

2 Kings

1 ¹ After Ahab died, Moab rebelled against Israel. ² Ahaziah^a had fallen through the lattice-work^b of his upper room in Samaria and had hurt himself badly. So he sent out messengers, telling them: “Go and ask Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I will get better from this injury.”

³ But the angel of the Lord told Elijah the Tishbite, “Go and meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and ask them, ‘Is it because there’s no God in Israel that you’re going to ask advice from Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?’” ⁴ So this is the Lord’s answer: ‘You will not leave the bed on which you are lying. You’re definitely going to die.’” And Elijah left.

⁵ The messengers returned to the king, and he asked them, “Why have you come back?”

⁶ “A man came and met us,” they replied. “He told us, ‘Go back to the king who sent you, and tell him, This is what the Lord says: Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to ask advice from Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? As a result you will not leave the bed on which you are lying. You’re definitely going to die.’”

⁷ “What was he like, this man who met you and told you all this?” the king asked.

⁸ “He was a hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist,” they replied.

“It’s Elijah the Tishbite,” said the king.

⁹ Then the king sent an army captain with fifty men to Elijah. The captain went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and told him, “Man of God, the king orders you, ‘Come down!’”

¹⁰ Elijah replied to the captain, “If I am a man of God, then let fire fall from heaven and burn up you and your fifty men.” Fire fell from heaven and burned up the captain and his men.

¹¹ So the king sent another captain with his fifty men to Elijah. The captain said to Elijah, “Man of God, the king orders you, Come down immediately!”

^a1:2. Ahab's son who had succeeded him as king of Israel.

^b1:2. Lattice-work: perhaps the shade used to cover a window.

¹² Elijah replied to the captain, “If I am a man of God, then let fire fall from heaven and burn up you and your fifty men.” Fire fell from heaven and burned up the captain and his men.

¹³ So the king sent a third captain with his fifty men. The third captain went up, kneeled before Elijah, and pleaded with him, “Man of God, please value my life and the lives of these fifty men. ¹⁴ Yes, fire has fallen from heaven and burned up the first two captains of fifty, along with all their men. But now please value my life!”

¹⁵ Then the angel of the Lord told Elijah, “Go down with him. You don't have to be afraid of him.” So Elijah got up and went down with him to the king.

¹⁶ Elijah told the king, “This is what the Lord says: ‘Is it because there's no God in Israel for you to consult that you have sent messengers to ask advice of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? As a result you will not leave the bed on which you are lying. You're definitely going to die.’”

¹⁷ Ahaziah died just as the Lord had said through Elijah. Because he had no son, Joram^c succeeded him as king in the second year of the reign of Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.

¹⁸ The rest of what happened in Ahaziah's reign and what he did are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

2 ¹ Just before the Lord took Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were walking together on their way from Gilgal. ² Elijah said to Elisha, “Please stay here, for the Lord has sent me to Bethel.”

But Elisha replied, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they went to Bethel.

³ The sons of the prophets who lived in Bethel came to Elisha and told him, “You do know that the Lord is going to take your master away from you today, don't you?”

“Yes, I know,” he replied. “Don't talk about it.”

⁴ Then Elijah said to him, “Please stay here, Elisha, for the Lord has sent me to Jericho.”

He replied, “As the Lord lives, and as you live, I will not leave you.” So they went to Jericho.

^c1:17. “Joram,” spelled here Jehoram. For purposes of clarity the king of Israel is called Joram in this translation, while the king of Judah is called Jehoram, though the names are basically the same and are used interchangeably in the Hebrew text.

⁵ The sons of the prophets who lived in Jericho came to Elisha and told him, “You do know that the Lord is going to take your master away from you today, don't you?”

“Yes, I know,” he replied. “Don't talk about it.”

⁶ Then Elijah said to him, “Please stay here, Elisha, for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan.”

He replied, “As the Lord lives, and as you live, I will not leave you.” So they travelled on together.

⁷ Then a group of fifty of the sons of the prophets went and stood facing Elijah and Elisha at a distance as the two of them stood by the Jordan. ⁸ Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up, and hit the water. It divided to the one side and to the other and both of them crossed over on dry ground.

⁹ When they arrived on the other side, Elijah asked Elisha, “What can I do for you before I'm taken from you?”

“Please let me have a double amount of your spirit,” Elisha replied.

¹⁰ “What you have asked for is hard,” Elijah responded. “But if you see me when I am taken from you, you will have it, otherwise not.”

¹¹ As they were walking along, talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire came between them, and Elijah was taken up in the whirlwind to heaven.

¹² Elisha saw what happened and cried out, “My father! My father! Look! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!” Then Elisha couldn't see him anymore. He took his clothes and ripped them to pieces.^d

¹³ Then Elisha picked up Elijah's cloak that had fallen from him, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴ He took Elijah's cloak that had fallen from him, hit the water, and cried out, “Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?” When he hit the water, it divided to the one side and to the other and Elisha crossed over.

¹⁵ The sons of the prophets who lived in Jericho saw him from the opposite side and shouted out, “Elijah's spirit now rests upon Elisha!” They went over to meet him, and bowed to the ground before him.

¹⁶ “Look,” they said to Elisha, “we your servants have fifty good men here. Please allow them to go and search for your master. Maybe the Spirit of the Lord has taken him and put him down on a mountain or in a valley somewhere.”

^d2:12. A symbolic act of great distress.

“Don't bother sending them,” Elisha replied.

¹⁷ But they went on trying to persuade him until he was too embarrassed to say no. “Go ahead and send them,” he told them. So they sent fifty men, who searched for Elijah for three days but couldn't find him.

¹⁸ When they returned to Elisha, who was staying in Jericho, he said to them, “Didn't I tell you not to bother going?”

¹⁹ The townspeople said to Elisha, “Look, sir, while our town has a good location as you can see, the water is bad and the soil is poor.”

²⁰ “Bring me a brand new bowl and put some salt in it,” he replied. So they brought it to him. ²¹ Then Elisha went to the spring, threw the salt into it, and said, “This is what the Lord says: ‘I have purified this water. It won't cause death or miscarriages anymore.’” ²² The water there is still pure to this very day, just as Elisha said it would be.

²³ Elisha went on from there to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, a group of youths came from the town. They made fun of him, calling out, “Go on up, baldy! Go on up, baldy!”^e

²⁴ Turning around, he looked at them and called down a curse on them in the Lord's name. Suddenly two female bears came out of the forest and mauled forty-two of them. ²⁵ Elisha carried on to Mount Carmel, and from there he went back to Samaria.

3 ¹ Joram, son of Ahab, became king of Israel in the eighteenth year of the reign of King Jehoshaphat of Judah. He reigned in Samaria for twelve years. ² He did evil in the Lord's sight, but not like his father and mother had done, for he got rid of the stone image of Baal that his father had made. ³ However, he still held on to the sins that Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had made Israel commit—he did not give them up.

⁴ Mesha, king of Moab, was a sheep breeder. He used to provide a tribute to the king of Israel of one hundred thousand lambs and the wool of one hundred thousand rams. ⁵ But after Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. ⁶ Immediately King Joram called up the whole Israelite army and left Samaria. ⁷ On his way he sent a message to Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, saying, “The

^e2:23. It seems they were taunting Elisha by saying he should leave in the same way as Elijah.

king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you join me in an attack on Moab?"

Jehoshaphat replied, "Yes, I will join you. You and I are as one, my men and your men are as one, and my horses and your horses are as one."

⁸ Then he asked, "Which way shall we go?"

"We'll take the road through the desert of Edom," he replied.

⁹ So the king of Israel, the king of Judah, and the king of Edom set off. Having followed an indirect route for seven days, they ran out of water for their army and for their animals.

¹⁰ "What are we doing?" complained the king of Israel. "The Lord has brought us three kings here to hand us over to the Moabites!"

¹¹ But Jehoshaphat asked, "Isn't there a prophet of the Lord here with us? Let us consult the Lord through him."

One of the king of Israel's officers answered, "Elisha, son of Shaphat, is here. He was Elijah's assistant."^f

¹² Jehoshaphat agreed, "The Lord communicates by him." So the king of Israel, Jehoshaphat, and the king of Edom went to see him.

¹³ Elisha said to the king of Israel, "What have I got to do with you? Go to your own prophets, those of your father and your mother." But the king of Israel said to him, "No—because it's the Lord who has brought these three kings here to hand them over to the Moabites!"

¹⁴ Elisha replied, "As the Lord Almighty lives, the one I serve, if I didn't respect the fact that Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, is here, I wouldn't even look in your direction or acknowledge you. ¹⁵ Now bring me a musician."^g

While the musician played, the Lord's power came upon Elisha, ¹⁶ and he announced, "This is what the Lord says: This valley will be filled with pools of water. For the Lord says: ¹⁷ You won't see any wind, you won't see any rain, but even so this valley will be filled with water. You will drink, and your cattle, and your animals. ¹⁸ The Lord views this as something trivial to do; and he will also make you victorious over the Moabites. ¹⁹ You will conquer every fortified

^f**3:11.** "He was Elijah's assistant": literally, "He used to pour water on Elijah's hands."

^g**3:15.** "Musician": usually referring to someone who could play a stringed instrument. A harp is often suggested.

town, and every important town. You will chop down every good tree, block up every spring, and spoil every good field by throwing stones on them.”

²⁰ The next day, around the time of the morning sacrifice, water suddenly flowed from the direction of Edom, filling the whole countryside with water. ²¹ All the Moabites had heard that the kings had come to attack them. So everyone who could wear a sword, young and old, was called up and went to guard the border. ²² But the next morning when they got up the sun was shining on the water, and to the Moabites on the other side it looked blood red. ²³ “This is blood!” they said. “The kings and their armies must have attacked and killed each other! Moabites, let’s grab the plunder!”

²⁴ But when the Moabites arrived at the Israelite camp, the Israelites ran out and attacked them, and they ran away from them. So the Israelites invaded their country and killed the Moabites.

²⁵ They destroyed the towns, and each soldier threw stones on every good field until it was covered. They blocked up every spring and chopped down every good tree. Only Kir-haraseth still had its walls, but soldiers using slingshots surrounded it and attacked it as well.

²⁶ When the king of Moab realized he’d lost the battle, he led seven hundred swordsmen in an attempt to break through and attack the king of Edom, but they weren’t able to do so. ²⁷ So the king of Moab took his firstborn son, who was meant to succeed him, and sacrificed him as a burnt offering on the town wall. Great anger came upon the Israelites, so they left and went back to their own country.^h

4¹ The wife of one of the sons of the prophets appealed to Elisha, “My husband, your servant, is dead, and you know that he honored the Lord. But now to pay his debts his creditor is coming to take my two sons as his slaves!”

² “What can I do to help you?” asked Elisha. “Tell me, what do you have in your house?”

“I, your servant, don’t have anything in my house except a jar of olive oil,” she replied.

^h3:27. Whether this was great anger displayed by the Moabites against the Israelites, or whether such a horrific act made the Israelites very angry is debated. It seems more likely that such a gruesome human sacrifice was so offensive, even to the Israelites in their lax spiritual state, that they simply left.

³ “Go and borrow empty jars from your neighbors—as many as possible, not just a few,” Elisha told her. ⁴ “Then go inside, shut the door behind you and your sons, and start pouring olive oil into all these jars, placing the full jars to one side.”

⁵ She left Elisha, went home, and shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept on pouring. ⁶ When all the jars were full, she told her son, “Bring me another one.” But he replied, “There aren't any jars left.” Then the olive oil stopped flowing.

⁷ She went and told the man of God what had happened, and he said, “Go and sell the olive oil and pay your debts, and you and your sons can live on what's left.”

⁸ One day as Elisha was passing through Shunem, a wealthy woman who lived there convinced him to have a meal. After that, whenever he was passing by he would stop there to eat.

⁹ She told her husband, “I'm sure that this man who regularly visits us is a holy man of God. ¹⁰ Please let's make a small room on the roof. We can put a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp in it for him. Then he can stay there whenever he visits us.”

¹¹ One day Elisha arrived and went up to his room and lay down. ¹² He said to his servant Gehazi, “Ask the Shunammite womanⁱ to come here.” Gehazi called her and she came to see Elisha.

¹³ Elisha said to Gehazi, “Please tell her, ‘You have gone to a lot of trouble on our behalf. Now what can we do for you? Do you want us to speak for you to the king or the army commander?’”

“I live with my own people,”^j she replied.

¹⁴ After she had left,^k Elisha asked, “What can we do for her?”

“She doesn't have a son, and her husband is old,” Gehazi replied.

¹⁵ Elisha said, “Ask her to come back.” So Gehazi called her, and she came stood by the door. ¹⁶ Elisha told her, “Around this time next year, you will be holding a son in your arms.”

“No, my lord!” she responded. “Man of God, don't tell your servant lies!”

ⁱ4:12. Referring to the woman who had arranged his accommodation.

^j4:13. In other words, she had all she needed.

^k4:14. “After she had left”: implied.

¹⁷ But the woman did indeed become pregnant, and the next year around that same time she gave birth to a son, just as Elisha had promised her.

¹⁸ The child grew up, but one day he when went out to see his father who was with the reapers, ¹⁹ he complained to his father, “My head hurts! My head hurts!”

His father told one of his servants, “Carry him back to his mother.” ²⁰ The servant picked him up and took him back to his mother. The boy sat on her lap until noon, and then he died. ²¹ She went upstairs and laid him on the bed of the man of God. Then she shut the door behind her and left.

²² She called her husband and said, “Please send me one of the servants and a donkey so I can run to the man of God and come back.”

²³ “Why do you need to go and see him today?” he asked. “It's not the New Moon or the Sabbath.”

“Don't worry about it,” she replied.

²⁴ She put the saddle on the donkey and told her servant, “Let's go quickly! Don't slow down for me unless I tell you to!” ²⁵ So she set off, and went to the man of God who was at Mount Carmel.

When he saw her way in the distance, the man of God told his servant Gehazi, “Look! There's the Shunammite woman! ²⁶ Please run to meet her and ask her, ‘Is everything fine with you, your husband, and your boy?’”

“Everything's fine,” she replied.

²⁷ But when she got to the man of God at the mountain, she grabbed hold of his feet. Gehazi came over to push her away, but the man of God said, “Leave her alone, for she's in terrible misery, but the Lord has hidden it from me and has not explained it to me.”

²⁸ “Did I ask you for a son, my lord?” she asked. “Didn't I tell you, ‘Don't tell me lies’?”

²⁹ Elisha said to Gehazi, “Put your cloak in your belt, pick up my staff, and go! Don't even say hello to anyone you meet, and if anyone says hello you, don't reply. Place my staff on the boy's face.”

³⁰ But the boy's mother said, “As the Lord lives and as you live, I'm not leaving without you!” So he got up and went with her.

³¹ Gehazi ran on ahead and placed the staff on the boy's face, but there was no sound or sign of life. So Gehazi went back to meet Elisha and told him, "The boy hasn't woken up."

³² When Elisha got to the house, there was the boy, lying dead on his bed. ³³ He went in, shut the door behind them both, and prayed to the Lord. ³⁴ Then he got on the bed and lay on top of the boy, and put his mouth on the boy's mouth, his eyes on the boy's eyes, his hands on the boy's hands. As he stretched out on him, the boy's body warmed up. ³⁵ Elisha got up, walked back and forth once in the room, and then got back on the bed and stretched out on him again. The boy sneezed seven times and then opened his eyes.

³⁶ Elisha called Gehazi and said, "Ask the Shunammite woman to come." So he did. When she arrived, Elisha said to her, "Here's your son. You can pick him up." ³⁷ She came in, fell at his feet, and bowed to the ground. Then she picked up her son and left.

³⁸ When Elisha went back to Gilgal, there was a famine in that area. The sons of the prophets were sitting at his feet, and he said to his servant, "Use the large pot and boil some stew for the sons of the prophets."

³⁹ One of them went out into the countryside to pick herbs. He found a wild vine and picked as many wild gourds as his cloak could hold. Then he came back and chopped them up into the pot of stew. But nobody knew they were dangerous to eat.¹

⁴⁰ They served it to the men to eat, but when they tasted the stew they shouted, "There's death in the pot, man of God!" They couldn't eat it.

⁴¹ Elisha said, "Get some flour." He threw it into the pot, and said, "Serve it to the people to eat." There was nothing bad to eat in the pot.

⁴² A man from Baal-shalishah came to the man of God with a sack of firstfruits—the first grain of the year, along with twenty loaves of barley bread. "Give it to the people to eat," said Elisha.

⁴³ "How can I serve just twenty loaves to a hundred men?" his servant asked.

"Give it to the people to eat," said Elisha, "for this is what the Lord says: 'They will eat and there will still be some left over.'"

¹4:39. "Dangerous to eat": implied.

⁴⁴ So he served the bread to them. They ate, and had some left over, just as the Lord had said.

5 ¹ Naaman, the king of Aram's army commander was considered a great man by his master and highly respected, for through him the Lord had made the Arameans victorious. He was a mighty warrior, but he was a leper.

² Some Arameans had gone on a raid and had captured a young girl from the land of Israel. She had been made a servant to Naaman's wife. ³ She told her mistress, "If only my master would go and see the prophet who lives in Samaria. I'm sure he could cure him of his leprosy."

⁴ Naaman went to his master and explained what the Israelite girl had said.

⁵ "You can go," said the king of Aram, "and I will send a letter with you to the king of Israel." So Naaman left. He took with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of clothing.

⁶ The letter he took to the king of Israel read: "This letter accompanies my servant Naaman, sent to you so you can heal him of his leprosy."

⁷ When the king of Israel read the letter, he ripped his clothes in panic and said, "Does this man think I'm God, having power over life and death, sending me a leper to heal? Obviously he's just trying to invent an excuse to attack me, as anyone can see!"

⁸ But when Elisha, the man of God, heard that the king of Israel had ripped his clothes in panic, he sent a message to the king, saying: "What did you rip your clothes for? Please send the man to me, so he will be convinced there is a prophet in Israel."

⁹ So Naaman arrived with his horses and chariots and stood waiting at the door of Elisha's house. ¹⁰ Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash yourself seven times in the Jordan. Then your body will be healed, and you will be clean."^m

¹¹ But Naaman got angry and left, saying, "I expected he would at least come out, stand there and invoke the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over where my leprosy is and heal it. ¹² Aren't the rivers of Damascus, Abanah and Pharpar, better than any of these

^m5:10. "Clean": from an Israelite perspective, anyone with leprosy was unclean.

streams of Israel? Couldn't I have washed in them and been healed?" So he turned around and went off in a rage.

¹³ But Naaman's officials went to him and said, "Sir, if the prophet had told you that you had to do something extraordinary, wouldn't you have done it? How much easier is it to do what he says, 'Wash and you'll be healed'?"

¹⁴ So Naaman went down and plunged himself underwater in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him. His body was healed, his skin became like a baby's, and he was clean.

¹⁵ Then Naaman and his whole entourage went back to the man of God, stood before him, and Naaman announced, "Now I'm convinced that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. Please accept a gift from me, your servant."

¹⁶ But Elisha replied, "As the Lord lives, the one I serve, I will not accept anything." Even though Naaman tried to persuade him to take the gift, he refused.

¹⁷ So Naaman said, "If you won't, please let me, your servant, take back with me two mule loads of earth, for I will never again bring a burnt offering or make a sacrifice to any other god but the Lord. ¹⁸ In addition, may the Lord forgive me for doing this: When my master goes into the temple of Rimmon to worship there, and I assist him, and I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the Lord forgive me for doing so."

¹⁹ "Go in peace," said Elisha, and Naaman left. But he had only gone a short way ²⁰ when Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, "Just look how my master has let this Naaman the Syrian off the hook by not accepting the gifts he brought! As the Lord lives, I'll run after him and get something from him."

²¹ So Gehazi chased after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running after him, he jumped down from the chariot to meet him and asked, "Is everything all right?"

²² "Everything's fine," Gehazi replied. "My master sent me to tell you, 'I've just found out that two young men have arrived to see me from the sons of the prophets who live the hill country of Ephraim. Please let them have a talent of silver and two sets of clothing.'"

²³ But Naaman replied, "Please, take two talents." He insisted that Gehazi to accept them. Then he tied up two talents of silver in two

bags as well as two sets of clothing. He gave them to two of his servants, who carried them for Gehazi.

²⁴ When Gehazi arrived at the hill fortress, he took the gifts from the servants and put them in the house. He told the men they could go, and they left.

²⁵ When Gehazi got back and attended his master, Elisha asked him, “Where have you been, Gehazi?” “Your servant hasn’t been anywhere,” he replied.

²⁶ But Elisha told him, “Didn’t I see you in my mind’s eye when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to take money and clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male and female servants?”

²⁷ Consequently Naaman’s leprosy will stick to you and your descendants forever!” As Gehazi left him, he had leprosy—he looked as white as snow.

6¹ The sons of the prophets told Elisha, “Look, the place we meet with you is too small for us. ² Let’s go to the Jordan and each of us can carry one log back. We can build a new place there for us to meet.”

“Go ahead,” said Elisha.

³ One of them asked, “Please come with your servants.”

“I’ll come,” he replied.

⁴ So he went with them. When they got to the Jordan, they started cutting down trees. ⁵ But as one of them was cutting down a tree, the iron axhead fell into the water. “Oh no! My master, it was one that was borrowed!” he shouted.

⁶ “Where did it fall?” the man of God asked. When he showed him the place, the man of God cut a stick, threw it in there, and made the iron axhead float.

⁷ “Pick it up,” Elisha told the man. So he reached out his hand and picked it up.

⁸ The Aramean king was at war with Israel. After consulting with his officers, he said, “I will set up my camp in this particular place.”

⁹ Then the man of God sent a warning to the king of Israel: “Watch out if you go near this place, because the Arameans are going to be there.”

¹⁰ So the king of Israel sent a warning to the place the man of God had indicated. Elisha repeatedly warned the king, so that he was on the alert in those places.

¹¹ This made the Aramean king really mad. He summoned his officers, demanding an answer: “Tell me, which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?”

¹² “It’s none of us, my lord the king,” one of his officers replied. “It’s Elisha, the prophet who lives in Israel—he tells the king of Israel even what you say in your bedroom.”

¹³ So the king gave the order, “Go and find out where he is so I can send soldiers to capture him.”

He was told, “Elisha is in Dothan.” ¹⁴ So he sent horses, chariots, and a large army. They came at night and surrounded the town.

¹⁵ Early in the morning when the servant of the man of God got up, he went out and saw that an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. “Oh, my master, what are we going to do?” he asked Elisha.

¹⁶ Elisha replied, “Don’t be afraid, for there are many more who are with us than there are with them!” ¹⁷ Elisha prayed, saying, “Lord, please open his eyes so he can see.” The Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and when he looked he saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

¹⁸ As the armyⁿ descended on him, Elisha prayed to the Lord, “Please strike these people with blindness.” So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked.

¹⁹ Then Elisha went and told them, “This isn’t the right road, and this isn’t the right town. Follow me, and I’ll take you to the man you’re looking for.” He led them to Samaria.

²⁰ After they had entered Samaria, Elisha prayed, “Lord, open the eyes of these men that they can see.” The Lord opened their eyes, and they looked around and saw that they were in Samaria.

²¹ When the king of Israel saw them, he asked Elisha, “My father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?”

²² “No, don’t you kill them!” he replied. “Would you kill prisoners you captured with your own sword or bow? Give them some food and water so that they may eat and drink, and then let them go back to their master.”

ⁿ6:18. Referring to the Arameans.

²³ So the king had a great feast prepared for them, and once they had finished eating and drinking, he sent them back to their master. The Aramean raiders did not enter the land of Israel again.

²⁴ Sometime after this Ben-hadad king of Aram called up all his army and went to lay siege to Samaria. ²⁵ So there was a major famine in Samaria. In fact the siege lasted so long that a donkey's head cost eighty shekels of silver, and a quarter cab of dove's dung^o cost five shekels of silver.

²⁶ As the king of Israel was walking by on the city wall, a woman called out to him, “Help me, my lord the king!”

²⁷ “If the Lord doesn't help you, why would you think I can help you?” the king replied. “I don't have grain from the threshing floor, or wine from the winepress.” ²⁸ But then he asked her, “What's the problem?”

“This woman told me, ‘Give up your son and we'll eat him today, and tomorrow we'll eat my son,’” she answered. ²⁹ “So we cooked my son and we ate him. The next day I said to her, ‘Give up your son so we can eat him,’ but she's hidden her son.”

³⁰ When the king heard what the woman said he ripped his clothes. As he walked by on the wall, the people saw that he was wearing sackcloth under his clothes next to his skin. ³¹ “May God punish me very severely if the head of Elisha, son of Shaphat, remains on his shoulders today!” he declared.

³² Elisha was sitting in his house with the elders. The king had sent a messenger on ahead, but before he got there, Elisha told the elders, “Can you see how this murderer is sending someone to cut off my head? So, as soon as the messenger arrives, close the door and hold it shut against him. Isn't that the sound of his master's footsteps following him?”

³³ While Elisha was still speaking with them, the messenger arrived. The king said, “This disaster is from the Lord. Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?”^p

^o**6:25.** “Dove's dung”: Some believe this referred to a kind of wild vegetable. One “cab” was equivalent to about 1.2 liters.

P6:33. The king believed the Lord had caused the problems and since there seemed to be no action from the Lord to solve them, the king was taking matters into his own hands. He was rejecting God, and intended to take vengeance on God's prophet Elisha.

7¹ Elisha replied, “Listen to the message from the Lord. This is what the Lord says: Around this time tomorrow a seah of the best flour will sell for a shekel, and two seahs of barley will sell for a shekel at the gate of Samaria.”⁹

² The officer who was the king's assistant said to the man of God, “Look, even if the Lord opened windows in heaven what you say couldn't happen!”

Elisha replied, “You'll see it with your own eyes, but you won't get to eat any of it.”

³ There happened to be four men with leprosy at the entrance of the city gate. They said to each other, “Why are we sitting around here until we die? ⁴ If we say, ‘Let's go into the city,’ we'll die because of the famine there; but if we go on sitting here, we'll die too. So come on, let's go to the camp of the Arameans and surrender to them. If they let us live, we'll live; if they kill us, we'll die.”

⁵ So they set off when it was getting dark and went to the camp of the Arameans. But when they arrived at the edge of the camp, nobody was there! ⁶ For the Lord had made the Arameans hear the sound of chariots, horses, and a large army approaching, so they said to each other, “The king of Israel has hired the kings of the Hittites and Egyptians to come and attack us.” ⁷ So they jumped up and ran away into the night, leaving behind their tents, their horses, and their donkeys. In fact the camp was left just as it was when they ran for their lives.

⁸ When the lepers got to the edge of the camp, they went into a tent and ate and drank. Then they took the silver, gold, and clothes, and hid them. After that they went back to another tent, took some things from there, and hid them. ⁹ Then they said to each other, “It's not right what we're doing. This is a day of good news, and if we keep quiet about it and wait until it gets light, we're sure to be punished. So let's go right away and let them know at the king's palace.”

¹⁰ They went and called to the gatekeepers of the city, “We went over to the Aramean camp and no one was there, not a sound of anybody! There were just horses and donkeys tied up, and the tents just as they were.”

¹¹ The gatekeepers shouted out the news, and reports reached the royal palace. ¹² The king got up in the night and said to his officers,

⁹7:1. In other words, the basic food commodities would be selling at low prices.

“Let me tell you the trick the Arameans are trying to play on us. They know we're starving, so they have left the camp and hidden in the field, thinking, ‘When they leave the city, we'll take them alive and be able to enter the city.’”

¹³ One of his officers suggested, “Have some men take five of the remaining horses in the city. What happens to them will be the same as that of all the Israelites left here, All the Israelites here are doomed. Let's send them to find out what's going on.”

¹⁴ So they got two chariots ready with their horses, and the king sent them out to the Aramean camp, telling them “Go and take a look.”

¹⁵ They went after them as far as the Jordan, and the whole way was full of clothing and equipment the Arameans had thrown aside as they ran away. The messengers returned and reported to the king.

¹⁶ Then the people went out and looted the camp of the Arameans. So a seah of the best flour sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley sold for a shekel, just as the Lord had predicted.

¹⁷ The king had put the officer who was his assistant in charge of the gate. In their rush the people trampled him in the gateway and he died, just as the man of God had said when the king visited him.

¹⁸ What the man of God had told the king also came true when he said, “Around this time tomorrow a seah of the best flour will sell for a shekel, and two seahs of barley will sell for a shekel at the gate of Samaria.”

¹⁹ Also the officer who was the king's assistant had said to the man of God, “Look, even if the Lord opened windows in heaven what you say couldn't happen!” Elisha had replied, “You'll see it with your own eyes, but you won't get to eat any of it.” ²⁰ This is what happened to him. The people trampled him in the gateway and he died.

8 ¹ Elisha told the woman whose son he had brought back to life, “You and your family need to pack up and leave, and live where you can somewhere else like a foreigner. For the Lord announced a famine will come to the land and will last seven years.”

² The woman packed up and did what the man of God had told her. She and her family went and lived as foreigners for seven years in the country of the Philistines.

³ When the seven years were over, she came back from the country of the Philistines and went to the king to appeal for the return of her house and lands. ⁴ The king was talking with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, asking him, “Please tell me about all the wonderful things Elisha did.” ⁵ It so happened that right then Gehazi was telling the king the story of how Elisha had brought the dead boy back to life when his mother arrived to make her appeal to the king for the return of her house and lands.

“My lord the king,” Gehazi called out, “this is the woman, and this is her son that Elisha brought back to life.”

⁶ The king asked the woman about it and she explained the whole story to him. The king gave orders to an official, saying, “Make sure everything that belonged to her is returned to her, together with all the profit from her lands from the day that she left the country until now.”

⁷ Elisha went to Damascus when Ben-hadad king of Aram was ill. The king was informed, “The man of God has arrived in town.”

⁸ The king ordered Hazael, “Take a gift with you and go and meet the man of God. Ask him to ask the Lord, ‘Will I recover from this illness?’”

⁹ So Hazael went to meet Elisha. He took with him a gift of all the best things from Damascus—forty camel-loads of goods. He came in and stood before him and said, “Your son Ben-hadad, king of Aram, has sent me to you to ask, ‘Will I recover from this illness?’”

¹⁰ “Go and tell him, ‘You will definitely recover.’ But the Lord has shown me that definitely he is going to die,” Elisha replied.^f

¹¹ Elisha stared at him for a long time until Hazael became uncomfortable. Then the man of God started to cry.

¹² “Why are you crying, my lord?” asked Hazael.

“Because I know the evil things you are going to do to the Israelites,” Elisha replied. “You will set their fortresses on fire, kill their young men with the sword, dash to pieces their little ones, and rip open their pregnant women.”

¹³ “But how could someone like me who's just a ‘dog’ achieve anything like that?” Hazael asked.

^f**8:10.** The prophet is not telling Hazael to lie. The question from the king was in regard to his illness. The king's death was not caused by his illness, but by Hazael who murdered him.

“The Lord has shown me that you are going to be the king of Aram,” Elisha replied.

¹⁴ Hazael left Elisha and went to his master, who asked him, “What did Elisha tell you?”

Hazael replied, “He told me you would definitely recover.”

¹⁵ But the following day Hazael took the bed cover, soaked it in water, and spread it over the king's face until he died. Then Hazael took over from him as king.

¹⁶ Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, began his reign as king of Judah in the fifth year of the reign of Joram, son of Ahab, king of Israel, while Jehoshaphat was still king of Judah.^s ¹⁷ He was thirty-two when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for eight years. ¹⁸ Jehoram followed the ways of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done, for he married a daughter of Ahab and did what was evil in the Lord's sight. ¹⁹ But for the sake of David his servant the Lord didn't want to destroy Judah since he had promised him that there would always be a ruler from his descendants, like a lamp forever.^t

²⁰ During Jehoram's time as king, Edom rebelled against Judah's rule and chose their own king. ²¹ So Jehoram went over to Zair with all his chariots. The Edomites surrounded him and his chariot commanders, but he took action and attacked at night. But his army ran back to their homes. ²² As a result Edom has been in rebellion against Judah's rule to this day. At the same time Libnah also decided to rebel.

²³ The rest of what happened in Jehoram's reign and all that he did are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.

²⁴ Jehoram died and was buried with his forefathers in the City of David. His son Ahaziah succeeded him as king.

²⁵ Ahaziah, son of Jehoram, became king of Judah in the twelfth year of the reign of Joram, son of Ahab, king of Israel. ²⁶ Ahaziah was twenty-two when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for one year. His mother's name was Athaliah, the granddaughter of Omri, king of Israel. ²⁷ Ahaziah also followed the evil ways of the family of Ahab, and did what was evil in the Lord's sight as the family of Ahab had done, for he was related to them by marriage.

^s8:16. This is clearly a co-regency.

^t8:19. See for example 1 Kings 11:36.

²⁸ Ahaziah went with Joram, son of Ahab, to fight against Hazael, king of Aram, at Ramoth-gilead. The Arameans wounded Joram, ²⁹ and he returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds he'd received in Ramah fighting against Hazael king of Aram. Ahaziah, son of Jehoram, king of Judah, went to Jezreel to visit Joram, son of Ahab, because Joram was wounded.

9 ¹ Elisha the prophet called one of the sons of the prophets and told him, “Put your cloak into your belt, take this flask of olive oil, and go to Ramoth-gilead. ² Once you get there, look for Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi. Go in, get him away from his companions, and take him to an inner room. Get him to leave his friends, lead him to a private room, ³ take the flask of olive oil, and pour it on his head. Tell him, ‘This is what the Lord says: I anoint you king of Israel.’ Then open the door and run away! Don't wait around!”

⁴ So the young prophet went to Ramoth-gilead. ⁵ When he arrived, he saw the army commanders sitting around. “I've got a message for you, commander,” he said.

“For which one of us?” Jehu asked.

“For you, commander,” he replied.

⁶ Jehu got up and went inside, where the young prophet poured the olive oil on his head and announced to him, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘I anoint you king over the Lord's people Israel. ⁷ You are going to destroy the family of Ahab, your master. You will avenge the blood my prophets and the blood of all the Lord's servants killed by Jezebel. ⁸ The whole house of Ahab will be eradicated—I will destroy all the males of Ahab's family in Israel, both slave and free. ⁹ I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha, son of Ahijah. ¹⁰ Dogs will eat Jezebel, Ahab's wife, at the plot of ground in Jezreel, and no one will bury her.’” Then the young prophet opened the door and ran away.

¹¹ When Jehu went back out to the other officers of his master, they asked him, “Is everything fine? Why did this crazy man come to you?”

“You know what he's like, and how he goes on and on,” he replied.

¹² “Liar!” they said. “Please tell us what's going on.”

“Well, he talked to me about this and that, and he told me, ‘This is what the Lord says: I anoint you king over Israel.’”

¹³ They quickly grabbed their cloaks and spread them on the bare steps. They blew the trumpet and shouted, “Jehu is king!”

¹⁴ So Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi, plotted rebellion against Joram. Joram and the whole Israelite army had been defending Ramoth-Gilead against Hazael, king of Aram. ¹⁵ But Joram had returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds he’d received fighting against Hazael, king of Aram. So Jehu said, “If you commanders want to make me king, don’t let anyone leave town and go and announce it in Jezreel.”

¹⁶ Jehu got on his chariot and went to Jezreel, for Joram was recuperating there. Ahaziah, king of Judah, was there too because he had come to visit Joram. ¹⁷ The watchman on the tower in Jezreel saw Jehu’s soldiers approaching, and he shouted out, “I see a soldiers coming!”

“Choose a horseman,” Joram ordered. “Send him out to meet them and ask, ‘Do you come in peace?’”

¹⁸ So a horseman rode off to meet Jehu, and said, “This is what the king asks: ‘Do you come in peace?’”

“What has peace got to do with you?” Jehu replied. “Turn around and follow me.”

The watchman reported, “The messenger has reached them, but he’s not returning.”

¹⁹ The king sent out a second horseman. He went up to them and said, “This is what the king asks: ‘Do you come in peace?’”

“What has peace got to do with you?” Jehu replied. “Turn around and follow me.”

²⁰ The watchman reported, “The messenger has reached them, but he’s not returning. The driving^u looks like the driving of Jehu, son of Nimshi—he’s a crazy driver!”

²¹ “Prepare my chariot!” Joram shouted, and they had his chariot ready. Then Joram, king of Israel, and Ahaziah, king of Judah, set off in their separate chariots, and met Jehu on the plot of ground that was previously owned by Naboth from Jezreel.

²² When Joram saw Jehu, he asked him, “Do you come in peace, Jehu?”

^u9:20. The driving of the chariot.

“What peace can there be with so much prostitution^v and witchcraft caused by your mother Jezebel?” Jehu replied.

²³ Joram turned around and raced away, shouting out to Ahaziah, “It’s treason, Ahaziah!”

²⁴ Jehu picked up his bow and shot Joram between the shoulders. The arrow went through his heart and he collapsed dead in his chariot.

²⁵ Jehu said to Bidkar his officer, “Pick him up and throw him into the field of Naboth from Jezreel. Remember when you and I were riding together behind his father Ahab how the Lord made this prophecy against him: ²⁶ ‘In the same way as I saw the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons yesterday, says the Lord, so I will certainly repay you on this same plot of ground, says the Lord.’ Now then, following what the Lord has said, pick him up and throw him on the plot of ground.”

²⁷ When Ahaziah, king of Judah, saw what happened, he raced up the road toward Beth-haggan. But Jehu chased after him, shouting, “Shoot him too!” So they shot Ahaziah in his chariot on the way up to Gur, near Ibleam. He managed to escape to Megiddo but he died there. ²⁸ His servants took him by chariot to Jerusalem and buried him with his forefathers in his tomb in the City of David. ²⁹ Ahaziah became king of Judah in the eleventh year of the reign of Joram, son of Ahab.

³⁰ When Jezebel heard that Jehu had arrived in Jezreel, she put on her black eye-shadow, placed jewelry in her hair, and watched from a window. ³¹ As Jehu came in through the gate, she shouted down, “Do you come in peace? Or are you like Zimri, a murderer of your master?”

³² Jehu looked up at the window and shouted out, “Who is on my side? Anyone?” Two or three eunuchs looked down at him.

³³ “Throw her down!” he shouted. And they threw her down. Her blood splattered on the wall and on the horses which then trampled her.

³⁴ Jehu went inside and ate and drank. Then he said, “Please deal with that cursed woman and bury her, for she was a king’s daughter.”

v9:22. “Prostitution”: in the spiritual sense of going after pagan gods, and also in the literal sense as pagan worship often involved sex with temple prostitutes, both male and female.

³⁵ They went out to bury her but all they found were her skull, her feet, and her hands.

³⁶ They went back and told Jehu, who said, “This is what the Lord said through his servant Elijah the Tishbite: ‘Dogs will eat Jezebel’s flesh on the plot of ground at Jezreel. ³⁷ Jezebel’s body will lie like manure in the field on the plot of ground at Jezreel, so that no one can say: This is where Jezebel is buried.’”

10¹ There were seventy sons of the house of Ahab living in Samaria. So Jehu wrote letters and sent them to the officials of Samaria,^w to the elders, and to the guardians of the sons of Ahab, saying: ² “Since your master’s sons are with you, and you have at your disposal chariots, horses, a fortified city, and weapons, when you receive this letter, ³ choose the best and most appropriate son of your master, place him on his father’s throne, and fight for your master’s house.”

⁴ But they were extremely frightened, and said to themselves, “If two kings couldn’t defeat him, how could we?”

⁵ So the palace and the city leaders, the elders, and the guardians sent a message to Jehu: “We are your servants, and we will do whatever you tell us. We’re not going to make anyone king. Do what you think is best.”

⁶ Then Jehu wrote them a second letter, saying, “If you are on my side, and if you are going to obey what I say, bring the heads of your master’s sons to me in Jezreel by this time tomorrow.” The seventy king’s sons were being raised by the leading men of the city. ⁷ When the letter arrived, they seized the king’s sons and killed all seventy of them, placed their heads in baskets, and sent them to Jehu at Jezreel.

⁸ A messenger came in and told Jehu, “They have brought the heads of the king’s sons.”

Jehu gave the order, “Put them in two piles at the entrance to the city gate until the morning.”

⁹ In the morning Jehu went out to speak to the people who had gathered. “You haven’t done anything wrong,”^x he told them. “I was the one who plotted against my master and killed him. But who killed all these? ¹⁰ Rest assured that nothing of what the Lord has

^w10:1. “Samaria.” The Hebrew text identifies “Jezreel,” but Jehu was already there.

^x10:9. “You haven’t done anything wrong”: literally, “You are righteous.”

prophesied against the house of Ahab will fail, for the Lord has done what he promised through his servant Elijah.”

¹¹ So Jehu killed everyone in Jezreel who was left of the house of Ahab, as well as all his high officials, close friends, and priests. This left Ahab without a single survivor.

¹² Then Jehu left and went Samaria. At Beth-eked of the Shepherds, ¹³ he met some relatives of Ahaziah, king of Judah.

“Who are you?” he asked them.

“We’re relatives of Ahaziah,” they replied. “We’ve come to visit the sons of the king and of the queen mother.”

¹⁴ “Take them alive!” Jehu ordered. So they took them alive, then killed them at the well of Beth-eked. There were forty-two men. He didn’t allow any of them to live.

¹⁵ He left there and came across Jehonadab, son of Rekab, who was coming to meet him. Jehu greeted him and asked him, “Are you as committed to me, as I am to you?”

“Yes I am,” Jehonadab replied.

“In that case, give me your hand,” said Jehu. So he stretched out his hand, and Jehu helped him up into the chariot.

¹⁶ “Come with me and see how dedicated I am to the Lord!” Jehu said, and had him ride in his chariot.

¹⁷ When Jehu arrived in Samaria, he went around killing everyone who was left of Ahab’s family until he had killed all of them, just as the Lord had said through Elijah.

¹⁸ Jehu had all the people gather together and told them, “Ahab worshiped Baal a little, but Jehu will worship him a lot. ¹⁹ So summon all the prophets of Baal, all his servants and all his priests. Make sure no one is missing, because I’m organizing a great sacrifice for Baal. Anyone who doesn’t attend will be executed.” But Jehu’s plan was a trick to destroy the followers of Baal.

²⁰ Jehu gave the order, “Call a religious assembly to honor Baal!” So they did so. ²¹ Jehu sent the announcement through the whole of Israel. All the followers of Baal came—not a single man was missing. They went into the temple of Baal, filling it from end to end. ²² Jehu said to the keeper of the wardrobe, “Distribute clothes for all the servants of Baal.” So he brought out clothes for them.

²³ Then Jehu and Jehonadab, son of Rekab, went into the temple of Baal. Jehu told the followers of Baal, “Look around and make

sure that no one who follows the Lord is here with you, only the worshipers of Baal.”

²⁴ They were inside presenting sacrifices and burnt offerings. Now Jehu had positioned eighty men outside and cautioned them, “I’m handing these men over to you. If you let any of them escape, you will pay for his life with yours.”

²⁵ As soon as Jehu had finished presenting the burnt offering, he ordered his guards and officers, “Go in and kill them all! Don’t let even one escape!” So they killed them with their swords. The guards and officers threw their bodies outside, and then they went into the inner sanctuary of the temple of Baal. ²⁶ They dragged out the idol pillars and burned them. ²⁷ They smashed the sacred pillar of Baal, and tore down the temple of Baal and turned it into a toilet, which it still is to this day.

²⁸ This was how Jehu destroyed Baal worship in Israel, ²⁹ but he did not end the sins that Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had made Israel commit—the worship of the golden calves at Bethel and Dan.

³⁰ The Lord said to Jehu, “Since you have done well, and have carried out what is right in my sight, and have accomplished all that I planned for the house of Ahab, your descendants will sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation.”

³¹ But Jehu was not completely committed to following the law of the Lord, the God of Israel. He did not end the sins that Jeroboam had made Israel commit.

³² At that time the Lord began to reduce the extent of Israel. Hazael defeated the Israelites throughout their territory ³³ east of the Jordan, all the land of Gilead (the region occupied by Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh), and from Aroer through the Arnon Valley up to Gilead and Bashan.

³⁴ The rest of what happened in Jehu’s reign, all that he did and what he accomplished, are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

³⁵ Jehu died and was buried in Samaria. His son Jehoahaz succeeded him as king. ³⁶ Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria for twenty-eight years.

11 ¹ When Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah,^y saw that her son was dead, she had all the rest of the royal family murdered.

^y11:1. Ahaziah was the king of Judah.

² But Jehosheba, daughter of King Jehoram, sister of Ahaziah, took Ahaziah's son Joash, stealing him away from the rest of the sons of the king who were being killed. She put him and his nurse in a bedroom to hide him from Athaliah, and he was not murdered.

³ Joash stayed hidden in the Lord's Temple for six years while Athaliah ruled the country.

⁴ In the seventh year, Jehoiada^z sent for the commanders of hundreds, the Carites,^a and the guards, and brought them into the Lord's Temple. He made an agreement with them and made them swear an oath. There in the Lord's Temple he showed them the king's son ⁵ and ordered them, “This is what you are going to do: One third of you who come on duty on the Sabbath will guard the royal palace. ⁶ One third will be at the Sur Gate, and one third at the gate behind the guards. You will alternate in guarding the palace. ⁷ The two divisions that would normally go off duty on the Sabbath will guard the Lord's Temple for the king. ⁸ Surround the king with weapons drawn, and anyone who approaches this line must be killed. Stay close to the king wherever he goes.”

⁹ The commanders of hundreds followed all the instructions that Jehoiada the priest had given. They each took their own men, those who were coming on duty on the Sabbath and those going off duty, and came to Jehoiada the priest. ¹⁰ Then the priest handed over to the commanders of hundreds the spears and shields that had belonged to King David which were kept in the Lord's Temple. ¹¹ The guards stood with weapons drawn surrounding the king by the altar, and in a line around the Temple, from the south side to the north side of the Temple.

¹² Then Jehoiada led out the king's son, placed the crown on him, and handed him a copy of God's Law. They proclaimed him king and anointed him. The people clapped, and shouted, “Long live the king!”

¹³ When Athaliah heard the noise of the guards and the people, she rushed to the crowds at the Lord's Temple. ¹⁴ She saw the king standing by his pillar as the custom was. The commanders and trumpeters were with the king, and everyone was celebrating and

^z11:4. Jehoiada was the high priest.

^a11:4. “Carites”: probably foreign mercenaries used as the royal guard.

blowing trumpets. Athaliah ripped her clothes and screamed out, “Treason! Treason!”

¹⁵ Jehoiada ordered the army commanders, “Bring her to the men standing in front of the Temple, and kill anyone who follows her.” Earlier the priest had made it clear, “She must not be killed in the Lord's Temple.” ¹⁶ They grabbed hold of her, took her to where the horses enter the palace grounds and they killed her there.

¹⁷ Then Jehoiada made a solemn agreement between the Lord, the king, and the people that they would be the Lord's people. He also made an agreement between the king and the people. ¹⁸ Everyone went to the Temple of Baal and tore down its altars and smashed the idols to pieces. They killed Mattan, the priest of Baal, right in front of the altar.

Then Jehoiada the priest had guards posted at the Lord's Temple. ¹⁹ Along with the commanders, the nobles, the governors of the people, and all the people, he led the king in a procession down from the Lord's Temple, entering through the upper gate to the royal palace. There they set the king on the royal throne.

²⁰ All throughout the land people celebrated, and Jerusalem was at peace, because Athaliah had been killed by the sword at the palace.

²¹ Joash was seven when he became king.

12 ¹ Joash^b became king in the seventh year of the reign of Jehu, and he reigned in Jerusalem for forty years. His mother's name was Zibiah of Beersheba. ² Joash did what was right in the Lord's sight during the years that Jehoiada the priest advised him. ³ Even so, the high places were not removed—the people went on sacrificing and presenting burnt offerings at these places.

⁴ Joash told the priests, “Collect together all the money that is brought as holy offerings to the Lord's Temple, whether the census money, the money from individual vows, and the money brought as a voluntary donation to the Lord's Temple. ⁵ Let each priest receive the money from those who give, and use it to repair whatever damage is discovered in the Temple.”

⁶ But by the twenty-third year of the reign of Joash, the priests still had not repaired the damage to the Temple. ⁷ So King Joash called together Jehoiada and the other priests and asked, “Why haven't you repaired the damage in the Temple? Don't use any more money

^b12:1. Here and elsewhere spelled “Jehoash.”

you're given for yourselves, instead hand it over to others to repair the Temple.”

⁸ The priests agreed not to receive any more money from the people, and that they wouldn't carry out the repairs to the Temple themselves.

⁹ Jehoiada the priest took a large wooden box, cut a hole in its lid, and placed it on the right side of the altar next to the entrance to the Lord's Temple. There the priests who guarded the doorway put all the money brought into the Lord's Temple into the collection box.

¹⁰ Whenever they saw there was a lot of money in the box, the king's secretary and the high priest would come, count the money brought into the Lord's Temple, and put it into bags. ¹¹ Then they weighed out the money and gave it to the supervisors of the work on the Lord's Temple. They paid the ones doing the work—the carpenters, builders, ¹² masons, and stonecutters. They also bought the timber and blocks of cut stone needed for the repair of the Lord's Temple, and paid all the other costs of restoring the Temple.

¹³ However, the money collected for the Lord's Temple was not used for making silver basins, lamp trimmers, bowls, trumpets, or any items of gold or silver for the Lord's Temple. ¹⁴ It was used to pay the workers doing the repairs to the Lord's Temple. ¹⁵ No accounts were demanded from the men who received the money to pay the workers because they did everything honestly. ¹⁶ The money from the guilt offerings and sin offerings was not collected for the Lord's Temple because it belonged to the priests.

¹⁷ Around this time Hazael, king of Aram, went and attacked Gath, and captured it. Then he marched to attack Jerusalem. ¹⁸ So King Joash of Judah took all the holy objects dedicated by his forefathers Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah, the kings of Judah, along with all the items he had dedicated himself, and all the gold found in the treasuries of the Lord's Temple and the royal palace, and he sent everything to Hazael, king of Aram. So Hazael retreated from Jerusalem.

¹⁹ The rest of what happened in Joash's reign and all that he did are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. ²⁰ His officials plotted against him and murdered him at Beth Millo, on the road that goes down to Silla. ²¹ The officials who attacked and killed him were Jozacar, son of Shimeath, and Jehozabad, son of Shomer.

They buried him with his forefathers in the City of David. His son Amaziah succeeded him as king.

13¹ Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, became king of Israel in the twenty-third year of the reign of Joash, son of Ahaziah, king of Judah. He reigned in Samaria for seventeen years.² He did what was evil in the Lord's sight, and followed the sins that Jeroboam son of Nebat, had made Israel commit; he did not end them.³ So the Lord was angry with Israel, and he repeatedly allowed them to be defeated by Hazael, king of Aram, and his son Ben-hadad.

⁴ Jehoahaz asked the Lord for help, and the Lord responded to his request because he saw how badly the king of Aram was treating Israel.⁵ The Lord gave Israel someone who would save them so they no longer were under Aramean rule. Then the Israelites were able to go back to living in safety as before.

⁶ Even so they did not end the sins that the house of Jeroboam had made Israel commit—they continued to follow them. The Asherah idol still stood in Samaria.

⁷ All that was left of Jehoahaz's army were fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand soldiers, for the king of Aram had destroyed the rest, turning them into dust like that when grain is threshed.

⁸ The rest of what happened in Jehoahaz's reign, all he did, and his great achievements are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.⁹ Jehoahaz died and was buried in Samaria. His son Jehoash^c succeeded him as king.

¹⁰ Jehoash, son of Jehoahaz, became king of Israel in Samaria in the thirty-seventh year of the reign of King Joash of Judah, and he reigned for sixteen years.¹¹ He did what was evil in the Lord's sight and did not end all the sins that Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had made Israel commit—he continued to follow them.

¹² The rest of what happened in Jehoash's reign, all he did, and his great achievements such as his war against Amaziah, king of Judah, are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

^c13:9. "Jehoash": here spelled "Joash," a variant spelling, but in this translation kept as Jehoash to differentiate from Joash, king of Judah.

¹³ Jehoash died, and Jeroboam sat on his throne.^d Jehoash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.

¹⁴ Elisha had become ill with a disease that would eventually kill him. Jehoash, king of Israel, went to visit him, and wept over him, saying, “My father, my father, the chariots and the horsemen of Israel!”

¹⁵ Elisha told him, “Find a bow and some arrows.” So Jehoash found a bow and some arrows.

¹⁶ Then Elisha said to the king of Israel, “Pick up the bow.” So the king picked up the bow. Elisha placed his hands on the king's hands.

¹⁷ “Open the east window,” he told him. So the king opened it and Elisha said, “Shoot!” So he fired an arrow.

Then Elisha explained, “This is the Lord's victory arrow representing the arrow of victory over the Arameans. You will attack the Arameans in Aphek and finish them off.”

¹⁸ Then Elisha said, “Pick up the arrows!” So he picked them up.

Elisha told the king of Israel, “Hit the ground with them!” He hit the ground three times, and then stopped.

¹⁹ The man of God got angry with him, telling him, “You should have hit the ground five or six times. Then you would have attacked the Arameans until you had completely destroyed them. But now you will only attack the Arameans three times.”

²⁰ Elisha died and was buried.

Raiders from the country of Moab used to invade Israel every spring. ²¹ On time some Israelites were burying a man when suddenly they saw some raiders coming, so they quickly threw the man into Elisha's tomb. As soon as he touched Elisha's bones, the man came back to life and stood up.

²² Hazael, king of Aram, caused problems for Israel through all Jehoahaz's reign. ²³ But the Lord graciously helped them and was kind to them. He looked after them because of his agreement with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Even to this day he's been unwilling to destroy them or to throw them out of his presence.

²⁴ When Hazael, king of Aram, died, his son Ben-hadad succeeded him as king. ²⁵ Then Jehoash, son of Jehoahaz, recovered from Ben-hadad son of Hazael, the towns that Hazael had captured from

^d**13:13.** Some believe this change in the formula describing royal succession suggests that Jeroboam was already reigning as co-regent with his father.

his father Jehoahaz. Jehoash defeated Ben-hadad three times, and so recaptured the Israelite towns.

14¹ Amaziah, son of Joash, became king of Judah in the second year of the reign of Jehoash, son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel.² He was twenty-five when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for twenty-nine years. His mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem.³ He did what was right in the Lord's sight, but not in the same way as his forefather David had. He did everything just as his father Joash had done.⁴ But the high places were not removed. The people still were sacrificing and presenting burn offerings in those places.

⁵ Once he was secure on the throne he executed the officials who had murdered his father the king.⁶ But he did not execute the murderers' children, following the Lord's command in the law of Moses that “Fathers must not be put to death for their children's sins, and children must not be put to death for their father's sins. Everyone is to die for their own sin.”

⁷ Amaziah killed ten thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt. He attacked and captured Sela and renamed it Joktheel, which is what it is called to this very day.

⁸ Amaziah sent messengers to the king of Israel, Jehoash, son of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, telling him, “Let's fight,^c face to face!”

⁹ Jehoash, king of Israel, replied to Amaziah, king of Judah: “In Lebanon a thistle sent a message to a cedar, saying, ‘Give your daughter as a wife to my son.’ But a wild animal of Lebanon came by and trampled down the thistle.¹⁰ You may indeed have defeated Edom. Now you've become arrogant. Stay home and enjoy your victory! Why provoke trouble that will bring you down, and Judah with you?”

¹¹ But Amaziah refused to listen, so Jehoash, king of Israel, came to attack him. He and Amaziah, king of Judah, met face to face at Beth Shemesh in Judah.¹² The army of Judah was defeated by Israel, and ran away home.¹³ Jehoash, king of Israel, captured Amaziah, king of Judah, the son of Joash, son of Ahaziah, at Beth Shemesh.

Then Jehoash attacked Jerusalem and knocked down the city wall from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate, about four hundred

^c14:8. “Fight”: literally “meet,” but the context makes it clear that Amaziah was trying to provoke armed conflict.

cubits in length. ¹⁴ He removed all the gold and silver, and all the items found in the Lord's Temple and in the treasuries of the royal palace, and also some hostages. Then he went back to Samaria.

¹⁵ The rest of what happened in Jehoash's reign, all he did, and his great achievements and his war with Amaziah, king of Judah, are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. ¹⁶ Jehoash died and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel. His son Jeroboam succeeded him as king.

¹⁷ Amaziah, son of Joash, king of Judah, lived for fifteen more years after the death of Joash, son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel. ¹⁸ The rest of the events that happened in Amaziah's reign are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.

¹⁹ A conspiracy against Amaziah took place in Jerusalem, and he ran away to Lachish. But men were sent after him and they murdered him there. ²⁰ They brought him back on horses and buried him in Jerusalem with his forefathers in the City of David. ²¹ Then all the people of Judah made Amaziah's son Azariah king to replace his father. Azariah was sixteen years old. ²² Azariah recaptured Elath for Judah and rebuilt it after his father's death.

²³ Jeroboam, son of Jehoash, became king of Israel in the fifteenth year of the reign of Amaziah, son of Joash, king of Judah. He reigned in Samaria for forty-one years. ²⁴ He did what was evil in the Lord's sight and did not end all the sins that Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had made Israel commit. ²⁵ He restored the border of Israel to where it had been, from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah,^f as the Lord, the God of Israel, had said through his servant Jonah, son of Amittai, the prophet, who came from Gath-hepher.

²⁶ The Lord had seen how badly the Israelites were suffering, both slave and free. No one was there to help Israel. ²⁷ However, since the Lord had said that he would not wipe out Israel, he saved them through Jeroboam, son of Jehoash. ²⁸ The rest of what happened in Jeroboam's reign, all he did, his great achievements and the battles he fought, and how he recovered for Israel both Damascus and Hamath, are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. ²⁹ Jeroboam died and was buried with the kings of Israel. His son Zechariah succeeded him as king.

^f**14:25.** "Sea of the Arabah": the Arabah is the Jordan Valley, so this would refer to the Dead Sea.

15¹ Azariah, son of Amaziah, became king of Judah in the twenty-seventh year of the reign of Jeroboam, king of Israel.² He was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for fifty-two years. His mother's name was Jecoliah of Jerusalem.³ He did what was right in the Lord's sight, just as his father Amaziah had done.⁴ But the high places were not removed. The people still were sacrificing and presenting burnt offerings in those places.⁵ The Lord touched the king and he had leprosy until the day he died. He lived in isolation in a separate house. His son Jotham was in charge of the palace and was the country's actual ruler.

⁶ The rest of what happened in Azariah's reign and all he did are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.⁷ Azariah died and was buried with his fore fathers in the City of David. His son Jotham succeeded him as king.⁸ Zechariah, son of Jeroboam, became king of Israel in the thirty-eighth year of the reign of Azariah, king of Judah. He reigned in Samaria for six months.⁹ He did what was evil in the Lord's sight, as his forefathers had done. He did not end the sins that Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had made Israel commit.¹⁰ Then Shallum, son of Jabesh, plotted against Zechariah. He attacked him, murdering him in front of the people, and took over as king.

¹¹ The rest of the events of Zechariah's reign are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.¹² In this way what the Lord told Jehu came true: "Your descendants will sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation."

¹³ Shallum, son of Jabesh, became king in the thirty-ninth year of the reign of King Uzziah of Judah. He reigned in Samaria for one month.¹⁴ Then Menahem, son of Gadi, went from Tirzah to Samaria, attacked and murdered Shallum, son of Jabesh, and took over as king.

¹⁵ The rest of the events of Shallum's reign and the rebellion he plotted are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

¹⁶ At that time Menahem, starting from Tirzah, attacked Tiphshah and the region nearby, because they would not surrender the town to him. So he destroyed Tiphshah and ripped open all the pregnant women.

¹⁷ Menahem, son of Gadi, became king of Israel in the thirty-ninth year of the reign of King Azariah of Judah. He reigned in Samaria for ten years. ¹⁸ Throughout his reign he did what was evil in the Lord's sight. He did not end the sins that Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had made Israel commit.

¹⁹ Pul,^g king of Assyria, invaded the country. Menahem paid Pul a thousand talents of silver to support Menahem in consolidating his power over the kingdom. ²⁰ Menahem demanded payment from all the wealthy men of Israel, fifty shekels of silver each, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria retreated and did not stay in the country.

²¹ The rest of what happened in Menahem's reign and all he did are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

²² Menahem died, and his son Pekahiah succeeded him as king.

²³ Pekahiah, son of Menahem, became king of Israel in Samaria in the fiftieth year of the reign of King Azariah of Judah, and he reigned for two years. ²⁴ He did what was evil in the Lord's sight. He did not end the sins that Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had made Israel commit.

²⁵ Pekah, son of Remaliah, one of his officers plotted against him together with Argob, Arieah, and fifty men from Gilead. Pekah attacked and killed Pekahiah in the fortress of the king's palace in Samaria, and took over as king.

²⁶ The rest of what happened in Pekahiah's reign and all he did are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

²⁷ Pekah, son of Remaliah, became king of Israel in the fifty-second year of the reign of King Azariah of Judah. He reigned in Samaria for twenty years. ²⁸ He did what was evil in the Lord's sight. He did not end the sins that Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had made Israel commit.

²⁹ During the reign of Pekah, king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, invaded and captured Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, Galilee, and all the land of Naphtali, and he took the people to Assyria as prisoners.

³⁰ Then Hoshea, son of Elah, plotted against Pekah, son of Remaliah. In the twentieth year of the reign of Jotham, son of Uzziah, Hoshea attacked Pekah, killed him, and took over as king.

§15:19. Usually associated with Tiglath-Pileser.

³¹ The rest of what happened in Pekah's reign and all he did are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

³² Jotham, son of Uzziah, became king of Judah in the second year of the reign of Pekah son of Remaliah, king of Israel. ³³ He was twenty-five when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for sixteen years. His mother's name was Jerusha, daughter of Zadok.

³⁴ He did what was right in the Lord's sight, just as his father Uzziah had done. ³⁵ But the high places were not removed. The people still were sacrificing and presenting burnt offerings in those places. He rebuilt the upper gate of the Lord's Temple. ³⁶ The rest of the events of Jotham's reign are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.

³⁷ During that time the Lord started sending Rezin, king of Aram, and Pekah, son of Remaliah, to attack Judah.

³⁸ Jotham died and was buried with his forefathers in the City of David, his ancestor. His son Ahaz succeeded him as king.

16¹ Ahaz, son of Jotham, became king of Judah in the seventeenth year of the reign of Pekah, son of Remaliah.

² Ahaz was twenty when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for sixteen years. But unlike David his forefather, he did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord his God. ³ He followed the ways of the kings of Israel, and he even sacrificed his son in the fire, participating in the disgusting practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites. ⁴ He sacrificed and presented burnt offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.

⁵ Rezin, king of Aram, and Pekah, son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came and attacked Jerusalem. They besieged Ahaz but couldn't defeat him. ⁶ This was when Rezin, king of Aram, recovered Elath for Edom.^h He expelled the people of Judah, and sent Edomites to Elath, where they still live to this day.

^h**16:6.** Aram/Edom. There two words are similar in Hebrew. It seems unlikely that the Arameans would have wished to hold a town so far from their own territory in the land of the Edomites. Some versions replace "Rezin, king of Aram" with "the king of Edom," but he is not previously mentioned. The conclusion is that it is unsure as to whether Elath was conquered by Arameans or Edomites; however it is sure that the town was lost to the people of Judah and was occupied by Edomites.

⁷ Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, saying, “I’m your servant, and your son. Please come and rescue me from the kings of Aram and Israel who are attacking me.” ⁸ Ahaz took the silver and gold from the Lord’s Temple and from the treasuries of the king’s palace, and he sent it to the king of Assyria as a gift.

⁹ The king of Assyria responded positively to him. He went and attacked Damascus, and captured it. He deported its inhabitants to Kir and executed Rezin.

¹⁰ King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria. During his visit he saw an altarⁱ in Damascus, and he sent Uriah the priest a drawing of the altar, along with instructions how to build it. ¹¹ So Uriah the priest built an altar following all the instructions King Ahaz had sent from Damascus, completing it before King Ahaz returned.

¹² When the king came back from Damascus he saw the altar. He went over to it and made offerings on it. ¹³ He presented his burnt offering and his grain offering, he poured out his drink offering, and sprinkled the blood of his friendship offerings on it. ¹⁴ He also moved the bronze altar that stood before the Lord from the front of the Temple, between the new altar and the Lord’s Temple, and he placed it to the north of the new altar.

¹⁵ Then King Ahaz ordered Uriah the priest: “Use this new important altar to offer the morning burnt offering, the evening grain offering, the king’s burnt offering and grain offering, and the burnt offering of all the people, and their grain offerings and their drink offerings. Sprinkle on this altar the blood of all the burnt offerings and sacrifices. The old bronze altar I’ll use for divination.”

¹⁶ Uriah the priest followed King Ahaz’s orders. ¹⁷ King Ahaz also removed the frames of the movable carts, and also took out the bronze basin from each of them. He removed the Sea from the bronze bulls it rested on and placed it on a stone pedestal. ¹⁸ He took down the Sabbath canopy they had built in the Temple, as well as the king’s outer entrance to the Lord’s Temple. He did this to please the king of Assyria.

ⁱ16:10. Clearly a pagan altar, probably Assyrian. It is likely that Tiglath-pileser required subservient kings to prove their loyalty to him, and this action of Ahaz would have demonstrated this.

¹⁹The rest of what happened in Ahaz's reign and all he did are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. ²⁰Ahaz died and was buried with his forefathers in the City of David. His son Hezekiah succeeded him as king.

17 ¹Hoshea, son of Elah, became king of Israel, in the twelfth year of the reign of King Ahaz of Judah. He reigned in Samaria for nine years. ²He did what was evil in the Lord's sight, but not in the same way the kings of Israel who were before him.

³Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, came and attacked him, and Hoshea submitted to him and paid him tribute.

⁴But then the king of Assyria discovered that Hoshea was being disloyal. Hoshea had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, asking for help, and he also had stopped sending annual tribute to the king of Assyria as he had done previously. So the king of Assyria arrested Hoshea and put him in prison.

⁵Then the king of Assyria invaded the whole country, and attacked Samaria, besieging it for three years. ⁶In the ninth year of the reign of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and deported the Israelites to Assyria. He settled them in Halah, in Gozan on the Habor River, and in the towns of the Medes.

⁷All this happened because the people of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, the one who had led them out of Egypt, saving them from the power of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. They had worshiped other gods, ⁸adopting the ways of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites, and the pagan practices introduced by the kings of Israel. ⁹Secretly the Israelites did things that were not right against the Lord their God. They built high places in all their towns, from watchtowers to fortified cities. ¹⁰They set up pagan stone pillars and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every green tree. ¹¹They offered sacrifices on all the high places, just like the nations the Lord drove out before them. They did evil things, angering the Lord. ¹²They worshiped idols, even though the Lord had told them, "You are not to do this."

¹³Yet the Lord had warned Israel and Judah repeatedly through all his prophets and seers, saying, "Leave your wicked ways and keep my commandments and instructions. Follow the whole law that I ordered your forefathers to obey, and gave to you through my servants the prophets."

¹⁴ But they refused listen, and they were as stubborn as their forefathers who did not trust the Lord their God. ¹⁵ They gave up on his regulations and the covenant he had made with their forefathers, as well as the decrees he had given them. They followed pointless idols and they became pointless themselves, copying the nations around them that the Lord ordered them not to copy. ¹⁶ They ignored all the commandments of the Lord their God, and they made themselves two metal idols of calves and an Asherah pole. They bowed down in worship to the sun, moon, and stars and served Baal. ¹⁷ They sacrificed their sons and daughters as pagan burnt offerings, and practiced fortune-telling and witchcraft. They gave themselves over to doing what was evil in the Lord's sight, making him angry.

¹⁸ So the Lord was extremely angry with Israel, and he banished them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah was left, ¹⁹ but even Judah did not keep the commandments of the Lord their God, but followed the idolatry that Israel had introduced. ²⁰ The Lord gave up on all the descendants of Israel. He punished them and handed them over to their enemies,^j until he had banished them from his presence.

²¹ When the Lord ripped Israel away from the house of David, they made Jeroboam, son of Nebat, their king. Jeroboam led Israel away from the Lord and made them commit terrible sins. ²² The Israelites continued to practice all the sins that Jeroboam committed. They did not stop doing them, ²³ so the Lord eventually expelled them from his presence, just as he had said he would through all his servants, the prophets. So the Israelites were deported from their land and taken to Assyria, where they are to this day.

²⁴ The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Kuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim and settled them in the towns of Samaria instead of the Israelites. They took over ownership of Samaria and lived in its towns. ²⁵ When they first started living there they did not worship the Lord, so he sent lions there among them, killing some of them.

²⁶ The king of Assyria was told, “The peoples that you brought and settled in the towns of Samaria they don't not know the rules of the God of the land. As a result, he has sent lions among them, which are killing them off because they don't know what the God of the land requires.”

^j17:20. “Enemies”: literally, “plunderers.”

²⁷ The king of Assyria gave the order: “Send back one of the priests you deported from Samaria, and let him go back and live there and teach the rules of the God of the land.” ²⁸ So one of the priests who had been deported from Samaria returned to live in Bethel, and taught them how to worship the Lord.

²⁹ But the people of the different nations went on making their own gods in the towns where they had settled, and they placed them in the shrines of the high places that the people of Samaria had made. ³⁰ Those from Babylon made Sukkoth Benoth, those from Kuthah made Nergal, and those from Hamath made Ashima. ³¹ The Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites sacrificed their children as burnt offerings to their gods Adrammelech and Anammelech.

³² While they worshiped the Lord, they also appointed priests from all kinds of their own people to offer sacrifices for them in the shrines of the high places. ³³ So even though they worshiped the Lord, they also worshiped their own gods following the practices of the nations they had come from. ³⁴ Even to this day they are still following their former practices. None of them truly worship the Lord or observe the regulations, requirements, laws, and commandments that the Lord gave to the descendants of Jacob, the one he named Israel.

³⁵ For the Lord had made an agreement with the Israelites, ordering them, “Don't worship other gods or bow down to them; don't serve them or offer sacrifices to them. ³⁶ You must worship only the Lord, who led you out of Egypt, helping you with his great power and strong arm. Only bow down to him; only offer sacrifices to him. ³⁷ Always pay attention to observe the regulations, requirements, laws, and commandments he gave you in writing, and don't worship other gods. ³⁸ Don't forget the agreement I have made with you, and don't worship other gods. ³⁹ You must worship only the Lord your God, and he will save you from all your enemies.”

⁴⁰ But they refused to listen, and continued their former idolatrous practices. ⁴¹ Even while these people from different nations were worshiping the Lord, they were actually worshiping their idols. Their children and grandchildren continue to do as their forefathers did to this day.

18 ¹ Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, became king of Judah in the third year of the reign of Hoshea, son of Elah, king of Israel. ² He

was twenty-five when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for twenty-nine years. His mother's name was Abi, daughter of Zechariah. ³ He did what was right in the Lord's sight, following all that his forefather David had done. ⁴ He removed the high places, smashed the stone idols, and cut down the Asherah poles. He ground to pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, because up to then the Israelites had been sacrificing offerings to it. It was called Nehushtan.

⁵ Hezekiah put his trust in the Lord, the God of Israel. Among the kings of Judah there was no one like him, neither before him nor after him. ⁶ He stayed faithful to the Lord and did not give up following him. He kept the commandments that the Lord had given Moses. ⁷ The Lord was with him; he was successful in everything he did. He defied the king of Assyria and refused to submit to him. ⁸ He defeated the Philistines all the way to Gaza and the surrounding area, from watchtower to fortified town.

⁹ In the fourth year of Hezekiah's reign, equivalent to the seventh year of the reign of Hoshea, son of Elah, king of Israel, Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, attacked Samaria, besieging it. ¹⁰ The Assyrians conquered it after three years. This was during the sixth year of Hezekiah, equivalent to the ninth year of Hoshea, king of Israel. ¹¹ The king of Assyria deported the Israelites to Assyria. He settled them in Halah, in Gozan on the Habor River, and in the towns of the Medes. ¹² This happened because they refused to listen to the Lord their God and broke his agreement—all that Moses, the Lord's servant, had commanded. They refused to listen and did not obey.

¹³ Sennacherib, king of Assyria, attacked and conquered all the fortified towns of Judah in the fourteenth year of the reign of Hezekiah. ¹⁴ So Hezekiah, king of Judah, sent a message to the king of Assyria who was at Lachish, saying, "I've made a terrible mistake! Please retreat and leave me alone, and I'll pay you whatever you want!" The king of Assyria demanded Hezekiah, king of Judah, pay three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. ¹⁵ Hezekiah paid him using all the silver from the Lord's Temple and the treasuries of the royal palace. ¹⁶ He even stripped the gold he had used to overlay the doors and doorposts of the Lord's Temple and gave everything to the king of Assyria.

¹⁷ Even so, the king of Assyria sent his commander in chief, his head officer, and his army general,^k along with a large army, from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. They approached Jerusalem and made camp beside the aqueduct of the upper pool, on the road to where laundry is washed. ¹⁸ They called for the king. Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, the palace manager, Shebna the scribe, and Joah, son of Asaph, the record-keeper, went out to speak with them.

¹⁹ The Assyrian army general said to them, “Tell Hezekiah this is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says: What are you trusting in that gives you such confidence? ²⁰ You say you have a strategy and are ready for war, but these are empty words. Who are you relying on, now that you have rebelled against me? ²¹ Now look! You're trusting in Egypt, a walking stick that's like a broken reed that will cut the hand of anyone leaning on it. That's what Pharaoh, king of Egypt, is like to everyone who trusts in him.

²² If you tell me, ‘We're trusting in the Lord our God,’ well didn't Hezekiah remove his high places and his altars, telling Judah and Jerusalem: ‘You have to worship at this altar in Jerusalem?’

²³ Why don't you accept a challenge from my master, the king of Assyria? He says, I'll give you two thousand horses, if you can find enough riders for them! ²⁴ How could you defeat even a single officer in charge of the weakest of my master's men when you're trusting in Egypt for chariots and horsemen? ²⁵ More than that—would I have come to attack this place without the Lord's encouragement? It was the Lord himself who told me, ‘Go and attack this land and destroy it.’”

²⁶ Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, together with Shebna and Joah, said to the army general, “Please speak to us, your servants, in Aramaic, for we understand it. Don't speak to us in Hebrew while the people on the wall are listening.”

²⁷ But the army general replied, “Did my master only send me to say these things to your master and to you, and not to the people sitting on the wall? They too, just like you, are going to have to eat their own excrement and drink their own urine!”

²⁸ Then the army general shouted out in Hebrew, “Listen to this from the great king, the king of Assyria! ²⁹ This is what the king

^k**18:17.** Literally, “Tartan, Rab-saris, and Rabshakeh.” However, they are Assyrian titles, not personal names.

says: Don't let Hezekiah trick you! He can't save you from me!

³⁰ Don't believe Hezekiah when he tells you to trust in the Lord, saying, 'I'm certain the Lord will save us. This city will never fall into the hands of the king of Assyria.' ³¹ Don't listen to Hezekiah. This is what the king says: Make a peace treaty with me and surrender to me. That way everyone will eat from their own vine and their own fig tree, and drink water from their own well! ³² I will come and take you to a land that's like your own, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey. Then you will live and not die.

But don't listen to Hezekiah, for he's tricking you when he says, 'The Lord will deliver us.' ³³ Have any of the gods of any nation ever saved their land from the power of the king of Assyria? ³⁴ Where were the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where were the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Were they able to save Samaria from me? ³⁵ Which one of all the gods of these countries has saved their land from me? How then could the Lord save Jerusalem from me?"

³⁶ But the people remained silent and didn't say anything, for Hezekiah had given the order, "Don't answer him."

³⁷ Then Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, the palace manager, Shebna the scribe, and Joah, son of Asaph, the record-keeper, went to Hezekiah with their clothes torn, and they told him what the Assyrian army general had said.

19 ¹ When Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and went into the Lord's Temple. ² He sent Eliakim the palace manager, Shebna, the scribe, and the leading priests, all wearing sackcloth, to see the prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz. ³ They told him, "This is what Hezekiah says: Today is a day of trouble, punishment. It's like when babies arrive at the entrance to the birth canal but there's no strength to deliver them. ⁴ Maybe the Lord your God, hearing the message the army commander delivered on behalf of his master, the king of Assyria—a message sent to insult the living God—will punish him for his words. Please say a prayer for the remnant of us who still survive."

⁵ After Hezekiah's officials delivered his message to Isaiah, ⁶ Isaiah replied to them, "Tell your master, This is what the Lord says: Don't be frightened by the words that you have heard, the words used by the servants of the king of Assyria to blaspheme me. ⁷ Look, I'm

going to scare him—he'll hear a rumor, and he'll have to return to his own country. When he's there I'll have him killed by the sword.”

⁸ The Assyrian army commander left and went back to join the king of Assyria, having heard the king had left Lachish and was attacking Libnah.

⁹ Sennacherib had received a message about Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, that said, “Watch out! He has set out to attack you.” So Sennacherib sent messengers again to Hezekiah, saying, ¹⁰ “Tell Hezekiah, king of Judah: ‘Don't let your God, the one you're trusting in, fool you by saying that Jerusalem won't fall into the hands of the king of Assyria. ¹¹ Look! You've heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the countries they've invaded¹— they destroyed them completely! Do you really think you'll be saved? ¹² Did the gods of the nations my forefathers destroyed save them—the gods of Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who lived in Telassar? ¹³ Where today is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, the king of Hena, or the king of Ivvah?”

¹⁴ Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the Lord's Temple and opened it out before the Lord. ¹⁵ Hezekiah prayed to the Lord, saying, “Lord, God of Israel, you who live above the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth, you are Creator of heaven and earth. ¹⁶ Please listen with your ears, Lord, and hear; open your eyes, Lord, and see. Listen to the message that Sennacherib has sent to insult the living God.

¹⁷ Yes, it's true, Lord, that the Assyrian kings have destroyed these nations and their lands. ¹⁸ They have thrown their gods into the fire because they are not really gods—they are just the work of human hands, made of wood and stone so they could destroy them. ¹⁹ Now, Lord our God, please save us from him, in order that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that only you, Lord, are God.”

²⁰ Then Isaiah, son of Amoz, sent a message to Hezekiah, saying, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I have heard your prayer about Sennacherib, king of Assyria. ²¹ This is the word the Lord condemning him: The virgin daughter of Zion scorns you and mocks you; the daughter of Jerusalem shakes her head as you run

¹19:11. “They've invaded”: implied.

away. ²² Who have you been insulting and ridiculing? Who did you raise your voice against? Who did you look at with so proud eyes? It was against the Holy One of Israel! ²³ By your servants you have mocked the Lord. You said: ‘With my many chariots I have ascended to the high mountains, to the farthest peaks of Lebanon. I have chopped down its tallest cedars, the best of its cypress trees. I have reached its most distant outposts, its deepest forests. ²⁴ I have dug wells and drunk water in foreign lands. With the soles of my feet I dried up all the rivers in Egypt.’”

²⁵ The Lord replies,^m “Haven't you heard? I decided it long ago; I planned it in the olden days. Now I am making sure it happens—that you are to knock down fortified towns into piles of rubble. ²⁶ Their people, powerless, are terrified and humiliated. They're like plants in a field, like soft green shoots, like grass that sprouts on rooftop—scorched before it can even grow.

²⁷ But I know you very well—where you live, when you come in, when you leave, and your furious anger against me. ²⁸ Because of your furious anger against me, and because I know how you disrespect me, I'm going to put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will force you to return the same way you came.”

²⁹ “Hezekiah, this will be a sign to prove this is true:ⁿ This year you'll eat what grows by itself. The second year you'll eat what grows from that. But in the third year you'll sow and reap, you'll plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ³⁰ The remnant that's left of Judah will revive again, sending roots below and bearing fruit above. ³¹ For a remnant will come out of Jerusalem, and survivors will come from Mount Zion. The intense determination of the Lord will make sure this happens. ³² This is what the Lord says about the king of Assyria: He shall not enter this city or shoot an arrow at it. He shall not advance towards it with a shield, or build a siege ramp against it. ³³ He shall return the same way he came, and he shall not enter this city, says the Lord. ³⁴ I will defend this city and save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.”

³⁵ That night the angel of the Lord went to the Assyrian camp and killed 185,000. When the survivors woke up in the morning, they were surrounded by dead bodies. ³⁶ Sennacherib, king of Assyria,

^m19:25. “The Lord replies”: supplied for clarity.

ⁿ19:29. “To prove this is true”: implied.

gave up and left. He returned home to Nineveh and stayed there. ³⁷ While he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with the sword and then ran away to the land of Ararat. His son Esar-haddon succeeded him as king.

20 ¹ About this time Hezekiah fell very sick and was about to die. The prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz, went to him and said, “This is what the Lord says: Put your affairs in order, because you are going to die. You won’t recover.”

² When Hezekiah heard this, he went to pray privately^o to the Lord, saying ³ “Please remember Lord how I have followed you faithfully with all my heart. I have done what is good in your sight.” Then Hezekiah cried and cried.

⁴ Before Isaiah had left the middle courtyard, the Lord spoke to him, saying, ⁵ “Go back in and tell Hezekiah, the ruler of my people, This is what the Lord, the God of your forefather David, says: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears. Look! I am going to heal you. In three days time you will go to the Lord’s Temple. ⁶ I will add fifteen years to your life. I will save you and this city from the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.”

⁷ Then Isaiah said, “Prepare a dressing from figs.” Hezekiah’s servants did so and put it on the skin sores, and Hezekiah got better.

⁸ Hezekiah had previously asked Isaiah, “What is the sign to confirm that the Lord is going to heal me and that I will go to the Lord’s Temple in three days time?”

⁹ Isaiah replied, “This is the sign from the Lord to you that the Lord will do what he promised: Do you want the shadow to go forward ten steps, or back ten steps?”

¹⁰ “It’s easy enough for the shadow to go forward ten steps, but not to go back ten steps,” Hezekiah answered. ¹¹ So Isaiah the prophet asked the Lord, and he moved the shadow back the ten steps it had gone down on the stairway of Ahaz.

¹² At the same time Merodach-baladan, son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a gift to Hezekiah, because he had heard that Hezekiah was sick. ¹³ Hezekiah welcomed the visitors and showed them everything in his treasury—all the silver, the gold, the

^o20:2. “Privately”: literally, “turned his face to the wall.”

spices, and the expensive oils. He also showed them his armory and all that he had in his storehouses. In fact there wasn't anything in his palace or in the whole of his kingdom that Hezekiah didn't show them.

¹⁴ Then the prophet Isaiah went to King Hezekiah and asked him, “Where did those men come from, and what did they tell you?”

“They came from a long way away, from Babylon,” Hezekiah replied.

¹⁵ “What did they see in your palace?” Isaiah asked.

“They saw everything in my palace,” replied Hezekiah. “There wasn't anything in all my storehouses I didn't show them.”

¹⁶ Isaiah told Hezekiah, “Listen to what the Lord says: ¹⁷ You can be certain that the time is coming when everything in your palace, and everything that your forefathers have saved up until now, will be taken away to Babylon. There will be nothing left, says the Lord.

¹⁸ Some of your sons, your own offspring, will be taken to serve as eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”

¹⁹ Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “The message from the Lord that you have told me is fine.” For he said to himself, “Why not, if there'll be peace and safety in my lifetime.”

²⁰ The rest of what happened in Hezekiah's reign, all he did, and how he made the pool and the tunnel to bring water into the city, are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.

²¹ Hezekiah died, and his son Manasseh succeeded him as king.

21 ¹ Manasseh was twelve when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for fifty-five years. His mother's name was Hephzibah. ² He did what was evil in the Lord's sight by following the disgusting pagan practices of the nations that the Lord had driven out before the Israelites. ³ He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had destroyed, and he erected altars for Baal. He made an Asherah idol pole, just as Ahab, king of Israel, had done, and he worshiped and served the sun, moon, and stars.

⁴ He set up pagan altars in the Lord's Temple, right where the Lord had said, “I will place my name in Jerusalem forever.” ⁵ He set up altars to worship the sun, moon, and stars in the two courtyards of the Lord's Temple. ⁶ He even he sacrificed his own son as a burnt offering, and used fortune-telling and witchcraft, and he dealt with

mediums and with spiritists. He did a great deal of evil in the Lord's sight, making the Lord angry.

⁷ He took the Asherah idol pole he had made and placed in the Temple. This was the place referred to by the Lord when he told David and Solomon, his son, "In this Temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, I will place my name forever. ⁸ I will never again make the Israelites wander from the land I gave their forefathers if they are careful to follow everything I have ordered them to do—the whole law that my servant Moses gave them." ⁹ The people refused to listen and Manasseh led them to sin so that the evil they did was even worse than the nations the Lord had destroyed before the Israelites.

¹⁰ The Lord said through his servants the prophets: ¹¹ "Since Manasseh, king of Judah, has committed all these disgusting sins, doing even more evil things than the Amorites who lived before him, and by his encouragement of idol worship has made Judah sin, ¹² this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Watch out! I am going to bring down upon Jerusalem and Judah such a disaster that it will cause ringing in the ears of everyone who hears it. ¹³ I will extend over Jerusalem the measuring line used against Samaria and the plumb line used against the house of Ahab,^p and I will wipe away Jerusalem as people wipe clean a bowl, wiping it and turning it upside down. ¹⁴ I will give up on the remnant of my special people and hand them over to their enemies. They will be plunder and loot to all their enemies, ¹⁵ because they have done what is evil in my sight, and have made me angry from the day their fathers left Egypt until today."

¹⁶ On top of that, Manasseh murdered so many innocent people that Jerusalem was filled from one side to the other with their blood. This was in addition to the sin that he had made Judah commit, doing evil in the Lord's sight.

¹⁷ The rest of what happened in Manasseh's reign, all he did, as well as the sins he committed, are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. ¹⁸ Manasseh died, and was buried in his palace garden, the garden of Uzza. His son Amon succeeded him as king.

P21:13. In other words, God says he will apply the same standard for judging Judah as he did for Israel.

¹⁹ Amon was twenty-two when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for two years. His mother's name was Meshullemeth, daughter of Haruz. She came from Jotbah.

²⁰ He did what was evil in the Lord's sight, just as his father Manasseh had done. ²¹ He followed all the ways of his father, and he served the idols his father had served, bowing down in worship to them. ²² He rejected the Lord, the God of his forefathers, and did not follow the way of the Lord. ²³ Amon's officials plotted against him and murdered him in his royal palace.

²⁴ But then the people of the land killed everyone who had plotted against King Amon, and they chose his son Josiah king to succeed him.

²⁵ The rest of what happened in Amon's reign, and all he did, are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. ²⁶ He was buried in his tomb in the garden of Uzza, and his son Josiah succeeded him as king.

22 ¹ Josiah was eight when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for thirty-one years. His mother's name was Jedidah, daughter of Adaiah. She came from Bozkath. ² He did what was right in the Lord's sight, and followed all the ways of David his forefather—he did not deviate to the right or to the left.

³ In the eighteenth year of his reign, Josiah sent Shaphan, son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam, to the Lord's Temple. He said, ⁴ “Go to Hilkiyah the high priest and have him count the money the doorkeepers have collected from the people coming to the Lord's Temple. ⁵ Then hand it over to those who are supervising the work on Lord's Temple, and have them pay the workmen doing the repairing of the Lord's Temple, ⁶ the carpenters, the builders and the masons. In addition have them purchase timber and cut stone to repair the Temple. ⁷ Don't ask for any accounts from the men who received the money because they deal honestly.”

⁸ Hilkiyah the high priest told Shaphan the scribe, “I've found the Book of the Law in the Lord's Temple.” He gave it to Shaphan who read it.

⁹ Shaphan the scribe went to the king and to give him a report, saying, “Your officials have paid out the money that was in the Lord's Temple and have handed it over to those appointed to supervise the work at the Lord's Temple.”

¹⁰ Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, “Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.” Shaphan read it to the king.

¹¹ When the king heard what was in the book of the Law, he tore his clothes. ¹² Then he gave orders to Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, son of Shaphan, Acbor, son of Micaiah, Shaphan, the scribe, and Asaiah the king's assistant, saying, ¹³ “Go and talk to the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all of Judah, about what is said in the book that's been found. For the Lord must be really angry with us, because our forefathers have not obeyed the Lord's instructions in this book; they have not been doing what is written there for us to do.”

¹⁴ Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Acbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went and spoke to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum, son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah, custodian of the wardrobe.⁹ She lived in Jerusalem, in the city's second quarter.

¹⁵ She told them, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Tell the man who sent you to me, ¹⁶ this is what the Lord says: I am about to bring disaster down on this place and on its people, in accordance with everything written in the book that has been read to the king of Judah. ¹⁷ They have abandoned me and offered sacrifices to other gods, making me angry by everything they've done. My anger will be poured out upon this place and will not be stopped.

¹⁸ But tell the king of Judah who sent you to ask the Lord, tell him this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: As for what you heard read to you— ¹⁹ because you were receptive and repentant before God when you heard his warnings against this place and against its people—that would become desolate and a curse—and because you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I have also heard^f you, declares the Lord. ²⁰ All this will not happen until after you have died, and you will die in peace.⁵ You will not see all the disaster that I'm going to bring down on this place.” They went back to the king and gave him her response.

23 ¹ Then the king summoned all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. ² He went to the Lord's Temple with all the people of Judah and Jerusalem, together with the priests and the Levites,

⁹22:14. “Wardrobe”: either the king's clothes, or those of the priest (s).

^f22:19. “Heard”: in the sense of a positive response.

⁵22:20. “Die in peace”: of course this did not happen, because Josiah chose to confront the Egyptian Pharaoh in battle and was killed. See 23:29.

all the people from the least to the greatest, and he read to them the whole Book of the Agreement that had been discovered in the Lord's Temple. ³ The king stood by the pillar and made a solemn agreement before the Lord to follow him and to keep his commandments, laws, and regulations with total dedication, and to observe the requirements of the agreement as written in the book. All the people entered into the agreement.

⁴ Then the king ordered Hilkiah the high priest, the priests of second rank, and the doorkeepers to remove from the Lord's Temple everything made for Baal, Asherah, and the worship of sun, moon, and stars. He burned them outside Jerusalem in the Kidron fields and took their ashes to Bethel. ⁵ He also dismissed the priests appointed by the kings of Judah to present burnt offerings on the high places of the towns of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem, those who had sacrificed to Baal, to the sun and moon, to the constellations, and to all the powers of heaven. ⁶ He removed the Asherah pole from the Lord's Temple and took it to the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem. He burned it there, ground it into dust, and threw its dust over the graves of the ordinary people. ⁷ He also demolished the quarters of the cult prostitutes^t that were in the Lord's Temple, where the women used to weave tapestries for the Asherah. ⁸ Josiah brought to Jerusalem^u all the priests from the towns of Judah and defiled the high places, from Geba to Beersheba, where the priests had sacrificed burnt offerings. He demolished the high places of the gates, near to the entrance of the gate of Joshua, the governor of the city, which was left of the town gate. ⁹ Though the priests of the high places did not serve at the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, they did eat unleavened bread with their brother priests.

¹⁰ He defiled the Topheth altar in the Valley of Ben-hinnom so that no one could sacrifice his son or daughter in the fire to Molech.

¹¹ He removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun from the entrance to the Lord's Temple. They were in the courtyard near the room of a eunuch named Nathan-melech. Josiah also burned the chariots dedicated to the sun. ¹² He demolished the altars that the kings of Judah had set up on the roof near the upper chamber of Ahaz, and the altars Manasseh had placed in the two

^t23:7. Referring to both males and females.

^u23:8. "To Jerusalem": implied.

courtyards of the Lord's Temple. The king smashed them to pieces and scattered them in the Kidron Valley. ¹³ The king also defiled the high places to the east of Jerusalem, to the south of the Mount of Corruption, the places which King Solomon of Israel had built for Ashtoreth, the vile goddess of the Sidonians, for Chemosh, the vile god of the Moabites, and for Molech, the vile god of the Ammonites. ¹⁴ He smashed the sacred stone pillars to pieces, chopped down the Asherah poles, and covered the places with human bones.

¹⁵ He also demolished the altar at Bethel, the high place set up by Jeroboam, son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. Then he burned the high place, ground it to dust, and burned the Asherah pole. ¹⁶ As Josiah looked around he saw some tombs there on the hill. He had the bones taken from the tombs, and he burned them on the altar to defile it, just as the Lord had said through the man of God who had prophesied these things.

¹⁷ Then he asked, “Whose gravestone is this that I see?”

“It's the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed exactly what you have done to the altar of Bethel,”^v the townspeople replied.

¹⁸ “Let him rest in peace,” said Josiah. “Don't anyone touch his bones.” So they left his bones undisturbed, together with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria.

¹⁹ Josiah destroyed, just as he did at Bethel, all the shrines of the high places in the towns of Samaria that the kings of Israel had built that had angered the Lord. ²⁰ Josiah slaughtered all the priests who were there at the high places on the altars, and burned human bones on them. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

²¹ The king sent out an order to all the people, “Observe the Passover of the Lord your God, as it is written in this Book of the Agreement.” ²² Such a Passover as this had not been observed from the days of the judges who ruled Israel on through all the days of the kings of Israel and Judah. ²³ But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, this Passover was observed to honor the Lord in Jerusalem.

²⁴ In addition, Josiah got rid of the mediums and spiritists, the household gods and idols, and all the disgusting practices that were present in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem. He did this to fulfill

^v23:17. See 1 Kings 13:2.

the words of the law written in the book that Hilkiah the priest had found in the Lord's Temple.

²⁵ Never before was there a king like him who committed himself to the Lord in all his thoughts and attitudes, and with all his strength, keeping all the Law of Moses. There was no king like him afterwards either.

²⁶ However, the Lord had not given up his furious hostility, which burned against Judah because of all that Manasseh had done to anger him. ²⁷ So the Lord announced, "I'm also going to banish Judah from my presence, just as I banished Israel. I will abandon this city that I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the Temple regarding which I said, My name will be there."

²⁸ The rest of what happened in Josiah's reign, and all he did, are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.

²⁹ While Josiah was still king, Pharaoh Neco, king of Egypt, led his army to help the king of Assyria at the Euphrates River. King Josiah took his army to fight him at Megiddo, but when Neco saw Josiah he killed him. ³⁰ His servants put his body in a chariot, brought him back from Megiddo to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own tomb. Then the people of the land chose Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, anointed him, and made him king in succession to his father.

³¹ Jehoahaz was twenty-three when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for three months. His mother's name was Hamutal, daughter of Jeremiah. She came from Libnah. ³² He did what was evil in the Lord's sight, just as all his forefathers had done. ³³ Pharaoh Neco imprisoned Jehoahaz at Riblah in the land of Hamath to stop him ruling in Jerusalem. He also imposed on Judah a tribute of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. ³⁴ Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim, son of Josiah, king in succession to his father Josiah, and he changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. Neco took Jehoahaz to Egypt, where he died.

³⁵ Jehoiakim paid the silver and gold to Pharaoh Neco, but in order to meet Pharaoh's demand he taxed the land and required payment of the silver and the gold from the people, each in proportion to their wealth.

³⁶ Jehoiakim was twenty-five when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for eleven years. His mother's name was

Zebidah, daughter of Pedaiah She came from Rumah. ³⁷ He did evil in the Lord's sight, just as his forefathers had done.

24 ¹ During the reign of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded the country and Jehoiakim submitted to him. But after three years Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar.

² Then the Lord sent bands of raiders against Judah to destroy them. They came from Babylonia, Aram, Moab, and Ammon, just as the Lord had said through his servants the prophets. ³ The Lord spoke against Judah to banish them from his presence because of all the sins that Manasseh had committed, and the innocent people he had killed, ⁴ filling Jerusalem with their blood. The Lord was not willing to forgive this.

⁵ The rest of what happened in Jehoiakim's reign, and all he did, are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.

⁶ Jehoiakim died, and his son Jehoiachin succeeded him as king.

⁷ The king of Egypt didn't leave his country again for the king of Babylon had taken all the territory that used to belong to him, from the Wadi of Egypt all the way to the Euphrates River.

⁸ Jehoiachin was eighteen when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for three months. His mother was Nehushta, daughter of Elnathan. She came from Jerusalem. ⁹ Jehoiachin did what was evil in the Lord's sight, just as his father had done.

¹⁰ At that time the officers of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon attacked Jerusalem and besieged it. ¹¹ Then Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon came himself while his officers were besieging the city.

¹² Jehoiachin, king of Israel, surrendered to the king of Babylon, along with his mother, his officers, his commanders, and his officials.

It was in the eighth year of his reign that Nebuchadnezzar captured Jehoiachin. ¹³ Nebuchadnezzar took all the treasures from the Lord's Temple and the royal palace, and he cut up all the gold items that Solomon, king of Israel, had made for the Lord's Temple, as the Lord had said would happen. ¹⁴ He deported all of Jerusalem, all the commanders and experienced soldiers, all the craftsmen and metalworkers, a total of ten thousand prisoners. Only the very poor people of the land were left.

¹⁵ He took Jehoiachin away into exile to Babylon, as well as the king's mother and the king's wives and his officials and the leading men of the land, he deported them all from Jerusalem to Babylon.

¹⁶ The king of Babylon also deported to Babylon all seven thousand fighting men and one thousand craftsmen and metalworkers, who were all strong and ready for battle.

¹⁷ The king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king instead of him, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

¹⁸ Zedekiah was twenty-one when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for eleven years. His mother's name was Hamutal, daughter of Jeremiah. She came from Libnah. ¹⁹ He did evil in the Lord's sight, just as Jehoiakim had done.

²⁰ All this happened in Jerusalem and Judah, because of the Lord's anger, until he eventually banished them from his presence.

Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

25 ¹ In the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, attacked Jerusalem with his entire army. He set up camp around the city and built siege ramps against the walls. ² The city remained under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.

³ By the ninth day of the fourth month, the famine in the city was so bad that the people had nothing left to eat. ⁴ Then the city wall was broken through, and all the soldiers escaped at night through the gate between the two walls by the king's garden, even though the Babylonians had the city surrounded. They ran away in the direction of the Arabah,^w ⁵ but the Babylonian army chased after the king and caught up with him on the plains of Jericho. His whole army had scattered and left him.

⁶ They captured the king and took him to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where he was sentenced. ⁷ They slaughtered Zedekiah's sons while he watched, and then gouged out his eyes, bound him in bronze shackles, and took him to Babylon.

⁸ On the seventh day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan, the commander of the guard, an officer of the king of Babylon, entered Jerusalem. ⁹ He burned down the Lord's Temple, the royal palace, and all the large buildings of Jerusalem. ¹⁰ The whole Babylonian army under the commander of the guard knocked down the walls around Jerusalem.

¹¹ Nebuzaradan, the commander of the guard, deported those who were left in the city, even those who had gone over to the side of the

^w**25:4.** "Arabah": the Jordan Valley.

king of Babylon, as well as the rest of the population. ¹² But the commander of the guard allowed the poor people who were left in the country to stay and take care of the vineyards and the fields.

¹³ The Babylonians broke into pieces the bronze pillars, the movable carts, and the bronze Sea that belonged to the Lord's Temple, and they took all the bronze to Babylon. ¹⁴ They also took all the pots, shovels, lamp snuffers, dishes, and all the other bronze items used in the Temple service. ¹⁵ The commander of the guard removed the censers and bowls, anything that was made of pure gold or silver.

¹⁶ The amount of bronze that came from the two columns, the Sea and the movable carts, which Solomon had made for the Lord's Temple, all of this weighed more than could be measured.

¹⁷ Each column was eighteen cubits tall. The bronze capital on top of one column was three cubits high, with a network of bronze pomegranates around it. The second column was the same, and also had a decorative network.

¹⁸ The commander of the guard took as prisoners Seraiah, the chief priest, Zephaniah the priest, second in rank, and the three Temple doorkeepers. ¹⁹ From those left in the city he took the officer in charge of the soldiers, and five of the king's advisors. He also took the secretary to the army commander who was in charge of calling up the people for military service, and sixty other men who were present in the city. ²⁰ Nebuzaradan, the commander of the guard, took them and brought them before the king of Babylon at Riblah. ²¹ The king of Babylon had them executed at Riblah in the land of Hamath.

So the people of Judah had to leave their land.

²² Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, appointed Gedaliah, son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, as governor over the people he had left in the land of Judah. ²³ When all the army officers of Judah^x and their men learned that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah as governor, they and their men met with Gedaliah at Mizpah. They included: Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan, son of Kareah, Seraiah, son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, Jaazaniah, son of the Maakathite.

^x25:23. "Of Judah": added for clarity.

²⁴ Gedaliah swore an oath to them and their men, telling them, “Don't be afraid of the Babylonian officials. Stay here in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and you'll be fine.”

²⁵ But in the seventh month, Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, son of Elishama, of royal blood, came with ten men. They attacked and killed Gedaliah, along with the men of Judea and Babylonians who were with him at Mizpah.

²⁶ As a result, all the people, from the least to the greatest, along with the army commanders, ran away to Egypt, terrified of what the Babylonians would do.

²⁷ In the year Evil-merodach became king of Babylon, he released Jehoiachin, king of Judah, from prison. This happened on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month of the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin, king of Judah. ²⁸ The king of Babylon treated him well and gave him a position of honor higher than the other kings there with him in Babylon. ²⁹ So Jehoiachin was able to remove his prison clothes, and he ate frequently at the king's table for the rest of his life. ³⁰ The king provided Jehoiachin with a daily allowance for the rest of his life.