried Abner in Hebron, the king wept aloud at Abner’s tomb, and all the people wept. ³³And the king sang this lament for Abner: “Should Abner die the death of a fool? ³⁴Your hands were not bound, your feet were not fettered. As a man falls before the wicked, so also you fell.” And all the people wept over him even more. ³⁵Then all the people came and urged David to eat something while it was still day, but David took an oath, saying, “May God punish me, and ever so severely, if I taste bread or anything else before the sun sets!” ³⁶All the people took note and were pleased. In fact, everything the king did pleased them. ³⁷So on that day all the troops and all Israel were convinced that the king had no part in the murder of Abner son of Ner. ³⁸Then the king said to his servants, “Do you not realize that a great prince has fallen today in Israel? ³⁹And I am weak this day, though anointed as king, and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too fierce for me. May the LORD repay the evildoer according to his evil!”

Chapter 4

THE MURDER OF ISH-BOSHETH

¹Now when Ish-bosheth son of Saul heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost courage, and all Israel was dismayed. ²Saul’s son had two men who were leaders of raiding parties. One was named Baanah and the other Rechab; they were sons of Rimmon the Beerothite of the tribe of Benjamin—Beeroth is considered part of Benjamin, ³because the Beerothites fled to Gittaim and have lived there as foreigners to this day. ⁴And Jonathan son of Saul had a son who was lame in his feet. He was five years old when the report about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. His nurse picked him up and fled, but as she was hurrying to escape, he fell and became lame. His name was Mephibosheth. ⁵Now Rechab and Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, set out and arrived at the house of Ish-bosheth in the heat of the day, while the king was taking his midday nap. ⁶They entered the interior of the house as if to get some wheat, and they stabbed him in the stomach. Then Rechab and his brother Baanah slipped away. ⁷They had entered the house while Ish-bosheth was lying on his bed, and having stabbed and killed him, they beheaded him, took his head, and traveled all night by way of the Arabah. ⁸They brought the head of Ish-bosheth to David at Hebron and said to the king, “Here is the head of Ish-bosheth son of Saul, your enemy who sought your life.

Today the LORD has granted vengeance to my lord the king against Saul and his offspring.”

THE EXECUTION OF RECHAB AND BAANAH

⁹But David answered Rechab and his brother Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, “As surely as the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life from all distress, ¹⁰when someone told me, ‘Look, Saul is dead,’ and thought he was a bearer of good news, I seized him and put him to death at Ziklag. That was his reward for his news! ¹¹How much more, when wicked men kill a righteous man in his own house and on his own bed, shall I not now require his blood from your hands and remove you from the earth!” ¹²So David commanded his young men, and they killed Rechab and Baanah. They cut off their hands and feet and hung their bodies by the pool in Hebron, but they took the head of Ish-bosheth and buried it in Abner’s tomb in Hebron.

Chapter 5

DAVID ANOINTED KING OF ALL ISRAEL

¹Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, “Here we are, your own flesh and blood. ²Even in times past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and brought them back. And to you the LORD said, ‘You will shepherd My people Israel, and you will be ruler over them.’” ³So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, where King David made with them a covenant before the LORD. And they anointed him king over Israel. ⁴David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years. ⁵In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah.

DAVID CONQUERS JERUSALEM

⁶Now the king and his men marched to Jerusalem against the Jebusites who inhabited the land. The Jebusites said to David: “You will never get in here. Even the blind and lame can repel you.” For they thought, “David cannot get in here.” ⁷Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion (that is, the City of David). ⁸On that day he said, “Whoever attacks the Jebusites must use the water shaft to reach the lame and blind who are despised by David.” That is why it is said, “The blind and the lame will never enter the palace.” ⁹So David took up residence in the fortress and called it the City of David. He built it up all the way around, from the supporting terraces inward. ¹⁰And David became greater and greater, for the LORD God of Hosts was with him. ¹¹Now Hiram king of Tyre sent envoys to David, along

with cedar logs, carpenters, and stonemasons, and they built a palace for David.

DAVID’S FAMILY GROWS

¹²And David realized that the LORD had established him as king over Israel and had exalted his kingdom for the sake of His people Israel. ¹³After he had arrived from Hebron, David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, and more sons and daughters were born to him. ¹⁴These are the names of the children born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, ¹⁵Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia, ¹⁶Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

TWO VICTORIES OVER THE PHILISTINES

¹⁷When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, they all went in search of him; but David learned of this and went down to the stronghold. ¹⁸Now the Philistines had come and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim. ¹⁹So David inquired of the LORD, “Should I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand?” “Go up,” replied the LORD, “for I will surely deliver the Philistines into your hand.” ²⁰So David went to Baal-perazim, where he defeated the Philistines and said, “Like a bursting flood, the LORD has burst out against my enemies before me.” So he called that place Baal-perazim. ²¹There the Philistines abandoned their idols, and David and his men carried them away. ²²Once again the Philistines came up and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim. ²³So David inquired of the LORD, who answered, “Do not march straight up, but circle around behind them and attack them in front of the balsam trees. ²⁴As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, move quickly, because this will mean that the LORD has gone out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines.” ²⁵So David did as the LORD had commanded him, and he struck down the Philistines all the way from Gibeon to Gezer.

Chapter 6

DAVID FETCHES THE ARK

¹David again assembled the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand in all. ²And he and all his troops set out for Baale of Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name—the name of the LORD of Hosts, who is enthroned between the cherubim that are on it. ³They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart, ⁴bringing with it the ark of God. And Ahio was walking in front of the ark.

UZZAH TOUCHES THE ARK

⁵David and all the house of Israel were celebrating before the LORD with all kinds of wood instruments, harps, stringed instruments, tambourines, sistrums, and cymbals. ⁶When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen had stumbled. ⁷And the anger of the LORD burned against Uzzah, and God struck him down on the spot for his irreverence, and he died there beside the ark of God. ⁸Then David became angry because the LORD had burst forth against Uzzah. So he named that place Perez-uzzah, as it is called to this day. ⁹That day David feared the LORD and asked, “How can the ark of the LORD ever come to me?” ¹⁰So he was unwilling to move the ark of the LORD to the City of David; instead, he took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. ¹¹Thus the ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite for three months, and the LORD blessed him and all his household.

THE ARK BROUGHT TO JERUSALEM

¹²Now it was reported to King David, “The LORD has blessed the house of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God.” So David went and had the ark of God brought up from the house of Obed-edom into the City of David with rejoicing. ¹³When those carrying the ark of the LORD had advanced six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fattened calf. ¹⁴And David, wearing a linen ephod, danced with all his might before the LORD, ¹⁵while he and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and the sounding of the ram’s horn.

MICHAL’S CONTEMPT FOR DAVID

¹⁶As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Saul’s daughter Michal looked down from a window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, and she despised him in her heart. ¹⁷So they brought the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it. Then David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. ¹⁸When David had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of Hosts. ¹⁹Then he distributed to every man and woman among the multitude of Israel a loaf of bread, a date cake, and a raisin cake. And all the people departed, each to his own home. ²⁰When David returned home to bless his own household, Saul’s daughter Michal came out to meet him. “How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today!” she said. “He has uncovered himself today in the sight of the maidservants of his subjects, like a vulgar person would do.” ²¹But David said to Michal, “I was dancing before the LORD, who chose me over your father and all his house

when He appointed me ruler over the LORD’s people Israel. I will celebrate before the LORD, ²²and I will humble and humble myself even more than this. Yet I will be honored by the maidservants of whom you have spoken.” ²³And Michal the daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.

Chapter 7**GOD’S COVENANT WITH DAVID**

¹After the king had settled into his palace and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²he said to Nathan the prophet, “Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent.” ³And Nathan replied to the king, “Go and do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.” ⁴But that night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, ⁵“Go and tell My servant David that this is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build for Me a house to dwell in? ⁶For I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt until this day, but I have moved about with a tent as My dwelling. ⁷In all My journeys with all the Israelites, have I ever asked any of the leaders I appointed to shepherd My people Israel, ‘Why haven’t you built Me a house of cedar?’ ⁸Now then, you are to tell My servant David that this is what the LORD of Hosts says: I took you from the pasture, from following the flock, to be the ruler over My people Israel. ⁹I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make for you a name like that of the greatest in the land. ¹⁰And I will provide a place for My people Israel and will plant them so that they may dwell in a place of their own and be disturbed no more. No longer will the sons of wickedness oppress them as they did at the beginning ¹¹and have done since the day I appointed judges over My people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD declares to you that He Himself will establish a house for you. ¹²And when your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³He will build a house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴I will be his Father, and he will be My son. When he does wrong, I will discipline him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. ¹⁵But My loving devotion will never be removed from him as I removed it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. ¹⁶Your house and kingdom will endure forever before Me, and your throne will be established forever.” ¹⁷So Nathan relayed to David all the words of this entire revelation.

DAVID'S PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

¹⁸Then King David went in, sat before the LORD, and said, "Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that You have brought me this far?" ¹⁹And as if this was a small thing in Your eyes, O Lord GOD, You have also spoken about the future of the house of Your servant. Is this Your custom with man, O Lord GOD? ²⁰What more can David say to You? For You know Your servant, O Lord GOD. ²¹For the sake of Your word and according to Your own heart, You have accomplished this great thing and revealed it to Your servant. ²²How great You are, O Lord GOD! For there is none like You, and there is no God but You, according to everything we have heard with our own ears. ²³And who is like Your people Israel—the one nation on earth whom God went out to redeem as a people for Himself and to make a name for Himself? You performed great and awesome wonders by driving out nations and their gods from before Your people, whom You redeemed for Yourself from Egypt. ²⁴For You have established Your people Israel as Your very own forever, and You, O LORD, have become their God. ²⁵And now, O LORD God, confirm forever the word You have spoken concerning Your servant and his house. Do as You have promised, ²⁶so that Your name will be magnified forever when it is said, 'The LORD of Hosts is God over Israel.' And the house of Your servant David will be established before You. ²⁷For You, O LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, have revealed this to Your servant when You said, 'I will build a house for you.' Therefore Your servant has found the courage to offer this prayer to You. ²⁸And now, O Lord GOD, You are God! Your words are true, and You have promised this goodness to Your servant. ²⁹Now therefore, may it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue forever before You. For You, O Lord GOD, have spoken, and with Your blessing the house of Your servant will be blessed forever."

Chapter 8

DAVID'S TRIUMPHS

¹Some time later, David defeated the Philistines, subdued them, and took Metheg-ammah from the hand of the Philistines. ²David also defeated the Moabites, made them lie down on the ground, and measured them off with a cord. He measured off with two lengths those to be put to death, and with one length those to be spared. So the Moabites became subject to David and brought him tribute. ³David also defeated Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah, who had marched out to restore his dominion along the Euphrates River. ⁴David captured from him a thousand chariots, seven thousand charioteers, and twenty thousand

foot soldiers, and he hamstrung all the horses except a hundred he kept for the chariots. ⁵When the Arameans of Damascus came to help King Hadadezer of Zobah, David struck down twenty-two thousand of their men. ⁶Then he placed garrisons in Aram of Damascus, and the Arameans became subject to David and brought him tribute. So the LORD made David victorious wherever he went. ⁷And David took the gold shields that belonged to the officers of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem. ⁸And from Betah and Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, King David took a large amount of bronze. ⁹When King Toi of Hamath heard that David had defeated the entire army of Hadadezer, ¹⁰he sent his son Joram to greet King David and bless him for fighting and defeating Hadadezer, who had been at war with Toi. Joram brought with him articles of silver and gold and bronze, ¹¹and King David dedicated these to the LORD, along with the silver and gold he had dedicated from all the nations he had subdued— ¹²from Edom and Moab, from the Ammonites and Philistines and Amalekites, and from the spoil of Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah. ¹³And David made a name for himself when he returned from striking down eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt. ¹⁴He placed garrisons throughout Edom, and all the Edomites were subject to David. So the LORD made David victorious wherever he went.

DAVID'S OFFICERS

¹⁵Thus David reigned over all Israel and administered justice and righteousness for all his people: ¹⁶Joab son of Zeruiah was over the army; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the recorder; ¹⁷Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were priests; Seraiah was the scribe; ¹⁸Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and Pelethites; and David's sons were priestly leaders.

Chapter 9

DAVID AND MEPHIBOSHETH

¹Then David asked, "Is there anyone left from the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for the sake of Jonathan?" ²And there was a servant of the house of Saul named Ziba. They summoned him to David, and the king inquired, "Are you Ziba?" "I am your servant," he replied. ³So the king asked, "Is there anyone left of the house of Saul to whom I can show the kindness of God?" Ziba answered, "There is still Jonathan's son, who is lame in both feet." ⁴"Where is he?" replied the king. And Ziba said, "Indeed, he is in Lo-debar at the house of Machir son of Ammiel." ⁵So King David had him brought from the house

of Machir son of Ammiel in Lo-debar. ⁶And when Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he fell facedown in reverence. Then David said, “Mephibosheth!” “I am your servant,” he replied. ⁷“Do not be afraid,” said David, “for surely I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table.” ⁸Mephibosheth bowed down and said, “What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog like me?” ⁹Then the king summoned Saul’s servant Ziba and said to him, “I have given to your master’s grandson all that belonged to Saul and to all his house. ¹⁰You and your sons and servants are to work the ground for him and bring in the harvest, so that your master’s grandson may have food to eat. But Mephibosheth, your master’s grandson, is always to eat at my table.” Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. ¹¹And Ziba said to the king, “Your servant will do all that my lord the king has commanded.” So Mephibosheth ate at David’s table like one of the king’s own sons. ¹²And Mephibosheth had a young son named Mica, and all who dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants of Mephibosheth. ¹³So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, because he always ate at the king’s table, and he was lame in both feet.

Chapter 10

DAVID’S MESSENGERS DISGRACED

¹Some time later, the king of the Ammonites died and was succeeded by his son Hanun. ²And David said, “I will show kindness to Hanun son of Nahash, just as his father showed kindness to me.” So David sent some of his servants to console Hanun concerning his father. But when they arrived in the land of the Ammonites, ³the princes of the Ammonites said to Hanun their lord, “Just because David has sent you comforters, do you really believe he is showing respect for your father? Has not David instead sent his servants to explore the city, spy it out, and overthrow it?” ⁴So Hanun took David’s servants, shaved off half of each man’s beard, cut off their garments at the hips, and sent them away. ⁵When this was reported to David, he sent messengers to meet the men, since they had been thoroughly humiliated. The king told them, “Stay in Jericho until your beards have grown back, and then return.” ⁶When the Ammonites realized that they had become a stench to David, they hired twenty thousand Aramean foot soldiers from Beth-rehob and Zoba, as well as a thousand men from the king of Maacah and twelve thousand men from Tob. ⁷On hearing this, David sent Joab and the entire army of mighty men. ⁸The Ammonites marched out and arrayed

themselves for battle at the entrance of the city gate, while the Arameans of Zobah and Rehob and the men of Tob and Maacah were by themselves in the open country.

DAVID DEFEATS AMMON AND ARAM

⁹When Joab saw the battle lines before him and behind him, he selected some of the best men of Israel and arrayed them against the Arameans. ¹⁰And he placed the rest of the troops under the command of his brother Abishai, who arrayed them against the Ammonites. ¹¹“If the Arameans are too strong for me,” said Joab, “then you will come to my rescue. And if the Ammonites are too strong for you, then I will come to your rescue. ¹²Be strong and let us fight bravely for our people and for the cities of our God. May the LORD do what is good in His sight.” ¹³So Joab and his troops advanced to fight the Arameans, who fled before him. ¹⁴When the Ammonites saw that the Arameans had fled, they too fled before Abishai, and they entered the city. So Joab returned from fighting against the Ammonites and came to Jerusalem. ¹⁵When the Arameans saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they regrouped. ¹⁶Hadadezer sent messengers to bring more Arameans from beyond the Euphrates, and they came to Helam with Shobach the commander of Hadadezer’s army leading them. ¹⁷When this was reported to David, he gathered all Israel, crossed the Jordan, and went to Helam. Then the Arameans arrayed themselves against David and fought against him. ¹⁸But the Arameans fled before Israel, and David killed seven hundred charioteers and forty thousand foot soldiers. He also struck down Shobach the commander of their army, who died there. ¹⁹When all the kings who were subject to Hadadezer saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and became subject to them. So the Arameans were afraid to help the Ammonites anymore.

Chapter 11

DAVID AND BATHSHEBA

¹In the spring, at the time when kings march out to war, David sent out Joab and his servants with the whole army of Israel. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah, but David remained in Jerusalem. ²One evening David got up from his bed and strolled around on the roof of the palace. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing—a very beautiful woman. ³So David sent and inquired about the woman, and he was told, “This is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.” ⁴Then David sent messengers to get her, and when she came to him, he slept with her. (Now she had just purified herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned home. ⁵And the

woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant." ⁶At this, David sent orders to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." So Joab sent him to David. ⁷When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the troops were doing and how the war was going. ⁸Then he said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king followed him. ⁹But Uriah slept at the door of the palace with all his master's servants; he did not go down to his house. ¹⁰And David was told, "Uriah did not go home." "Haven't you just arrived from a journey?" David asked Uriah. "Why didn't you go home?" ¹¹Uriah answered, "The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my master Joab and his soldiers are camped in the open field. How can I go to my house to eat and drink and sleep with my wife? As surely as you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing!" ¹²"Stay here one more day," David said to Uriah, "and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day and the next. ¹³Then David invited Uriah to eat and drink with him, and he got Uriah drunk. And in the evening Uriah went out to lie down on his cot with his master's servants, but he did not go home.

DAVID ARRANGES URIAH'S DEATH

¹⁴The next morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. ¹⁵In the letter he wrote: "Put Uriah at the front of the fiercest battle; then withdraw from him, so that he may be struck down and killed." ¹⁶So as Joab besieged the city, he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew the strongest enemy soldiers were. ¹⁷And when the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of David's servants fell, and Uriah the Hittite also died. ¹⁸Joab sent to David a full account of the battle ¹⁹and instructed the messenger, "When you have finished giving the king a full account of the battle, ²⁰if the king's anger flares, he may ask you, 'Why did you get so close to the city to fight? Did you not realize they would shoot from atop the wall?' ²¹Who struck Abimelech son of Jerubesheth? Was it not a woman who dropped an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you get so close to the wall?' If he asks you this, then you are to say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead as well.'" ²²So the messenger set out and reported to David all that Joab had sent him to say. ²³The messenger said to David, "The men overpowered us and came out against us in the field, but we drove them back to the entrance of the gate. ²⁴Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall, and some of the king's servants were killed. And your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead as well." ²⁵Then David told the messenger, "Say this to Joab: 'Do not let this matter upset you, for the sword de-

vours one as well as another. Strengthen your attack against the city and demolish it.' Encourage him with these words."

DAVID MARRIES BATHSHEBA

²⁶When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. ²⁷And when the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the LORD.

Chapter 12

NATHAN REBUKES DAVID

¹Then the LORD sent Nathan to David, and when he arrived, he said, "There were two men in a certain city, one rich and the other poor. ²The rich man had a great number of sheep and cattle, ³but the poor man had nothing except one small ewe lamb that he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food and drank from his cup; it slept in his arms and was like a daughter to him. ⁴Now a traveler came to the rich man, who refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for his guest." ⁵David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan: "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die! ⁶Because he has done this thing and has shown no pity, he must pay for the lamb four times over." ⁷Then Nathan said to David, "You are that man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. ⁸I gave your master's house to you and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah, and if that was not enough, I would have given you even more. ⁹Why then have you despised the command of the LORD by doing evil in His sight? You put Uriah the Hittite to the sword and took his wife as your own. You have slain him with the sword of the Ammonites. ¹⁰Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.' ¹¹This is what the LORD says: 'I will raise up adversity against you from your own house. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to another, and he will lie with them in broad daylight. ¹²You have acted in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'"

DAVID'S LOSS AND REPENTANCE

¹³Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." "The LORD has taken away your sin," Nathan

replied, “You will not die. ¹⁴Nevertheless, because by this deed you have shown utter contempt for the word of the LORD, the son born to you will surely die.” ¹⁵After Nathan had gone home, the LORD struck the child that Uriah’s wife had borne to David, and he became ill. ¹⁶David pleaded with God for the boy. He fasted and went into his house and spent the night lying in sackcloth on the ground. ¹⁷The elders of his household stood beside him to help him up from the ground, but he was unwilling and would not eat anything with them. ¹⁸On the seventh day the child died. But David’s servants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, “Look, while the child was alive, we spoke to him, and he would not listen to us. So how can we tell him the child is dead? He may even harm himself.” ¹⁹When David saw that his servants were whispering to one another, he perceived that the child was dead. So he asked his servants, “Is the child dead?” “He is dead,” they replied. ²⁰Then David got up from the ground, washed and anointed himself, changed his clothes, and went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they set food before him, and he ate. ²¹“What is this you have done?” his servants asked. “While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but when he died, you got up and ate.” ²²David answered, “While the child was alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, ‘Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let him live.’” ²³But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.”

SOLOMON’S BIRTH

²⁴Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and lay with her. So she gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. Now the LORD loved the child ²⁵and sent word through Nathan the prophet to name him Jedidiah because the LORD loved him.

THE CAPTURE OF RABBAH

²⁶Meanwhile, Joab fought against Rabbah of the Ammonites and captured the royal fortress. ²⁷Then Joab sent messengers to David to say, “I have fought against Rabbah and have captured the water supply of the city. ²⁸Now, therefore, assemble the rest of the troops, lay siege to the city, and capture it. Otherwise I will capture the city, and it will be named after me.” ²⁹So David assembled all the troops and went to Rabbah; and he fought against it and captured it. ³⁰Then he took the crown from the head of their king. It weighed a talent of gold and was set with precious stones, and it was placed on David’s head. And David took a great amount of plunder from the city. ³¹David brought out the people who were there and put them to work with saws, iron picks, and axes, and he made them

work at the brick kilns. He did the same to all the Ammonite cities. Then David and all his troops returned to Jerusalem.

Chapter 13

AMNON AND TAMAR

¹After some time, David’s son Amnon fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of David’s son Absalom. ²Amnon was sick with frustration over his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed implausible for him to do anything to her. ³Now Amnon had a friend named Jonadab, the son of David’s brother Shimeah. Jonadab was a very shrewd man, ⁴and he asked Amnon, “Why are you, the son of the king, so depressed morning after morning? Won’t you tell me?” Amnon replied, “I am in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom’s sister.” ⁵Jonadab told him, “Lie down on your bed and pretend you are ill. When your father comes to see you, say to him, ‘Please let my sister Tamar come and give me something to eat. Let her prepare it in my sight so I may watch her and eat it from her hand.’” ⁶So Amnon lay down and feigned illness. When the king came to see him, Amnon said, “Please let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, so that I may eat from her hand.” ⁷Then David sent word to Tamar at the palace: “Please go to the house of Amnon your brother and prepare a meal for him.” ⁸So Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon, who was lying down. She took some dough, kneaded it, made cakes in his sight, and baked them. ⁹Then she brought the pan and set it down before him, but he refused to eat. “Send everyone away!” said Amnon. And everyone went out. ¹⁰Then Amnon said to Tamar, “Bring the food into the bedroom, so that I may eat it from your hand.” Tamar took the cakes she had made and went to her brother Amnon’s bedroom. ¹¹And when she had brought them to him to eat, he took hold of her and said, “Come lie with me, my sister!” ¹²“No, my brother!” she cried. “Do not violate me, for such a thing should never be done in Israel. Do not do this disgraceful thing! ¹³Where could I ever take my shame? And you would be like one of the fools in Israel! Please speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you.” ¹⁴But Amnon refused to listen to her, and being stronger, he violated her and lay with her. ¹⁵Then Amnon hated Tamar with such intensity that his hatred was greater than the love he previously had. “Get up!” he said to her. “Be gone!” ¹⁶“No,” she replied, “sending me away is worse than this great wrong you have already done to me!” But he refused to listen to her. ¹⁷Instead, he called to his attendant and said, “Throw this woman out and bolt the door behind her!” ¹⁸So

Amnon's attendant threw her out and bolted the door behind her. Now Tamar was wearing a robe of many colors, because this is what the king's virgin daughters wore. ¹⁹And Tamar put ashes on her head and tore her robe. And putting her hand on her head, she went away crying aloud. ²⁰Her brother Absalom said to her, "Has your brother Amnon been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister. He is your brother. Do not take this thing to heart." So Tamar lived as a desolate woman in the house of her brother Absalom. ²¹When King David heard all this, he was furious. ²²And Absalom never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad, because he hated Amnon for violating his sister Tamar.

ABSALOM'S REVENGE ON AMNON

²³Two years later, when Absalom's sheepshearers were at Baal-hazor near Ephraim, he invited all the sons of the king. ²⁴And he went to the king and said, "Your servant has just hired shearers. Will the king and his servants please come with me?" ²⁵"No, my son," the king replied, "we should not all go, or we would be a burden to you." Although Absalom urged him, he was not willing to go, but gave him his blessing. ²⁶"If not," said Absalom, "please let my brother Amnon go with us." "Why should he go with you?" the king asked. ²⁷But Absalom urged him, so the king sent Amnon and the rest of his sons. ²⁸Now Absalom had ordered his young men, "Watch Amnon until his heart is merry with wine, and when I order you to strike Amnon down, you are to kill him. Do not be afraid. Have I not commanded you? Be courageous and valiant!" ²⁹So Absalom's young men did to Amnon just as Absalom had ordered. Then all the other sons of the king got up, and each one fled on his mule. ³⁰While they were on the way, a report reached David: "Absalom has struck down all the sons of the king; not one of them is left!" ³¹Then the king stood up, tore his clothes, and lay down on the ground. And all his servants stood by with their clothes torn. ³²But Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shimeah, spoke up: "My lord must not think they have killed all the sons of the king, for only Amnon is dead. In fact, Absalom has planned this since the day Amnon violated his sister Tamar. ³³So now, my lord the king, do not take to heart the report that all the sons of the king are dead. Only Amnon is dead."

ABSALOM FLEES TO GESHUR

³⁴Meanwhile, Absalom had fled. When the young man standing watch looked up, he saw many people coming down the road west of him, along the side of the hill. And the watchman went and reported to the king, "I see men coming from the direction of Horonaim, along the side of the hill." ³⁵So Jonadab said to the king, "Look, the sons of

the king have arrived! It is just as your servant said." ³⁶And as he finished speaking, the sons of the king came in, wailing loudly. Then the king and all his servants also wept very bitterly. ³⁷Now Absalom fled and went to Talmai son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur. But David mourned for his son every day. ³⁸After Absalom had fled and gone to Geshur, he stayed there three years. ³⁹And King David longed to go to Absalom, for he had been consoled over Amnon's death.

Chapter 14

ABSALOM'S RETURN TO JERUSALEM

¹Now Joab son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart longed for Absalom. ²So Joab sent to Tekoa to bring a wise woman from there. He told her, "Please pretend to be a mourner; put on clothes for mourning and do not anoint yourself with oil. Act like a woman who has mourned for the dead a long time. ³Then go to the king and speak these words to him." And Joab put the words in her mouth. ⁴When the woman from Tekoa went to the king, she fell facedown in homage and said, "Help me, O king!" ⁵"What troubles you?" the king asked her. "Indeed," she said, "I am a widow, for my husband is dead. ⁶And your maidservant had two sons who were fighting in the field with no one to separate them, and one struck the other and killed him. ⁷Now the whole clan has risen up against your maidservant and said, 'Hand over the one who struck down his brother, that we may put him to death for the life of the brother whom he killed. Then we will cut off the heir as well!' So they would extinguish my one remaining ember by not preserving my husband's name or posterity on the earth." ⁸"Go home," the king said to the woman, "and I will give orders on your behalf." ⁹But the woman of Tekoa said to the king, "My lord the king, may any blame be on me and on my father's house, and may the king and his throne be guiltless." ¹⁰"If anyone speaks to you," said the king, "bring him to me, and he will not trouble you again!" ¹¹"Please," she replied, "may the king invoke the LORD your God to prevent the avenger of blood from increasing the devastation, so that my son may not be destroyed!" "As surely as the LORD lives," he vowed, "not a hair of your son's head will fall to the ground." ¹²Then the woman said, "Please, may your servant speak a word to my lord the king?" "Speak," he replied. ¹³The woman asked, "Why have you devised a thing like this against the people of God? When the king says this, does he not convict himself, since he has not brought back his own banished son? ¹⁴For we will surely die and be like water poured out on the ground, which cannot be recovered. Yet God does not take away a life, but

He devises ways that the banished one may not be cast out from Him. ¹⁵Now therefore, I have come to present this matter to my lord the king because the people have made me afraid. Your servant thought, ‘I will speak to the king. Perhaps he will grant the request of his maidservant. ¹⁶For the king will hear and deliver his maidservant from the hand of the man who would cut off both me and my son from God’s inheritance.’ ¹⁷And now your servant says, ‘May the word of my lord the king bring me rest, for my lord the king is able to discern good and evil, just like the angel of God. May the LORD your God be with you.’ ¹⁸Then the king said to the woman, “I am going to ask you something; do not conceal it from me!” “Let my lord the king speak,” she replied. ¹⁹So the king asked, “Is the hand of Joab behind all this?” The woman answered, “As surely as you live, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right or to the left from anything that my lord the king says. Yes, your servant Joab is the one who gave me orders; he told your maidservant exactly what to say. ²⁰Joab your servant has done this to bring about this change of affairs, but my lord has wisdom like the wisdom of the angel of God, to know everything that happens in the land.” ²¹Then the king said to Joab, “I hereby grant this request. Go, bring back the young man Absalom.” ²²Joab fell facedown in homage and blessed the king. “Today,” said Joab, “your servant knows that he has found favor in your eyes, my lord the king, because the king has granted his request.” ²³So Joab got up, went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. ²⁴But the king added, “He may return to his house, but he must not see my face.” So Absalom returned to his own house, but he did not see the face of the king. ²⁵Now there was not a man in all Israel as handsome and highly praised as Absalom. From the sole of his foot to the top of his head, he did not have a single flaw. ²⁶And when he cut the hair of his head—he shaved it every year because his hair got so heavy—he would weigh it out to be two hundred shekels, according to the royal standard. ²⁷Three sons were born to Absalom, and a daughter named Tamar, who was a beautiful woman.

ABSALOM RECONCILED TO DAVID

²⁸Now Absalom lived in Jerusalem two years without seeing the face of the king. ²⁹Then he sent for Joab to send him to the king, but Joab refused to come to him. So Absalom sent a second time, but Joab still would not come. ³⁰Then Absalom said to his servants, “Look, Joab’s field is next to mine, and he has barley there. Go and set it on fire!” And Absalom’s servants set the field on fire. ³¹Then Joab came to Absalom’s house and demanded, “Why did your servants set my field on fire?” ³²“Look,” said Absalom,

“I sent for you and said, ‘Come here. I want to send you to the king to ask: Why have I come back from Geshur? It would be better for me if I were still there.’ So now, let me see the king’s face, and if there is iniquity in me, let him kill me.” ³³So Joab went and told the king, and David summoned Absalom, who came to him and bowed facedown before him. Then the king kissed Absalom.

Chapter 15

ABSALOM’S CONSPIRACY

¹Some time later, Absalom provided for himself a chariot with horses and fifty men to run ahead of him. ²He would get up early and stand beside the road leading to the city gate. Whenever anyone had a grievance to bring before the king for a decision, Absalom would call out and ask, “What city are you from?” And if he replied, “Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel,” ³Absalom would say, “Look, your claims are good and right, but the king has no deputy to hear you.” ⁴And he would add, “If only someone would appoint me judge in the land, then everyone with a grievance or dispute could come to me, and I would give him justice.” ⁵Also, when anyone approached to bow down to him, Absalom would reach out his hand, take hold of him, and kiss him. ⁶Absalom did this to all the Israelites who came to the king for justice. In this way he stole the hearts of the men of Israel. ⁷After four years had passed, Absalom said to the king, “Please let me go to Hebron to fulfill a vow I have made to the LORD. ⁸For your servant made a vow while dwelling in Geshur of Aram, saying: ‘If indeed the LORD brings me back to Jerusalem, I will worship the LORD in Hebron.’” ⁹“Go in peace,” said the king. So Absalom got up and went to Hebron. ¹⁰Then Absalom sent spies throughout the tribes of Israel with this message: “When you hear the sound of the horn, you are to say, ‘Absalom reigns in Hebron!’” ¹¹Two hundred men from Jerusalem accompanied Absalom. They had been invited as guests and they went along innocently, for they knew nothing about the matter. ¹²While Absalom was offering the sacrifices, he sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David’s counselor, to come from his hometown of Giloh. So the conspiracy gained strength, and Absalom’s following kept increasing.

DAVID FLEES JERUSALEM

¹³Then a messenger came to David and reported, “The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom.” ¹⁴And David said to all the servants with him in Jerusalem, “Arise and let us flee, or we will not escape from Absalom! We must leave quickly, or he will soon overtake us, heap disaster on

us, and put the city to the sword.” ¹⁵The king’s servants replied, “Whatever our lord the king decides, we are your servants.” ¹⁶Then the king set out, and his entire household followed him. But he left behind ten concubines to take care of the palace. ¹⁷So the king set out with all the people following him. He stopped at the last house, ¹⁸and all his servants marched past him—all the Cherethites and Pelethites, and six hundred Gittites who had followed him from Gath. ¹⁹Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, “Why should you also go with us? Go back and stay with the new king, since you are both a foreigner and an exile from your homeland. ²⁰In fact, you arrived only yesterday; should I make you wander around with us today while I do not know where I am going? Go back and take your brothers with you. May the LORD show you loving devotion and faithfulness.” ²¹But Ittai answered the king, “As surely as the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether it means life or death, there will your servant be!” ²²“March on then,” said David to Ittai. So Ittai the Gittite marched past with all his men and all the little ones who were with him. ²³Everyone in the countryside was weeping loudly as all the people passed by. And as the king crossed the Kidron Valley, all the people also passed toward the way of the wilderness. ²⁴Zadok was also there, and all the Levites with him were carrying the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God, and Abiathar offered sacrifices until all the people had passed out of the city. ²⁵Then the king said to Zadok, “Return the ark of God to the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me back and let me see both it and His dwelling place again. ²⁶But if He should say, ‘I do not delight in you,’ then here I am; let Him do to me whatever seems good to Him.” ²⁷The king also said to Zadok the priest, “Are you not a seer? Return to the city in peace—you with your son Ahimaaz, and Abiathar with his son Jonathan. ²⁸See, I will wait at the fords of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me.” ²⁹So Zadok and Abiathar returned the ark of God to Jerusalem and stayed there.

DAVID WEEPS AT THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

³⁰But David continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went up. His head was covered, and he was walking barefoot. And all the people with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went. ³¹Now someone told David: “Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.” So David pleaded, “O LORD, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!” ³²When David came to the summit, where he used to worship God, Hushai the Archite was there to meet him with his robe

torn and dust on his head. ³³David said to him, “If you go on with me, you will be a burden to me. ³⁴But you can thwart the counsel of Ahithophel for me if you return to the city and say to Absalom: ‘I will be your servant, my king; in the past I was your father’s servant, but now I will be your servant.’” ³⁵Will not Zadok and Abiathar the priests be there with you? Report to them everything you hear from the king’s palace. ³⁶Indeed, their two sons, Ahimaaz son of Zadok and Jonathan son of Abiathar, are there with them. Send them to me with everything you hear.” ³⁷So David’s friend Hushai arrived in Jerusalem just as Absalom was entering the city.

Chapter 16

DAVID AND ZIBA

¹When David had gone a little beyond the summit, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth was there to meet him. He had a pair of saddled donkeys loaded with two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred clusters of raisins, a hundred summer fruits, and a skin of wine. ²“Why do you have these?” asked the king. Ziba replied, “The donkeys are for the king’s household to ride, the bread and summer fruit are for the young men to eat, and the wine is to refresh those who become exhausted in the wilderness.” ³“Where is your master’s grandson?” asked the king. And Ziba answered, “Indeed, he is staying in Jerusalem, for he has said, ‘Today, the house of Israel will restore to me the kingdom of my grandfather.’” ⁴So the king said to Ziba, “All that belongs to Mephibosheth is now yours!” “I humbly bow before you,” said Ziba. “May I find favor in your eyes, my lord the king!”

SHIMEI CURSES DAVID

⁵As King David approached Bahurim, a man from the family of the house of Saul was just coming out. His name was Shimei son of Gera, and as he approached, he kept yelling out curses. ⁶He threw stones at David and at all the servants of the king, though the troops and all the mighty men were on David’s right and left. ⁷And as he yelled curses, Shimei said, “Get out, get out, you worthless man of bloodshed! ⁸The LORD has paid you back for all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned, and the LORD has delivered the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. See, you have come to ruin because you are a man of bloodshed!” ⁹Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and cut off his head!” ¹⁰But the king replied, “What have I to do with you, O sons of Zeruiah? If he curses me because the LORD told him, ‘Curse David,’ who can ask, ‘Why did you do this?’” ¹¹Then David said to

Abishai and to all his servants, “Behold, my own son, my own flesh and blood, seeks my life. How much more, then, this Benjamite! Leave him alone and let him curse me, for the LORD has told him so.”¹² Perhaps the LORD will see my affliction and repay me with good for the cursing I receive today.”¹³ So David and his men proceeded along the road as Shimei went along the ridge of the hill opposite him. As Shimei went, he yelled curses, threw stones, and flung dust at David.¹⁴ Finally, the king and all the people with him arrived, exhausted. And there he refreshed himself.

THE COUNSEL OF AHITHOPHEL AND HUSHAI

¹⁵Then Absalom and all the men of Israel came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel was with him.¹⁶ And David’s friend Hushai the Archite went to Absalom and said to him, “Long live the king! Long live the king!”¹⁷ “Is this the loyalty you show your friend?” Absalom replied. “Why did you not go with your friend?”¹⁸ “Not at all,” Hushai answered. “For the one chosen by the LORD, by this people, and by all the men of Israel—his I will be, and with him I will remain.”¹⁹ Furthermore, whom should I serve if not his son? As I served in your father’s presence, so also I will serve in yours.”²⁰ Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, “Give me counsel. What should we do?”²¹ Ahithophel replied, “Sleep with your father’s concubines, whom he has left to take care of the palace. When all Israel hears that you have become a stench to your father, then the hands of all who are with you will be strengthened.”²² So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and he slept with his father’s concubines in the sight of all Israel.²³ Now in those days the advice of Ahithophel was like the consultation of the word of God. Such was the regard that both David and Absalom had for Ahithophel’s advice.

Chapter 17

HUSHAI COUNTERS AHITHOPHEL’S ADVICE

¹Furthermore, Ahithophel said to Absalom, “Let me choose twelve thousand men and set out tonight in pursuit of David.² I will attack him while he is weak and weary; I will throw him into a panic, and all the people with him will flee; I will strike down only the king³ and bring all the people back to you as a bride returning to her husband. You seek the life of only one man; then all the people will be at peace.”⁴ This proposal seemed good to Absalom and all the elders of Israel.⁵ Then Absalom said, “Summon Hushai the Archite as well, and let us hear what he too has to say.”⁶ So Hushai came to Absalom, who told him, “Ahithophel has spoken this proposal. Should we carry it out? If not, what do you say?”⁷ Hushai replied, “This time the advice of

Ahithophel is not sound.”⁸ He continued, “You know your father and his men. They are mighty men, and as fierce as a wild bear robbed of her cubs. Moreover, your father is a man of war who will not spend the night with the troops.⁹ Surely by now he is hiding in a cave or some other location. If some of your troops fall first, whoever hears of it will say, ‘There has been a slaughter among the troops who follow Absalom.’¹⁰ Then even the most valiant soldier with the heart of a lion will melt with fear, because all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man who has valiant men with him.¹¹ Instead, I advise that all Israel from Dan to Beersheba—a multitude like the sand on the seashore—be gathered to you, and that you yourself lead them into battle.¹² Then we will attack David wherever we find him, and we will descend on him like dew on the ground. And of all the men with him, not even one will remain.¹³ If he retreats to a city, all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we will drag it down to the valley until not even a pebble can be found there.”¹⁴ Then Absalom and all the men of Israel said, “The advice of Hushai the Archite is better than that of Ahithophel.” For the LORD had purposed to thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom.

HUSHAI’S WARNING SAVES DAVID

¹⁵So Hushai told Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, “This is what Ahithophel has advised Absalom and the elders of Israel, and this is what I have advised.¹⁶ Now send quickly and tell David, ‘Do not spend the night at the fords of the wilderness, but be sure to cross over. Otherwise the king and all the people with him will be swallowed up.’”¹⁷ Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying at En-rogel, where a servant girl would come and pass along information to them. They in turn would go and inform King David, for they dared not be seen entering the city.¹⁸ But a young man did see them and told Absalom. So the two left quickly and came to the house of a man in Bahurim. He had a well in his courtyard, and they climbed down into it.¹⁹ Then the man’s wife took a covering, spread it over the mouth of the well, and scattered grain over it so nobody would know a thing.²⁰ When Absalom’s servants came to the woman at the house, they asked, “Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?” “They have crossed over the brook,” she replied. The men searched but did not find them, so they returned to Jerusalem.²¹ After the men had gone, Ahimaaz and Jonathan climbed up out of the well and went to inform King David, saying, “Get up and cross over the river at once, for Ahithophel has given this advice against you.”²² So David and all the people with him got up and crossed the Jordan. By daybreak, there was no one left who had not

crossed the Jordan. ²³When Ahithophel saw that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his donkey and set out for his house in his hometown. He put his affairs in order and hanged himself. So he died and was buried in his father's tomb. ²⁴Then David went to Mahanaim, and Absalom crossed the Jordan with all the men of Israel. ²⁵Absalom had appointed Amasa over the army in place of Joab. Amasa was the son of a man named Ithra, the Ishmaelite who had married Abigail, the daughter of Nahash and sister of Zeruiah the mother of Joab. ²⁶So the Israelites and Absalom camped in the land of Gilead. ²⁷When David came to Mahanaim, he was met by Shobi son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Ammonites, Machir son of Ammiel from Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim. ²⁸They brought beds, basins, and earthen vessels, as well as wheat, barley, flour, roasted grain, beans, lentils, ²⁹honey, curds, sheep, and cheese from the herd for David and his people to eat. For they said, "The people have become hungry, exhausted, and thirsty in the wilderness."

Chapter 18

ABSALOM KILLED

¹Then David reviewed his troops and appointed over them commanders of thousands and of hundreds. ²He sent out the troops, a third under Joab, a third under Joab's brother Abishai son of Zeruiah, and a third under Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the troops, "I will surely march out with you as well." ³But the people pleaded, "You must not go out! For if we have to flee, they will not care about us. Even if half of us die, they will not care. But you are worth ten thousand of us. It is better now if you support us from the city." ⁴"I will do whatever seems best to you," the king replied. So he stood beside the gate, while all the troops marched out by hundreds and by thousands. ⁵Now the king had commanded Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, "Treat the young man Absalom gently for my sake." And all the people heard the king's orders to each of the commanders regarding Absalom. ⁶So David's army marched into the field to engage Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim. ⁷There the people of Israel were defeated by David's servants, and the slaughter was great that day—twenty thousand men. ⁸The battle spread over the whole countryside, and that day the forest devoured more people than the sword. ⁹Now Absalom was riding on his mule when he met the servants of David, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom's head was caught fast in the tree. The mule under him kept going, so that he was suspended in midair. ¹⁰When one of the men saw this, he told Joab, "I just saw Absalom hanging in an

oak tree!" ¹¹"You just saw him!" Joab exclaimed. "Why did you not strike him to the ground right there? I would have given you ten shekels of silver and a warrior's belt!" ¹²The man replied, "Even if a thousand shekels of silver were weighed out into my hands, I would not raise my hand against the son of the king. For we heard the king command you and Abishai and Ittai, 'Protect the young man Absalom for my sake.' ¹³If I had jeopardized my own life—and nothing is hidden from the king—you would have abandoned me." ¹⁴But Joab declared, "I am not going to wait like this with you!" And he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through the heart of Absalom while he was still alive in the oak tree. ¹⁵And ten young men who carried Joab's armor surrounded Absalom, struck him, and killed him. ¹⁶Then Joab blew the ram's horn, and the troops broke off their pursuit of Israel because Joab had restrained them. ¹⁷They took Absalom, cast him into a large pit in the forest, and piled a huge mound of stones over him. Meanwhile, all the Israelites fled, each to his home. ¹⁸During his lifetime, Absalom had set up for himself a pillar in the King's Valley, for he had said, "I have no son to preserve the memory of my name." So he gave the pillar his name, and to this day it is called Absalom's Monument.

DAVID MOURNS FOR ABSALOM

¹⁹Then Ahimaaz son of Zadok said, "Please let me run and tell the king the good news that the LORD has avenged him of his enemies." ²⁰But Joab replied, "You are not the man to take good news today. You may do it another day, but you must not do so today, because the king's son is dead." ²¹So Joab said to a Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." The Cushite bowed to Joab and took off running. ²²Ahimaaz son of Zadok, however, persisted and said to Joab, "No matter what, please let me also run behind the Cushite!" "My son," Joab replied, "why do you want to run, since you will not receive a reward?" ²³"No matter what, I want to run!" he replied. "Then run!" Joab told him. So Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain and outran the Cushite. ²⁴Now David was sitting between the two gates when the watchman went up to the roof of the gateway by the wall, looked out, and saw a man running alone. ²⁵So he called out and told the king. "If he is alone," the king replied, "he bears good news." As the first runner drew near, ²⁶the watchman saw another man running, and he called out to the gatekeeper, "Look! Another man is running alone!" "This one also brings good news," said the king. ²⁷The watchman said, "The first man appears to me to be running like Ahimaaz son of Zadok." "This is a good man," said the king. "He comes with good news." ²⁸Then Ahimaaz called out to the king, "All is well!" And he bowed facedown be-

fore the king. He continued, “Blessed be the LORD your God! He has delivered up the men who raised their hands against my lord the king.” ²⁹The king asked, “Is the young man Absalom all right?” And Ahimaaz replied, “When Joab sent the king’s servant and your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I do not know what it was.” ³⁰“Move aside,” said the king, “and stand here.” So he stepped aside. ³¹Just then the Cushite came and said, “May my lord the king hear the good news: Today the LORD has avenged you of all who rose up against you!” ³²The king asked the Cushite, “Is the young man Absalom all right?” And the Cushite replied, “May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up against you to harm you be like that young man.” ³³The king was shaken and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And as he walked, he cried out, “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!”

Chapter 19

JOAB REPROVES DAVID

¹Then it was reported to Joab, “The king is weeping and mourning over Absalom.” ²And that day’s victory was turned into mourning for all the people, because on that day they were told, “The king is grieving over his son.” ³So they returned to the city quietly that day, as people steal away in humiliation after fleeing a battle. ⁴But the king covered his face and cried out at the top of his voice, “O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!” ⁵Then Joab went into the house and said to the king, “Today you have disgraced all your servants who have saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters, of your wives, and of your concubines. ⁶You love those who hate you and hate those who love you! For you have made it clear today that the commanders and soldiers mean nothing to you. I know today that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead, it would have pleased you! ⁷Now therefore get up! Go out and speak comfort to your servants, for I swear by the LORD that if you do not go out, not a man will remain with you tonight. This will be worse for you than all the adversity that has befallen you from your youth until now!”

DAVID RESTORED AS KING

⁸So the king got up and sat in the gate, and all the people were told: “Behold, the king is sitting in the gate.” So they all came before the king. Meanwhile, the Israelites had fled, each man to his home. ⁹And all the people throughout the tribes of Israel were arguing, “The king rescued us from the hand of our enemies and delivered us from the hand of the Philistines, but now he has fled the land because of

Absalom. ¹⁰But Absalom, the man we anointed over us, has died in battle. So why do you say nothing about restoring the king?” ¹¹Then King David sent this message to Zadok and Abiathar, the priests: “Say to the elders of Judah, ‘Why should you be the last to restore the king to his palace, since the talk of all Israel has reached the king at his quarters?’ ¹²You are my brothers, my own flesh and blood. So why should you be the last to restore the king?’ ¹³And say to Amasa, ‘Aren’t you my flesh and blood? May God punish me, and ever so severely, if from now on you are not the commander of my army in place of Joab!’” ¹⁴So he swayed the hearts of all the men of Judah as though they were one man, and they sent word to the king: “Return, you and all your servants.” ¹⁵So the king returned, and when he arrived at the Jordan, the men of Judah came to Gilgal to meet him and escort him across the Jordan.

SHIMEI PARDONED

¹⁶Then Shimei son of Gera, a Benjamite from Bahurim, hurried down with the men of Judah to meet King David, ¹⁷along with a thousand men of Benjamin, as well as Ziba the steward of the house of Saul and his fifteen sons and twenty servants. They rushed down to the Jordan before the king ¹⁸and crossed at the ford to carry over the king’s household and to do what was good in his sight. When Shimei son of Gera crossed the Jordan, he fell down before the king ¹⁹and said, “My lord, do not hold me guilty, and do not remember your servant’s wrongdoing on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem. May the king not take it to heart. ²⁰For your servant knows that I have sinned, so here I am today as the first of all the house of Joseph to come down to meet my lord the king.” ²¹But Abishai son of Zeruiah said, “Shouldn’t Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD’s anointed?” ²²And David replied, “Sons of Zeruiah, what have I to do with you, that you should be my adversaries today? Should any man be put to death in Israel today? Am I not indeed aware that today I am king over Israel?” ²³So the king said to Shimei, “You shall not die.” And the king swore an oath to him.

MEPHIBOSHETH EXCUSED

²⁴Then Mephibosheth, Saul’s grandson, went down to meet the king. He had not cared for his feet or trimmed his mustache or washed his clothes from the day the king had left until the day he returned safely. ²⁵And he came from Jerusalem to meet the king, who asked him, “Mephibosheth, why did you not go with me?” ²⁶“My lord the king,” he replied, “because I am lame, I said, ‘I will have my donkey saddled so that I may ride on it and go with the king.’ But my servant Ziba deceived me, ²⁷and he has slandered your servant to my lord the king. Yet my lord the

king is like the angel of God, so do what is good in your eyes. ²⁸For all the house of my grandfather deserves death from my lord the king, yet you have set your servant among those who eat at your table. What further right, then, do I have to keep appealing to the king?" ²⁹The king replied, "Why say any more? I hereby declare that you and Ziba are to divide the land." ³⁰And Mephibosheth said to the king, "Instead, since my lord the king has safely come to his own house, let Ziba take it all!"

DAVID'S KINDNESS TO BARZILLAI

³¹Now Barzillai the Gileadite had come down from Rogelim to cross the Jordan with the king and send him on his way from there. ³²Barzillai was quite old, eighty years of age, and since he was a very wealthy man, he had provided for the king while he stayed in Mahanaim. ³³The king said to Barzillai, "Cross over with me, and I will provide for you at my side in Jerusalem." ³⁴But Barzillai replied, "How many years of my life remain, that I should go up to Jerusalem with the king? ³⁵I am now eighty years old. Can I discern what is good and what is not? Can your servant taste what he eats or drinks? Can I still hear the voice of singing men and women? Why should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king? ³⁶Your servant will go with the king only a short distance past the Jordan; why should the king repay me with such a reward? ³⁷Please let your servant return, that I may die in my own city near the tomb of my father and mother. But here is your servant Chimham. Let him cross over with my lord the king, and do for him what is good in your sight." ³⁸The king replied, "Chimham will cross over with me, and I will do for him what is good in your sight, and I will do for you whatever you desire of me." ³⁹So all the people crossed the Jordan, and then the king crossed over. The king kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and Barzillai returned home. ⁴⁰Then the king crossed over to Gilgal, and Chimham crossed over with him. All the troops of Judah and half the troops of Israel escorted the king.

CONTENTION OVER THE KING

⁴¹Soon all the men of Israel came to the king and asked, "Why did our brothers, the men of Judah, take you away secretly and bring the king and his household across the Jordan, together with all of David's men?" ⁴²And all the men of Judah replied to the men of Israel, "We did this because the king is our relative. Why does this anger you? Have we ever eaten at the king's expense or received anything for ourselves?" ⁴³"We have ten shares in the king," answered the men of Israel, "so we have more claim to David than you. Why then do you despise us? Were we not

the first to speak of restoring our king?" But the men of Judah spoke more fiercely than the men of Israel.

Chapter 20

SHEBA'S REBELLION

¹Now a worthless man named Sheba son of Bichri, a Benjamite, happened to be there, and he blew the ram's horn and shouted: "We have no share in David, no inheritance in Jesse's son. Every man to his tent, O Israel!" ²So all the men of Israel deserted David to follow Sheba son of Bichri. But the men of Judah stayed by their king all the way from the Jordan to Jerusalem. ³When David returned to his palace in Jerusalem, he took the ten concubines he had left to take care of the palace, and he placed them in a house under guard. He provided for them, but he no longer slept with them. They were confined until the day of their death, living as widows. ⁴Then the king said to Amasa, "Summon the men of Judah to come to me within three days, and be here yourself." ⁵So Amasa went to summon Judah, but he took longer than the time allotted him. ⁶And David said to Abishai, "Now Sheba the son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom. Take your lord's servants and pursue him, or he will find fortified cities and elude us." ⁷So Joab's men, along with the Cherethites, the Pelethites, and all the mighty men, marched out of Jerusalem in pursuit of Sheba son of Bichri. ⁸And while they were at the great stone in Gibeon, Amasa joined them. Now Joab was dressed in military attire, with a dagger strapped to his belt. And as he stepped forward, he slipped the dagger from its sheath. ⁹"Are you well, my brother?" Joab asked Amasa. And with his right hand Joab grabbed Amasa by the beard to kiss him. ¹⁰Amasa was not on guard against the dagger in Joab's hand, and Joab stabbed him in the stomach and spilled out his intestines on the ground. And Joab did not need to strike him again, for Amasa was dead. Then Joab and his brother Abishai pursued Sheba son of Bichri. ¹¹One of Joab's young men stood near Amasa and said, "Whoever favors Joab, and whoever is for David, let him follow Joab!" ¹²But Amasa wallowed in his blood in the middle of the road, and when the man saw that all the troops were stopping there, he dragged the body off the road into a field and threw a garment over it. ¹³As soon as Amasa's body was removed from the road, all the men went on with Joab to pursue Sheba son of Bichri. ¹⁴Sheba passed through all the tribes of Israel to Abel-beth-maacah and through the entire region of the Berites, who gathered together and followed him. ¹⁵And Joab's troops came and besieged Sheba in Abel-beth-maacah and built a siege ramp against the outer rampart of the city. As all the troops

with Joab were battering the wall to topple it, ¹⁶a wise woman called out from the city, “Listen! Listen! Please tell Joab to come here so that I may speak with him.” ¹⁷When he had come near to her, the woman asked, “Are you Joab?” “I am,” he replied. “Listen to the words of your servant,” she said. “I am listening,” he answered. ¹⁸Then the woman said, “Long ago they used to say, ‘Seek counsel at Abel,’ and that is how disputes were settled. ¹⁹I am among the peaceable and faithful in Israel, but you are trying to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why would you swallow up the LORD’s inheritance?” ²⁰“Far be it!” Joab declared. “Far be it from me to swallow up or destroy! ²¹That is not the case. But a man named Sheba son of Bichri, from the hill country of Ephraim, has lifted up his hand against the king, against David. Deliver him alone, and I will depart from the city.” “Look,” the woman replied, “his head will be thrown to you over the wall.” ²²Then the woman went to all the people with her wise counsel, and they cut off the head of Sheba son of Bichri and threw it to Joab. So he blew the ram’s horn and his men dispersed from the city, each to his own home. And Joab returned to the king in Jerusalem. ²³Now Joab was over the whole army of Israel; Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and Pelethites; ²⁴Adoram was in charge of the forced labor; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the recorder; ²⁵Sheva was the scribe; Zadok and Abiathar were priests; ²⁶and Ira the Jairite was David’s priest.

Chapter 21

DAVID AVENGES THE GIBEONITES

¹During the reign of David there was a famine for three successive years, and David sought the face of the LORD. And the LORD said, “It is because of the blood shed by Saul and his family, because he killed the Gibeonites.” ²At this, David summoned the Gibeonites and spoke to them. (Now the Gibeonites were not Israelites, but a remnant of the Amorites. The Israelites had taken an oath concerning them, but in his zeal for Israel and Judah, Saul had sought to kill them.) ³So David asked the Gibeonites, “What shall I do for you? How can I make amends so that you may bless the inheritance of the LORD?” ⁴The Gibeonites said to him, “We need no silver or gold from Saul or his house, nor should you put to death anyone in Israel for us.” “Whatever you ask, I will do for you,” he replied. ⁵And they answered the king, “As for the man who consumed us and plotted against us to exterminate us from existing within any border of Israel, ⁶let seven of his male descendants be delivered to us so that we may hang them before the LORD at Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of the LORD.” “I will give them

to you,” said the king. ⁷Now the king spared Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, because of the oath before the LORD between David and Jonathan son of Saul. ⁸But the king took Armoni and Mephibosheth, the two sons whom Rizpah daughter of Aiah had borne to Saul, as well as the five sons whom Merab daughter of Saul had borne to Adriel son of Barzillai the Meholathite. ⁹And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them on the hill before the LORD. So all seven of them fell together; they were put to death in the first days of the harvest, at the beginning of the barley harvest. ¹⁰And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it out for herself on a rock. From the beginning of the harvest until the rain from heaven poured down on the bodies, she did not allow the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night. ¹¹When David was told what Saul’s concubine Rizpah, daughter of Aiah, had done, ¹²he went and took the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan from the men of Jabesh-gilead, who had stolen them from the public square of Beth-shan where the Philistines had hung the bodies after they had struck down Saul at Gilboa. ¹³So David had the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan brought from there, and they also gathered the bones of those who had been hanged. ¹⁴And they buried the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan in Zela in the land of Benjamin, in the tomb of Saul’s father Kish. After they had done everything the king had commanded, God answered their prayers for the land.

FOUR BATTLES AGAINST THE PHILISTINES

¹⁵Once again the Philistines waged war against Israel, and David and his servants went down and fought against the Philistines. But David became exhausted. ¹⁶Then Ishbi-benob, a descendant of Rapha, whose bronze spear weighed three hundred shekels and who was bearing a new sword, resolved to kill David. ¹⁷But Abishai son of Zeruiah came to his aid, struck the Philistine, and killed him. Then David’s men swore to him, “You must never again go out with us to battle, so that the lamp of Israel may not be extinguished.” ¹⁸Some time later at Gob, there was another battle with the Philistines. At that time Sibbecai the Hushathite killed Saph, a descendant of Rapha. ¹⁹Once again there was a battle with the Philistines at Gob, and Elhanan son of Jair the Bethlehemite killed the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver’s beam. ²⁰And there was also a battle at Gath, where there was a man of great stature with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot—twenty-four in all. He too was descended from Rapha, ²¹and when he taunted Israel, Jonathan the son of David’s brother Shimei killed

him. ²²So these four descendants of Rapha in Gath fell at the hands of David and his servants.

Chapter 22

DAVID'S SONG OF DELIVERANCE

¹And David sang this song to the LORD on the day the LORD had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. ²He said: "The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer. ³My God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation. My stronghold, my refuge, and my Savior, You save me from violence. ⁴I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies. ⁵For the waves of death engulfed me; the torrents of chaos overwhelmed me. ⁶The cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me. ⁷In my distress I called upon the LORD; I cried out to my God. And from His temple He heard my voice, and my cry for help reached His ears. ⁸Then the earth shook and quaked; the foundations of the heavens trembled; they were shaken because He burned with anger. ⁹Smoke rose from His nostrils, and consuming fire came from His mouth; glowing coals blazed forth. ¹⁰He parted the heavens and came down with dark clouds beneath His feet. ¹¹He mounted a cherub and flew; He soared on the wings of the wind. ¹²He made darkness a canopy around Him, a gathering of water and thick clouds. ¹³From the brightness of His presence coals of fire blazed forth. ¹⁴The LORD thundered from heaven; the voice of the Most High resounded. ¹⁵He shot His arrows and scattered the foes; He hurled lightning and routed them. ¹⁶The channels of the sea appeared, and the foundations of the world were exposed at the rebuke of the LORD, at the blast of the breath of His nostrils. ¹⁷He reached down from on high and took hold of me; He drew me out of deep waters. ¹⁸He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from foes too mighty for me. ¹⁹They confronted me in my day of calamity, but the LORD was my support. ²⁰He brought me out into the open; He rescued me because He delighted in me. ²¹The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness; He has repaid me according to the cleanness of my hands. ²²For I have kept the ways of the LORD and have not wickedly departed from my God. ²³For all His ordinances are before me; I have not disregarded His statutes. ²⁴And I have been blameless before Him and kept myself from iniquity. ²⁵So the LORD has repaid me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in His sight. ²⁶To the faithful You show Yourself faithful, to the blameless You show Yourself blameless; ²⁷to the pure You show Yourself pure, but to the crooked You show Yourself shrewd. ²⁸You

save an afflicted people, but Your eyes are on the haughty to bring them down. ²⁹For You, O LORD, are my lamp; the LORD lights up my darkness. ³⁰For in You I can charge an army; with my God I can scale a wall. ³¹As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the LORD is flawless. He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him. ³²For who is God besides the LORD? And who is the Rock except our God? ³³God is my strong fortress, and He makes my way clear. ³⁴He makes my feet like those of a deer and stations me upon the heights. ³⁵He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze. ³⁶You have given me Your shield of salvation, and Your gentleness exalts me. ³⁷You broaden the path beneath me so that my ankles do not give way. ³⁸I pursued my enemies and destroyed them; I did not turn back until they were consumed. ³⁹I devoured and crushed them so they could not rise; they have fallen under my feet. ⁴⁰You have armed me with strength for battle; You have subdued my foes beneath me. ⁴¹You have made my enemies retreat before me; I destroyed those who hated me. ⁴²They looked, but there was no one to save them—to the LORD, but He did not answer. ⁴³I ground them as the dust of the earth; I crushed and trampled them like mud in the streets. ⁴⁴You have delivered me from the strife of my people; You have preserved me as the head of nations; a people I had not known shall serve me. ⁴⁵Foreigners cower before me; when they hear me, they obey me. ⁴⁶Foreigners lose heart and come trembling from their strongholds. ⁴⁷The LORD lives, and blessed be my Rock! And may God, the Rock of my salvation, be exalted— ⁴⁸the God who avenges me and brings down nations beneath me, ⁴⁹who frees me from my enemies. You exalt me above my foes; You rescue me from violent men. ⁵⁰Therefore I will praise You, O LORD, among the nations; I will sing praises to Your name. ⁵¹Great salvation He brings to His king. He shows loving devotion to His anointed, to David and his descendants forever."

Chapter 23

DAVID'S LAST SONG

¹These are the last words of David: "The oracle of David son of Jesse, the oracle of the man raised on high, the one anointed by the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel: ²The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; His word was on my tongue. ³The God of Israel spoke; the Rock of Israel said to me, 'He who rules the people with justice, who rules in the fear of God, ⁴is like the light of the morning at sunrise of a cloudless dawn, the glistening after the rain on the sprouting grass of the earth.' ⁵Is not my house right with God? For He has established with me an

everlasting covenant, ordered and secured in every part. Will He not bring about my full salvation and my every desire? ⁶But the worthless are all like thorns raked aside, for they can never be gathered by hand. ⁷The man who touches them must be armed with iron or with the shaft of a spear. The fire burns them to ashes in the place where they lie.”

DAVID’S MIGHTY MEN

⁸These are the names of David’s mighty men: Joshebbasshebeth the Tahchemonite was chief of the Three. He wielded his spear against eight hundred men, whom he killed at one time. ⁹Next in command was Eleazar son of Dodo the Ahohite. As one of the three mighty men, he went with David to taunt the Philistines who had gathered for battle at Pas-dammim. The men of Israel retreated, ¹⁰but Eleazar stood his ground and struck the Philistines until his hand grew weary and stuck to his sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day. Then the troops returned to him, but only to plunder the dead. ¹¹And after him was Shammah son of Agee the Hararite. When the Philistines had banded together near a field full of lentils, Israel’s troops fled from them. ¹²But Shammah took his stand in the middle of the field, defended it, and struck down the Philistines. So the LORD brought about a great victory. ¹³At harvest time, three of the thirty chief men went down to David at the cave of Adullam, while a company of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. ¹⁴At that time David was in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was at Bethlehem. ¹⁵David longed for water and said, “Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!” ¹⁶So the three mighty men broke through the Philistine camp, drew water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem, and brought it back to David. But he refused to drink it; instead, he poured it out to the LORD, ¹⁷saying, “Far be it from me, O LORD, to do this! Is this not the blood of the men who risked their lives?” So he refused to drink it. Such were the exploits of the three mighty men. ¹⁸Now Abishai, the brother of Joab and son of Zeruiah, was chief of the Three, and he wielded his spear against three hundred men, killed them, and won a name along with the Three. ¹⁹Was he not more honored than the Three? And he became their commander, even though he was not included among the Three. ²⁰And Benaiah son of Jehoiada was a man of valor from Kabzeel, a man of many exploits. He struck down two champions of Moab, and on a snowy day he went down into a pit and killed a lion. ²¹He also struck down an Egyptian, a huge man. Although the Egyptian had a spear in his hand, Benaiah went against him with a club, snatched the spear from his hand, and killed the Egyptian

with his own spear. ²²These were the exploits of Benaiah son of Jehoiada, who won a name along with the three mighty men. ²³He was most honored among the Thirty, but he did not become one of the Three. And David appointed him over his guard. ²⁴Now these were members of the Thirty: Asahel the brother of Joab, Elhanan son of Dodo of Bethlehem, ²⁵Shammah the Harodite, Elikah the Harodite, ²⁶Helez the Paltite, Ira son of Ikkesh the Tekoite, ²⁷Abiezer the Anathothite, Mebunnai the Hushathite, ²⁸Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite, ²⁹Heled son of Baanah the Netophathite, Ittai son of Ribai from Gibeah of the Benjamites, ³⁰Benaiah the Pirathonite, Hiddai from the brooks of Gaash, ³¹Abi-albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite, ³²Eliabha the Shaalbonite, the sons of Jashen, Jonathan ³³son of Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam son of Sharar the Hararite, ³⁴Eliphelet son of Ahasbai the Maacathite, Eliam son of Ahithophel the Gilonite, ³⁵Hezro the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite, ³⁶Igal son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite, ³⁷Zekek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite, the armor-bearer of Joab son of Zeruiah, ³⁸Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, ³⁹and Uriah the Hittite. There were thirty-seven in all.

Chapter 24

DAVID’S MILITARY CENSUS

¹Again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He stirred up David against them, saying, “Go and take a census of Israel and Judah.” ²So the king said to Joab the commander of his army, who was with him, “Go now throughout the tribes of Israel from Dan to Beersheba and register the troops, so that I may know their number.” ³But Joab replied to the king, “May the LORD your God multiply the troops a hundred times over, and may the eyes of my lord the king see it. But why does my lord the king want to do such a thing?” ⁴Nevertheless, the king’s word prevailed against Joab and against the commanders of the army. So Joab and the commanders of the army departed from the presence of the king to register the troops of Israel. ⁵They crossed the Jordan and camped near Aroer, south of the town in the middle of the valley, and proceeded toward Gad and Jazer. ⁶Then they went to Gilead and the land of Tahtim-hodshi, and on to Dan-jaan and around to Sidon. ⁷They went toward the fortress of Tyre and all the cities of the Hivites and Canaanites. Finally, they went on to the Negev of Judah, to Beersheba. ⁸At the end of nine months and twenty days, having gone through the whole land, they returned to Jerusalem. ⁹And Joab reported to the king the total number of the troops. In Israel there

were 800,000 men of valor who drew the sword, and in Judah there were 500,000.

JUDGMENT FOR DAVID'S SIN

¹⁰After David had numbered the troops, his conscience was stricken and he said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. Now, O LORD, I beg You to take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have acted very foolishly." ¹¹When David got up in the morning, the word of the LORD had come to Gad the prophet, David's seer: ¹²"Go and tell David that this is what the LORD says: 'I am offering you three options. Choose one of them, and I will carry it out against you.'" ¹³So Gad went and said to David, "Do you choose to endure three years of famine in your land, three months of fleeing the pursuit of your enemies, or three days of plague upon your land? Now then, think it over and decide how I should reply to Him who sent me." ¹⁴David answered Gad, "I am deeply distressed. Please, let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men."

A PLAGUE ON ISRAEL

¹⁵So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel from that morning until the appointed time, and seventy thousand of the people from Dan to Beersheba died. ¹⁶But when the angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, the LORD relented from the calamity and said to the angel who was destroying the people, "Enough! Withdraw your hand now!" At that time the angel of the LORD was by the threshing

floor of Araunah the Jebusite. ¹⁷When David saw the angel striking down the people, he said to the LORD, "Surely I, the shepherd, have sinned and acted wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? Please, let Your hand fall upon me and my father's house."

DAVID BUILDS AN ALTAR

¹⁸And that day Gad came to David and said to him, "Go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." ¹⁹So David went up at the word of Gad, just as the LORD had commanded. ²⁰When Araunah looked out and saw the king and his servants coming toward him, he went out and bowed facedown before the king. ²¹"Why has my lord the king come to his servant?" Araunah said. "To buy your threshing floor," David replied, "that I may build an altar to the LORD, so that the plague upon the people may be halted." ²²Araunah said to David, "May my lord the king take whatever seems good to him and offer it up. Here are the oxen for a burnt offering and the threshing sledges and ox yokes for the wood. ²³O king, Araunah gives all these to the king." He also said to the king, "May the LORD your God accept you." ²⁴"No," replied the king, "I insist on paying a price, for I will not offer to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. ²⁵And there he built an altar to the LORD and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. Then the LORD answered the prayers on behalf of the land, and the plague upon Israel was halted.