The Book of First Samuel

THE “BOOKS” OF SAMUEL were originally one book. In the Septuagint, it was divided into two owing to its length (scrolls at the time weren’t long enough to hold either it or the original one-volume Book of Kings), and the Christian tradition followed this division. In the Tanach, this division was not accepted until the 15th century, under the influ­ence of the Vulgate. (The Vulgate is the principal Latin version of the Bible, prepared mainly by St. Jerome in the late 4th century, and, as revised in 1592, adopted as the official text for the Roman Catholic Church.) Following a pattern found in some other biblical books, which end with the death of a main character, the division in the book of Samuel was made at the point of Saul’s death. Thus, First Samuel recounts the periods of Eli (chapters 1-4), Samuel (chapters 5-12), and Saul (chapters 13-31, including his complicated relationship with David); Second Samuel concentrates exclusively on the reign of David.

Chapter 1

1 There was a man from Ramatayim [a/k/a Ramah] of the Tzufites, in the hill country of Efrayim, whose name was Elkanah ben Y’rocham ben Elihu ben Tokhu ben Tzuf, an Efrayimite.

2 He had two wives, one named Chanah and the other P’ninah; P’ninah had children, but Chanah was childless.

3 This man used to go up from his town every year to worship and to offer sacrifice to the Lord of Hosts at Shiloh. Chofni and Pinchas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the Lord there.

4 One such day, Elkanah offered a sacrifice. He used to give portions to his wife P’ninah and to all her sons and daughters;

5 but to Chanah he would give one portion only—though Chanah was his favorite—for the Lord had closed her womb.

6 Moreover, her rival would make her miserable by taunting her that the Lord had closed her womb.

7 Thus he did year after year: Every time she went up to the House of the Lord, the other would taunt her, so that she wept and would not eat.

8 Her husband Elkanah said to her, “Chanah, why are you crying and why aren’t you eating? Why are you so sad? Am I not more devoted to you than ten sons?”

9 After they ate and drank at Shiloh, Chanah rose [Septuagint adds “and stood before the Lord”]; the priest Eli was sitting on the seat near the doorpost of the temple of the Lord.

10 In her wretchedness, she prayed to the Lord, weeping all the while.

11 And she made this vow: “O Lord of Hosts, if You will look upon the suffering of Your maidservant and will remember me and not forget Your maidservant, and if You will grant Your maidservant a male child, I will dedicate him to the Lord for all the days of his life; and no razor shall ever touch his head.”

12 As she kept on praying before the Lord, Eli watched her mouth.

13 Now Chanah was praying in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice could not be heard, so Eli thought she was drunk.

14 Eli said to her, “How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Sober up [lit. “remove your wine from you”]!”

15 And Chanah replied, “Oh no, my lord! I am a very unhappy woman. I have drunk no wine or other strong drink, but I have been pouring out my heart to the Lord.

16 Do not take your maidservant for a worthless woman; I have only been speaking all this time out of my great anguish and distress.”

17 “Then go in peace,” said Eli, “and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of Him.”

18 She answered, “You are most kind to your handmaid.” So the woman left, and she ate, and was no longer downcast.

19 Early next morning, they bowed low before the Lord, and they went back home to Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Chanah and the Lord remembered her.

20 Chanah conceived, and at the turn of the year bore a son. She named him Sh’muel [*sha’ul mei’el*, “asked of God”], meaning, “I asked the Lord for him.”

21 And when the man Elkanah and all his household were going up to offer to the Lord the annual sacrifice and his votive sacrifice,

22 Chanah did not go up. She said to her husband, “When the child is weaned, I will bring him. For when he has appeared before the Lord, he must remain there for good.”

23 Her husband Elkanah said to her, “Do as you think best. Stay home until you have weaned him. May the Lord fulfill His word.” So the woman stayed home and nursed her son until she weaned him.

24 When she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with three bulls, one ephah of flour, and a jar of wine. And though the boy was still very young, she brought him to the House of the Lord at Shiloh.

25 After slaughtering the bull, they brought the boy to Eli.

26 She said, “Please, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you and prayed to the Lord.

27 “It was this boy I prayed for; and the Lord has granted me what I asked of Him.

28 “I, in turn, hereby lend him to the Lord. For as long as he lives he is lent to the Lord.” And they bowed low there before the Lord.

Chapter 2

1 And Chanah prayed: “My heart exults in the Lord; I have triumphed [lit. “my horn is high”] through the Lord. I gloat over my enemies [lit. “my mouth is wide”]; I rejoice in Your deliverance.

2 “There is no holy one like the Lord. Truly, there is none beside You; there is no rock like our God.

3 “Talk no more with lofty pride, let no arrogance cross your lips! For the Lord is an all-knowing God; by Him are actions measured.

4 “The bows of the mighty are broken, and the faltering are girded with strength.

5 “Men once sated must hire out for bread; men once hungry hunger no more. While the barren woman bears seven, the mother of many is forlorn.

6 “The Lord deals death and gives life, casts down into Sheol and raises up.

7 “The Lord makes poor and makes rich; He casts down, He also lifts high.

8 “He raises the poor from the dust, lifts up the needy from the dunghill, setting them with nobles, granting them seats of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s; He has set the world upon them.

9 “He guards the steps of His faithful, but the wicked perish in darkness—for not by strength shall man prevail.

10 “The foes of the Lord shall be shattered; He will thunder against them in the heavens. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth. He will give power to His king, And triumph to [lit. “and will raise the horn of”] His anointed one [משיח, *mashiach*].”

11 Then Elkanah [and Chanah] went home to Ramah; and the boy entered the service of the Lord under the priest Eli.

12 Now Eli’s sons were scoundrels; they paid no heed to the Lord.

13 This is how the priests used to deal with the people: When anyone brought a sacrifice, the priest’s boy would come along with a three-pronged fork while the meat was boiling,

14 and he would thrust it into the cauldron, or the kettle, or the great pot, or the small cooking-pot; and whatever the fork brought up, the priest would take away on it [Targum and Septuagint add “for himself”]. This was the practice at Shiloh with all the Israelites who came there.

15 But now, even before the suet was turned into smoke, the priest’s boy would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, “Hand over some meat to roast for the priest; for he won’t accept boiled meat from you, only raw.”

16 And if the man said to him, “Let them first turn the suet into smoke, and then take as much as you want,” he would reply, “No, hand it over at once or I’ll take it by force.”

17 The sin of the young men against the Lord was very great, for the men treated the Lord’s offerings impiously.

18 Sh’muel was engaged in the service of the Lord as an attendant, girded with a linen ephod.

19 His mother would also make a little robe for him and bring it up to him every year, when she made the pilgrimage with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice.

20 Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, “May the Lord grant you offspring by this woman in place of the loan she made to the Lord.” Then they would return home.

21 For the Lord took note of Chanah; she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. Young Sh’muel meanwhile grew up in the service of the Lord.

22 Now Eli was very old. When he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who performed tasks [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting,

23 he said to them, “Why do you do such things? I get evil reports about you from the people on all hands.

24 Don’t, my sons! It is no favorable report I hear the people of the Lord spreading about.

25 If a man sins against a man, the Lord may pardon [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] him; but if a man offends against God, who can obtain pardon [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] for him?” But they ignored their father’s plea; for the Lord was resolved that they should die.

26 Young Sh’muel, meanwhile, grew in esteem and favor both with God and with men.

27 A man of God came to Eli and said to him, “Thus said the Lord: Lo, I revealed Myself to your father’s house in Egypt when they were subject to the House of Pharaoh,

28 “and I chose them from among all the tribes of Israel to be My priests—to ascend My altar, to burn incense, and to carry an ephod [here this refers to a device for obtaining oracles, not a garment as in verse 18 above] before Me—and I assigned to your father’s house all offerings by fire of the Israelites.

29 “Why, then, do you *maliciously trample upon the sacrifices and offerings that I have commanded* [meaning of the italicized phrase in Hebrew—*lamah tivahtu b’zivchi uvminchati asher tziviti ma-on*—is uncertain. Emendation yields “gaze grudgingly upon the sacrifices and offerings which I have commanded” (connecting *ma-on* with *oyen*, “keeping a jealous eye”; see 1 Sam. 18.9]. You have honored your sons more than Me, feeding on the first portions of every offering of My people Israel.

30 “Assuredly, declares the Lord, the God of Israel, “I intended for you and your father’s house to remain in My service forever. But now,” declares the Lord, “far be it from Me! For I honor those who honor Me, but those who spurn Me shall be dishonored.

31 “A time is coming when I will break your power and that of your father’s house, and there shall be no elder in your house.

32 “You will gaze grudgingly [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] at all the bounty that will be bestowed on Israel, but there shall never be an elder in your house.

33 “I shall not cut off all your offspring from My altar; but, to make your eyes pine and your spirit languish, all the increase in your house shall die as [ordinary] men.

34 “And this shall be a sign for you: The fate of your two sons Chofni and Pinchas—they shall both die on the same day.

35 “And I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest, who will act in accordance with My wishes and My purposes. I will build for him an enduring house, and he shall walk before My anointed evermore.

36 “And all the survivors of your house shall come and bow low to him for the sake of a money fee and a loaf of bread, and shall say, ‘Please, assign me to one of the priestly duties, that I may have a morsel of bread to eat.’”

Chapter 3

1 Young Sh’muel was in the service of the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; prophecy was not widespread.

2 One day, Eli was asleep in his usual place; his eyes had begun to fail and he could barely see.

3 The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Sh’muel was sleeping in the temple of the Lord where the Ark of God was.

4 The Lord called out to Sh’muel, and he answered, “I’m coming.”

5 He ran to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” But he replied, “I didn’t call you; go back to sleep.” So he went back and lay down.

6 Again the Lord called, “Sh’muel!” Sh’muel rose and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” But he replied, “I didn’t call, my son; go back to sleep.”

7 —Now Sh’muel had not yet experienced the Lord; the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.—

8 The Lord called Sh’muel again, a third time, and he rose and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” Then Eli understood that the Lord was calling the boy.

9 And Eli said to Sh’muel, “Go lie down. If you are called again, say, ‘Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.’” And Sh’muel went to his place and lay down.

10 The Lord came, and stood there, and He called as before: “Sh’muel! Sh’muel!” And Sh’muel answered, “Speak, for Your servant is listening.”

11 The Lord said to Sh’muel: “I am going to do in Israel such a thing that both ears of anyone who hears about it will tingle.

12 “In that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I spoke concerning his house, from beginning to end.

13 “And I declare to him that I sentence his house to endless punishment for the iniquity he knew about— how his sons committed sacrilege at will [meaning of Hebrew uncertain; Septuagint adds “against God”]— and he did not rebuke them.

14 “Assuredly, I swear concerning the house of Eli that the iniquity of the house of Eli will never be expiated by sacrifice or offering.”

15 Sh’muel lay there until morning; and then he opened the doors of the House of the Lord. Sh’muel was afraid to report the vision to Eli,

16 but Eli summoned Sh’muel and said, “Sh’muel, my son”; and he answered, “Here.”

17 And [Eli] asked, “What did He say to you? Keep nothing from me. Thus and more may God do to you if you keep from me a single word of all that He said to you!”

18 Sh’muel then told him everything, withholding nothing from him. And [Eli] said, “He is the Lord; He will do what He deems right.”

19 Sh’muel grew up and the Lord was with him: He did not leave any of his [Sh’muel’s] predictions unfulfilled.

20 All Israel, from Dan to B’er-sheva, knew that Sh’muel was trustworthy as a prophet of the Lord.

21 And the Lord continued to appear at Shiloh: the Lord revealed Himself to Sh’muel at Shiloh with the word of the Lord;

Chapter 4

1 and Sh’muel’s word went forth to all Israel. Israel marched out to engage the Philistines [P'lishtim] in battle; they encamped near Even-ezer, while the Philistines encamped at Afek.

2 The Philistines arrayed themselves against Israel; and when the battle was fought [meaning of Hebrew uncertain], Israel was routed by the Philistines, who slew about 4,000 men on the field of battle.

3 When the [Israelite] troops returned to the camp, the elders of Israel asked, “Why did the Lord put us to rout today before the Philistines? Let us fetch the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord from Shiloh; thus He will be present among us and will deliver us from the hands of our enemies.”

4 So the troops sent men to Shiloh; there Eli’s two sons, Chofni and Pinchas, were in charge of the Ark of the Covenant of God, and they brought down from there the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of Hosts Enthroned on the Cherubim.

5 When the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord entered the camp, all Israel burst into a great shout, so that the earth resounded.

6 The Philistines heard the noise of the shouting and they wondered, “Why is there such a loud shouting in the camp of the Hebrews?” And when they learned that the Ark of the Lord had come to the camp,

7 the Philistines were frightened; for they said, “God has come to the camp.” And they cried, “Woe to us! Nothing like this has ever happened before.

8 “Woe to us! Who will save us from the power of this mighty God? He is the same God who struck the Egyptians with every kind of plague in the wilderness!

9 “Brace yourselves and be men, O Philistines! Or you will become slaves to the Hebrews as they were slaves to you. Be men and fight!”

10 The Philistines fought; Israel was routed, and they all fled to their homes. The defeat was very great, 30,000 foot soldiers of Israel fell there.

11 The Ark of God was captured, and Eli’s two sons, Chofni and Pinchas, were slain.

12 A Binyaminite ran from the battlefield and reached Shiloh the same day; his clothes were rent and there was earth on his head [as a sign of mourning].

13 When he arrived, he found Eli sitting on a seat, waiting beside the road—his heart trembling for the Ark of God. The man entered the city to spread the news, and the whole city broke out in a cry.

14 And when Eli heard the sound of the outcry and asked, “What is the meaning of this uproar?” the man rushed over to tell Eli.

15 Now Eli was 98 years old; his eyes were fixed in a blind stare.

16 The man said to Eli, “I am the one who came from the battlefield; I have just fled from the battlefield.” [Eli] asked, “What happened, my son?”

17 The bearer of the news replied, “Israel fled before the Philistines and the troops also suffered a great slaughter. Your two sons, Chofni and Pinchas, are dead, and the Ark of God has been captured.”

18 When he mentioned the Ark of God, [Eli] fell backward off the seat beside the gate, broke his neck and died; for he was an old man and heavy. He had been a chieftain of Israel for 40 years.

19 His daughter-in-law, the wife of Pinchas, was with child, about to give birth. When she heard the report that the Ark of God was captured and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she was seized with labor pains, and she crouched down and gave birth.

20 As she lay dying, the women attending her said, “Do not be afraid, for you have borne a son.” But she did not respond or pay heed.

21 She named the boy Ee-chavod [Ichabod], meaning, “The glory has departed from Israel”—referring to the capture of the Ark of God and to [the death of] her father-in-law and her husband.

22 “The glory is gone from Israel,” she said, “for the Ark of God has been captured.”

Chapter 5

1 When the Philistines captured the Ark of God, they brought it from Even-ezer to Ashdod.

2 The Philistines took the Ark of God and brought it into the temple of Dagon and they set it up beside Dagon.

3 Early the next day, the Ashdodites found Dagon lying face down on the ground in front if the Ark of the Lord. They picked up Dagon and put him back in his place;

4 but early the next morning, Dagon was again lying prone on the ground in front of the Ark of the Lord. The head and both hands of Dagon were cut off, lying on the threshold; only Dagon’s trunk was left intact [meaning of Hebrew uncertain].

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

6 The hand of the Lord lay heavy upon the Ashdodites, and He wrought havoc among them: He struck Ashdod and its territory with hemorrhoids. [Septuagint also mentions mice swarming in the Philistine ships and invading their fields.]

7 When the men of Ashdod saw how matters stood, they said, “The Ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for His hand has dealt harshly with us and with our god Dagon.”

8 They sent messengers and assembled all the lords of the Philistines and asked, “What shall we do with the Ark of the God of Israel?” They answered, “Let the Ark of the God of Israel be removed to Gat.” So they moved the Ark of the God of Israel [to Gat].

9 And after they had moved it, the hand of the Lord came against the city, causing great panic; He struck the people of the city, young and old, so that hemorrhoids [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] broke out among them.

10 Then they sent the Ark of God to Ekron. But when the Ark of God came to Ekron, the Ekronites cried out, “They have moved the Ark of the God of Israel to us to slay us and our kindred.”

11 They too sent messengers and assembled all the lords of the Philistines and said, “Send the Ark of the God of Israel away, and let it return to its own place, that it may not slay us and our kindred.” For the panic of death pervaded the whole city, so heavily had the hand of God fallen there;

12 and the men who did not die were stricken with hemorrhoids. The outcry of the city went up to heaven.

Chapter 6

1 The Ark of the Lord remained in the territory of the Philistines seven months [Septuagint adds “and mice invaded their fields”].

2 Then the Philistines summoned the priests and the diviners and asked, “What shall we do about the Ark of the Lord? Tell us with what we shall send it off to its own place.”

3 They answered, “If you are going to send the Ark of the God of Israel away, do not send it away without anything; you must also pay an indemnity to Him. Then you will be healed, and He will make Himself known to you [lit. “and you will know why His hand would not turn away from you”]; otherwise His hand will not turn away from you.”

4 They asked, “What is the indemnity that we should pay to Him?” They answered, “Five golden hemorrhoids and five golden mice, corresponding to the number of lords of the Philistines; for the same plague struck all of you and your lords.

5 “You shall make figures of your hemorrhoids and of the mice that are ravaging your land; thus you shall honor the God of Israel, and perhaps He will lighten the weight of His hand upon you and your gods and your land.

6 “Don’t harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts. As you know, when He made a mockery of them, they had to let them [Israel] go, and they departed.

7 “Therefore, get a new cart ready and two milk cows that have not borne a yoke; harness the cows to the cart, but take back indoors the calves that follow them.

8 “Take the Ark of the Lord and place it on the cart; and put next to it in a chest the gold objects you are paying Him as indemnity. Send it off, and let it go its own way.

9 “Then watch: If it goes up the road to Beit-shemesh, to His own territory, it was He who has inflicted this great harm on us. But if not, we shall know that it was not His hand that struck us; it just happened to us by chance.”

10 The men did so. They took two milk cows and harnessed them to the cart, and shut up their calves indoors.

11 They placed the Ark of the Lord on the cart together with the chest, the golden mice, and the figures of their hemorrhoids.

12 The cows went straight ahead along the road to Beit-shemesh. They went along a single highroad, lowing as they went, and turning off neither to the right nor to the left; and the lords of the Philistines walked behind them as far as the border of Beit-shemesh.

13 The people of Beit-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley. They looked up and saw the Ark, and they rejoiced when they saw it.

14 The cart came into the field of Y’hoshua of Beit-shemesh and it stopped there. They split up the wood of the cart and presented the cows as a burnt offering to the Lord. A large stone was there;

15 and the Levites took down the Ark of the Lord and the chest beside it con­taining the gold objects and placed them on the large stone. Then the men of Beit-shemesh pre­sented burnt offerings and other sacrifices to the Lord that day.

16 The five lords of the Philistines saw this and returned the same day to Ekron.

17 The following were the golden hemor­rhoids that the Philistines paid as an indemnity to the Lord: For Ashdod, one; for Gaza, one; for Ashkelon, one; for Gat, one; for Ekron, one.

18 [meaning of Hebrew uncertain in parts of this and the next verse] As for the golden mice, their number accorded with all the Philistine towns that belonged to the five lords—both fortified towns and unwalled villages, as far as the great meadow [אבל in Hebrew; JPS and some ancient manuscripts substitute “stone,” *even* (אבן) in Hebrew] on which the Ark of the Lord was set down, to this day, in the field of Y’hoshua of Beit-shemesh.

19 He [The Lord] struck at the men of Beit-­shemesh because *they looked into the Ark of the Lord; He struck down 70 men among the people [and] 50,000 men* [meaning of the italicized Hebrew phrase is uncertain]. The peo­ple mourned, for He had inflicted a great slaughter upon the population.

20 And the men of Beit-shemesh asked, “Who can stand in at­tendance on the Lord, this holy God? And to whom shall He go up from us?”

21 They sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiryat-y’arim to say, “The Philistines have sent back the Ark of the Lord. Come down and take it into your keeping.”

Chapter 7

1 The men of Kiryat-y’arim came and took up the Ark of the Lord and brought it into the house of Avinadav on the hill; and they consecrated his son Eleazar to have charge of the Ark of the Lord.

2 A long time elapsed from the day that the Ark was housed in Kiryat-y’arim, 20 years in all; and all the House of Israel yearned [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] after the Lord.

3 And Sh’muel said to all the House of Israel, “If you mean to return to the Lord with all your heart, you must remove the alien gods and the Ashtarot from your midst and direct your heart to the Lord and serve Him alone. Then He will deliver you from the hands of the Philistines.”

4 And the Israelites removed the Baalim and Ashtarot and they served the Lord alone.

5 Sh’muel said, “Assemble all Israel at Mitzpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you.”

6 They jackassembled at Mitzpah, and they drew water and poured it out before the Lord; they fasted that day, and there they confessed that they had sinned against the Lord. And Sh’muel acted as chieftain of the Israelites at Mitzpah.

7 When the Philistines heard that the Israelites had assembled at Mitzpah, the lords of the Philistines marched out against Israel. Hearing of this, the Israelites were terrified of the Philistines

8 and they implored Sh’muel, “Do not neglect us and do not refrain from crying out to the Lord our God to save us from the hands of the Philistines.”

9 Thereupon Sh’muel took a suckling lamb and sacrificed it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord; and Sh’muel cried out to the Lord in behalf of Israel, and the Lord responded to him.

10 For as Sh’muel was presenting the burnt offering and the Philistines advanced to attack Israel, the Lord thundered mightily against the Philistines that day. He threw them into confusion, and they were routed by Israel.

11 The men of Israel sallied out of Mitzpah and pursued the Philistines, striking them down to a point below Beit-car.

12 Sh’muel took a stone and set it up between Mitzpah and Shen, and named it Even-ezer [“stone of help”]: “For up to now,” he said, “the Lord has helped us.”

13 The Philistines were humbled and did not invade the territory of Israel again; and the hand of the Lord was set against the Philistines as long as Sh’muel lived.

14 The towns which the Philistines had taken from Israel, from Ekron to Gat, were restored to Israel; Israel recovered all her territory from the Philistines. There was also peace between Israel and the Amorites.

15 Sh’muel judged Israel as long as he lived.

16 Each year he made the rounds of Beit-El, Gilgal, and Mitzpah, and acted as judge over Israel at all those places.

17 Then he would return to Ramah, for his home was there, and there too he would judge Israel. He built an altar there to the Lord.

Chapter 8

1 When Sh’muel grew old, he appointed his sons judges over Israel.

2 The name of his firstborn son was Yoel, and his second son’s name was Aviyah; they sat as judges in B’er-sheva.

3 But his sons did not follow in his ways; they were bent on gain, they accepted bribes, and they subverted justice.

4 All the elders of Israel assembled and came to Sh’muel at Ramah,

5 and they said to him, “You have grown old, and your sons have not followed your ways. Therefore appoint a king for us, to govern us like all other nations.”

6 Sh’muel was displeased that they said “Give us a king to govern us.” Sh’muel prayed to the Lord,

7 and the Lord replied to Sh’muel, “Heed the demand of the people in everything they say to you. For it is not you they have rejected; it is Me they have rejected as their king.

8 “Like everything else they have done ever since I brought them out of Egypt to this day—forsaking Me and worshiping other gods—so they are doing to you.

9 “Heed their demand; but warn them solemnly, and tell them about the practices of any king who will rule over them.”

10 Sh’muel reported all the words of the Lord to the people, who were asking him for a king.

11 He said, “This will be the practice of the king who will rule over you: He will take your sons and appoint them as his charioteers and horsemen, and they will serve as outrunners for his chariots.

12 “He will appoint them as his chiefs of thousands and of fifties; or they will have to plow his fields, reap his harvest, and make his weapons and the equipment for his chariots.

13 “He will take your daughters as perfumers, cooks, and bakers.

14 “He will seize your choice fields, vineyards, and olive groves, and give them to his courtiers.

15 “He will take a tenth part of your grain and vintage and give it to his eunuchs and courtiers.

16 “He will take your male and female slaves, your choice young men [בחוריכם, but Septuagint reads “cattle,” בקרכם], and your jackasses, and put them to work for him.

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

18 “The day will come when you cry out because of the king whom you yourselves have chosen; and the Lord will not answer you on that day.”

19 But the people would not listen to Sh’muel’s warning. “No,” they said. “We must have a king over us,

20 “that we may be like all the other nations: Let our king rule over us and go out at our head and fight our battles.”

21 When Sh’muel heard all that the people said, he reported it to the Lord.

22 And the Lord said to Sh’muel, “Heed their demands and appoint a king for them.” Sh’muel then said to the men of Israel, “All of you go home.”

Chapter 9

1 There was a man of Binyamin whose name was Kish ben Aviel ben Tz’ror ben B’chorat ben Afiyah, a Binyaminite, a man of substance.

2 He had a son whose name was Shaul, an excellent young man; no one among the Israelites was handsomer than he; he was a head taller [lit. “taller from his shoulders up”] than any of the people.

3 And [it happened once that] the jackasses of Shaul’s father Kish went astray, and Kish said to his son Shaul, “Take along one of the servants and go out and look for the jackasses.”

4 He passed into the hill country of Efrayim. He crossed the district of Shalishah, but they did not find them. They passed through the district of Sha-alim, but they were not there. They traversed the [entire] territory of Binyamin, and still they did not find them.

5 When they reached the district of Tzuf, Shaul said to the servant who was with him, “Let us turn back, or my father will stop worrying about the jackasses and begin to worry about us.”

6 But he replied, “There is a man of God in that town, and the man is highly esteemed; everything that he says comes true. Let us go there; perhaps he will tell us about the errand on which we set out.”

7 “But if we go,” Shaul said to his servant, “what can we bring the man? For the food in our bags is all gone, and there is nothing we can bring to the man of God as a present. What have we got?”

8 The servant answered Shaul again, “I happen to have a quarter-shekel of silver. I can give that to the man of God and he will tell us about our errand.”

9 —Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he would say, “Come, let us go to the seer,” for the prophet of today was formerly called a seer.—

10 Shaul said to his servant, “A good idea; let us go.” And they went to the town where the man of God lived.

11 As they were climbing the ascent to the town, they met some girls coming out to draw water, and they asked them, “Is the seer in town?”

12 “Yes,” they replied. “He is up there ahead of you. Hurry, for he has just come to the town because the people have a sacrifice at the shrine today.

13 “As soon as you enter the town, you will find him before he goes up to the shrine to eat; the people will not eat until he comes; for he must first bless the sacrifice and only then will the guests eat. Go up at once, for you will find him right away.”

14 So they went up to the town; and as they were entering the town, Sh’muel came out toward them, on his way up to the shrine.

15 Now the day before Shaul came, the Lord had revealed the following to Sh’muel:

16 “At this time tomorrow, I will send a man to you from the territory of Binyamin, and you shall anoint him ruler of My people Israel. He will deliver My people from the hands of the Philistines; for I have taken note of My people, their outcry has come to Me.”

17 As soon as Sh’muel saw Shaul, the Lord declared to him, “This is the man that I told you would govern My people.”

18 Shaul approached Sh’muel inside the gate and said to him, “Tell me, please, where is the house of the seer?”

19 And Sh’muel answered Shaul, “I am the seer. Go up ahead of me to the shrine, for you shall eat with me today; and in the morning I will let you go, after telling you whatever may be on your mind.

20 “As for your jackasses that strayed three days ago, do not concern yourself about them, for they have been found. And for whom is all Israel yearning, if not for you and all your ancestral house?”

21 Shaul replied, “But I am only a Binyaminite, from the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my clan is the least of all the clans of the tribe of Binyamin! Why do you say such things to me?”

22 Sh’muel took Shaul and his servant and brought them into the hall, and gave them a place at the head of the guests, who numbered about 30.

23 And Sh’muel said to the cook, “Bring the portion which I gave you and told you to set aside.”

24 The cook lifted up the thigh and what was on it [meaning of Hebrew uncertain], and set it before Shaul. And [Sh’muel] said, “What has been reserved is set before you. Eat; it has been kept for you for this occasion, when I said I was inviting the people.” So Shaul ate with Sh’muel that day.

25 They then descended from the shrine to the town, and [Sh’muel] talked [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] with Shaul on the roof. [Septuagint has it that they set a bed for Shaul on the roof, which is consistent with the next verse.]

26 Early, at the break of day, Sh’muel called to Shaul on the roof. He said, “Get up, and I will send you off.” Shaul arose, and the two of them, Sh’muel and he, went outside.

27 As they were walking toward the end of the town, Sh’muel said to Shaul, “Tell the servant to walk ahead of us”— and he walked ahead—”but you stop here a moment and I will make known to you the word of God.”

**Chapter 10**

1 Sh’muel took a flask of oil and poured some on Shaul’s head and kissed him, and said, “The Lord herewith anoints you [כי משחך ה׳, *ki m’sha-ch’chah Adonai*] ruler over His own people.

2 “When you leave me today, you will meet two men near the tomb of Rachel in the territory of Binyamin, at Tzeltzah [meaning of Hebrew uncertain], and they will tell you that the jackasses you set out to look for have been found, and that your father has stopped being concerned about the jackasses and is worrying about you, saying: ‘What shall I do about my son?’

3 “You shall pass on from there until you come to the terebinth of Tabor. There you will be met by three men making a pilgrimage to God at Beit-El. One will be carrying three kids, another will be carrying three loaves of bread, and the third will be carrying a jar of wine.

4 “They will greet you and offer you two loaves of bread, which you shall accept.

5 After that, you are to go on to the Hill of God [Givat Elohim, perhaps Gi’vah], where the Philistine prefects reside. There, as you enter the town, you will encounter a band of prophets coming down from the shrine, preceded by lyres, timbrels, flutes, and harps, and they will be speaking in ecstasy [prophesying].

6 “The spirit of the Lord will grip you, and you will speak in ecstasy along with them; you will become another man.

7 “And once these signs have happened to you, act when the occasion arises, for God is with you.

8 “After that, you are to go down to Gilgal ahead of me, and I will come down to you to present burnt offerings and offer sacrifices of well-being. Wait seven days until I come to you and instruct you what you are to do next.”

9 As [Shaul] turned around to leave Sh’muel, God gave him another heart; and all those signs were fulfilled that same day.

10 And when they came there, to the Hill, he saw a band of prophets coming toward him. Thereupon the spirit of God gripped him, and he spoke in ecstasy among them.

11 When all who knew him previously saw him speaking in ecstasy together with the prophets, the people said to one another, “What’s happened to the son of Kish? [To refer to a person merely as “the son (ben) of…” is slighting that person.] Is Shaul too among the prophets?”

12 But another person there spoke up and said, “And who are their fathers?” Thus the proverb arose: “Is Shaul too among the prophets?”

13 And when he stopped speaking in ecstasy, he entered the shrine.

14 Shaul’s uncle asked him and his servant, “Where did you go?” “To look for the jackasses,” he replied. “And when we saw that they were not to be found, we went to Sh’muel.”

15 “Tell me,” said Shaul’s uncle, “what did Sh’muel say to you?”

16 Shaul answered his uncle, “He just told us that the jackasses had been found.” But he did not tell him anything of what Sh’muel had said about the kingship.

17 Sh’muel summoned the people to the Lord at Mitzpah

18 and said to them, “Thus said the Lord, the God of Israel: ‘I brought Israel out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians and of all the kingdoms that oppressed you.’

19 “But today you have rejected your God who delivered you from all your troubles and calamities. For you said, ‘No, set up a king over us!’ Now station yourselves before the Lord, by your tribes and clans.”

20 Sh’muel brought forward each of the tribes of Israel, and the lot indicated the tribe of Binyamin.

21 Then Sh’muel brought forward the tribe of Binyamin by its clans, and the clan of the Matrites was indicated; and then Shaul ben Kish was indicated. But when they looked for him, he was not to be found.

22 They inquired of the Lord again, “Has anyone else come here?” And the Lord replied, “Yes; he is hiding among the baggage.”

23 So they ran over and brought him from there; and when he took his place among the people, he stood a head taller than all the people.

24 And Sh’muel said to the people, “Do you see the one whom the Lord has chosen? There is none like him among all the people.” And all the people acclaimed him, shouting, “Long live the king!”

25 Sh’muel expounded to the people the rules of the monarchy, and recorded them in a document which he deposited before the Lord. Sh’muel then sent the people back to their homes.

26 Shaul also went home to Giv’ah, accompanied by upstanding men whose hearts God had touched.

27 But some scoundrels said, “How can this fellow save us?” So they scorned him and brought him no gift. But he pretended not to mind [lit. “But he was one who holds his peace”].

Chapter 11

1. Nachash the Ammonite marched up and besieged Yavesh-gil’ad. All the men of Yavesh-gil’ad said to Nachash, “Make a pact with us, and we will serve you.”

2 But Nachash the Ammonite answered them, “I will make a pact with you on this condition, that everyone’s right eye be gouged out; I will make this a humiliation for all Israel.”

3 The elders of Yavesh said to him, “Give us seven days’ respite, so that we may send messengers throughout the territory of Israel; if no one comes to our aid, we will surrender to you.”

4 When the messengers came to Giv’ah of Shaul and gave this report in the hearing of the people, all the people broke into weeping.

5 Shaul was just coming from the field driving the cattle; and Shaul asked, “Why are the people crying?” And they told him about the situation of the men of Yavesh.

6 When he heard these things, the spirit of God gripped Shaul and his anger blazed up.

7 He took a yoke of oxen and cut them into pieces, which he sent by messengers throughout the territory of Israel, with the warning, “Thus shall be done to the cattle of anyone who does not follow Shaul and Sh’muel into battle!” Terror from the Lord fell upon the people, and they came out as one man.

8 [Shaul] mustered them in Bezek, and the Israelites numbered 300,000, the men of Judah 30,000.

9 The messengers who had come were told, “Thus shall you speak to the men of Yavesh-gil’ad: Tomorrow, when the sun grows hot, you shall be saved.” When the messengers came and told this to the men of Yavesh-gil’ad, they rejoiced.

10 The men of Yavesh then told [the Amoni], “Tomorrow we will surrender to you, and you can do to us whatever you please.”

11 The next day, Shaul divided the troops into three columns; at the morning watch they entered the camp and struck down the Amoni until the day grew hot. The survivors scattered; no two were left together.

12 The people then said to Sh’muel, “Who was it said, ‘Shall Shaul be king over us?’ Hand the men over and we will put them to death!”

13 But Shaul replied, “No man shall be put to death this day! For this day the Lord has brought victory to Israel.”

14 Sh’muel said to the people, “Come, let us go to Gilgal and there inaugurate the monarchy.”

15 So all the people went to Gilgal, and there at Gilgal they declared Shaul king before the Lord. They offered sacrifices of well-being there before the Lord; and Shaul and all the men of Israel held a great celebration there.

Chapter 12

1 Then Sh’muel said to all Israel, “I have yielded to you in all you have asked of me and have set a king over you.

2 “Henceforth the king will be your leader. As for me, I have grown old and gray—but my sons are still with you—and I have been your leader from my youth to this day.

3 “Here I am! Testify against me, in the presence of the Lord and in the presence of His anointed one: Whose ox have I taken, or whose jackass have I taken? Whom have I defrauded or whom have I robbed? From whom have I taken a bribe to look the other way? I will return it to you.”

4 They responded, “You have not defrauded us, and you have not robbed us, and you have taken nothing from anyone.”

5 He said to them, “The Lord then is witness, and His anointed [את משיחו, *et m’shicho*] is witness, to your admission this day that you have found nothing in my possession.” They responded, “He is!”

6 Sh’muel said to the people, “The Lord [is witness], He who appointed [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] Moses and Aaron and who brought your fathers out of the land of Egypt.

7 “Come, stand before the Lord while I cite against you all the kindnesses that the Lord has done to you and your fathers.

8 “When Jacob came to Egypt… [text is clearly missing; Septuagint adds “and the Egyptians oppressed them”], your fathers cried out to the Lord, and the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and settled them in this place.

9 “But they forgot the Lord their God; so He delivered them into the hands of Sisera the military commander of Chatzor, into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the kind of Moab; and these made war upon them.

10 “They cried to the Lord, ‘We are guilty, for we have forsaken the Lord and worshiped the Baalim and Ashtarot. Oh, deliver us from our enemies and we will serve You.’

11 “And the Lord sent Y’rubaal [Gid’on] and Bedan [Septuagint has “Barak”] and Yiftach and Sh’muel, and delivered you from the enemies around you; and you dwelt in security.

12 “But when you saw that Nachash king of the Amoni was advancing against you, you said to me, ‘No, we must have a king reigning over us’—though the Lord your God is your King.

13 “Well, the Lord has set a king over you! Here is the king that you have chosen, that you have asked for.

14 “If you will revere the Lord, worship Him, and obey Him, and will not flout the Lord’s command, if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God, [well and good].

15 “But if you do not obey the Lord and you flout the Lord’s command, the hand of the Lord will strike you as it did your fathers [meaning of Hebrew uncertain].

16 “Now stand by and see the marvelous thing that the Lord will do before your eyes.

17 It is the season of the wheat harvest [when thunderstorms do not occur in the land of Israel]. I will pray to the Lord and He will send thunder and rain; then you will take thought and realize what a wicked thing you did in the sight of the Lord when you asked for a king.”

18 Sh’muel prayed to the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day, and the people stood in awe of the Lord and of Sh’muel.

19 The people all said to Sh’muel, “Intercede for your servants with the Lord your God that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins the wickedness of asking for a king.”

20 But Sh’muel said to the people, “Have no fear. You have, indeed, done all those wicked things. Do not, however, turn away from the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart.

21 “Do not turn away to follow worthless things, which can neither profit nor save but are worthless.

22 “For the sake of His great name, the Lord will never abandon His people, seeing that the Lord undertook to make you His people.

23 “As for me, far be it from me to sin against the Lord and refrain from praying for you; and I will continue to instruct you in the practice of what is good and right.

24 “Above all, you must revere the Lord and serve Him faithfully with all your heart; and consider how grandly He has dealt with you.

25 “For if you persist in your wrongdoing, both you and your king shall be swept away.”

Chapter 13

1 Shaul was a year old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel two years. [“was a year old” is the correct translation, which means it’s wrong; the actual number is lacking in the Hebrew text, however; also, the precise context of the “two years” is uncertain. This verse is not found in the Septuagint.]

2 Shaul picked 3,000 Israelites, of whom 2,000 were with Shaul in Michmas [or Michmash, as in some texts] and in the hill country of Beit-El, and 1,000 with [his son] Yonatan in Giv’ah of Binyamin; the rest of the troops he sent back to their homes.

3 Yonatan struck down the Philistine prefect in Geva; and the Philistines heard about it. Shaul had the ram’s horn sounded throughout the land, saying, “Let the Hebrews hear.”

4 When all Israel heard that Shaul had struck down the Philistine prefect, and that Israel had incurred the wrath of [lit. “became malodorous to] the Philistines, all the people rallied to Shaul at Gilgal.

5 The Philistines, in turn, gathered to attack Israel: 30,000 [Septuagint and other versions read “three thousand”] chariots and 6,000 horsemen, and troops as numerous as the sands of the seashore. They marched up and encamped at Michmas, east of Beit-aven.

6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in trouble—for the troops were hard pressed— the people hid in caves, among thorns, among rocks, in tunnels, and in cisterns.

7 Some Hebrews crossed the Jordan, [to] the territory of Gad and Gil’ad. Shaul was still at Gilgal, and the rest of the people rallied to him in alarm.

8 He waited seven days, the time that Sh’muel had set. But when Sh’muel failed to come to Gilgal, and the people began to scatter,

9 Shaul said, “Bring me the burnt offering and the sacrifice of well-being”; and he presented the burnt offering.

10 He had just finished presenting the burnt offering when Sh’muel arrived; and Shaul went out to meet him and welcome him.

11 But Sh’muel said, “What have you done?” Shaul replied, “I saw the people leaving me and scattering; you had not come at the appointed time, and the Philistines had gathered at Michmas.

12 “I thought the Philistines would march down against me at Gilgal before I had entreated the Lord, so I forced myself [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] to present the burnt offering.”

13 Sh’muel answered Shaul, “You acted foolishly in not keeping the commandments that the Lord your God laid upon you! Otherwise, the Lord would have established your dynasty over Israel forever.

14 “But now your dynasty will not endure. The Lord will seek out a man after His own heart, and the Lord will appoint him ruler over His people, because you did not abide by what the Lord had commanded you.”

15 Sh’muel arose and went up from Gilgal to Giv’ah of Binyamin. Shaul numbered the troops who remained with him—about 600 strong.

16 Shaul and his son Yonatan, and the troops who remained with them, stayed in Geva of Binyamin, while the Philistines were encamped at Michmas.

17 The raiders came out of the Philistine camp in three columns: One column headed for the Ofrah road that leads to the district of Shual,

18 another column headed for the Beit-choron road, and the third column headed for the border road that overlooks the valley of Tz’voim toward the desert.

19 No smith was to be found in all the land of Israel, for the Philistines were afraid that the Hebrews would make swords or spears.

20 So all the Israelites had to go down to the Philistines to have their plowshares, their mattocks [an agricultural cutting tool shaped like a pickaxe, but with an edge like an adze], axes, and colters sharpened. [A colter is a vertical cutting blade fixed in front of a plowshare.]

21 [meaning of some of the Hebrew terms in this verse is uncertain] The charge for sharpening was a pim [two-thirds of a shekel] for plowshares, mattocks, three-pronged forks, and axes, and for setting the goads.

22 Thus on the day of the battle, no sword or spear was to be found in the possession of any of the troops with Shaul and Yonatan; only Shaul and Yonatan had them.

23 Now the Philistine garrison had marched out to the pass of Michmas.

Chapter 14

1 One day, Yonatan ben Shaul said to the attendant who carried his arms, “Come, let us cross over to the Philistine garrison on the other side”; but he did not tell his father.

2 Now Shaul was staying on the outskirts of Giv’ah, under the pomegranate tree at Migron, and the troops with him numbered about 600.

3 Achiyah ben Achituv, brother of Ee-chavod ben Pinchas ben Eli, the priest of the Lord at Shiloh, was there bearing an ephod. The troops did not know that Yonatan had gone.

4 At the crossing [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] by which Yonatan sought to reach the Philistine garrison, there was a rocky crag on one side, and another rocky crag on the other, the one called Botzetz and the other Seneh.

5 One crag was located on the north, near Michmas, and the other on the south, near Geva.

6 Yonatan said to the attendant who carried his arms, “Come, let us cross over to the outpost of those uncircumcised fellows. Perhaps the Lord will act in our behalf, for nothing prevents the Lord from winning a victory by many or by few.”

7 His arms-bearer answered him, “Do whatever you like. You go first, I am with you, whatever you decide.”

8 Yonatan said, “We’ll cross over to those men and let them see us.

9 “If they say to us, ‘Wait until we get to you,’ then we’ll stay where we are, and not go up to them.

10 “But if they say, ‘Come up to us,’ then we will go up, for the Lord is delivering them into our hands. That shall be our sign.”

11 They both showed themselves to the Philistine outpost and the Philistines said, “Look, some Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have been hiding.”

12 The men of the outpost shouted to Yonatan and his arms-bearer, “Come up to us, and we’ll teach you a lesson.” Then Yonatan said to his arms-bearer, “Follow me, for the Lord will deliver them into the hands of Israel.”

13 And Yonatan clambered up on his hands and feet, his arms-bearer behind him; they [the Philistines] fell before Yonatan, and his arms-bearer finished them off behind him.

14 The initial attack that Yonatan and his arms-bearer made accounted for some 20 men, *within a space about half a furrow long [in] an acre of land* [meaning of the Hebrew in the italicized phrase is uncertain].

15 Terror broke out among all the troops both in the camp [and] in the field; the outposts and the raiders were also terrified. The very earth quaked, and a terror from God ensued.

16 Shaul’s scouts in Giv’ah of Binyamin saw that the multitude was scattering [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] in all directions.

17 And Shaul said to the troops with him, “Take a count and see who has left us.” They took a count and found that Yonatan and his arms-bearer were missing.

18 Thereupon Shaul said to Achiyah, “Bring the Ark of God here”; for the Ark of God was at the time among the Israelites.

19 But while Shaul was speaking to the priest, the confusion in the Philistine camp kept increasing; and Shaul said to the priest, “Withdraw your hand.”

20 Shaul and the troops with him assembled and rushed into battle; they found them [the Philistines] in very great confusion, every man’s sword turned against his fellow.

21 And the Hebrews who had previously sided with the Philistines, who had come up with them in the army [from] round about—they too joined the Israelites who were with Shaul and Yonatan.

22 When all the men of Israel who were hiding in the hill country of Efrayim heard that the Philistines were fleeing, they too pursued them in battle.

23 Thus the Lord brought victory to Israel that day. The fighting passed beyond Beit-aven.

24 The men of Israel were distressed that day. For Shaul had laid an oath upon the troops: “Cursed be the man who eats any food before night falls and I take revenge on my enemies.” So none of the troops ate anything.

25 Everybody came to a stack of beehives [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] where some honey had spilled on the ground.

26 When the troops came to the beehives and found the flow of honey there, no one put his hand to his mouth, for the troops feared the oath.

27 Yonatan, however, had not heard his father adjure the troops. So he put out the stick he had with him, dipped it into the beehive of honey, and brought his hand back to his mouth; and his eyes lit up.

28 At this one of the soldiers spoke up, “Your father adjured the troops: ‘Cursed be the man who eats anything this day.’ And so the troops are faint.”

29 Yonatan answered, “My father has brought trouble on the people. See for yourselves how my eyes lit up when I tasted that bit of honey.

30 “If only the troops had eaten today of spoil captured from the enemy, the defeat of the Philistines would have been greater still!”

31 They struck down the Philistines that day from Michmas to Ayalon, and the troops were famished.

32 The troops pounced on the spoil; they took the sheep and cows and calves and slaughtered them on the ground, and the troops ate with the blood [i.e., without the proper rites].

33 When it was reported to Shaul that the troops were sinning against the Lord, eating with the blood, he said, “You have acted faithlessly. Roll a large stone over to me today.”

34 And Shaul ordered, “Spread out among the troops and tell them that everyone must bring me his ox or his sheep and slaughter it here, and then eat. You must not sin against the Lord and eat with the blood.” Every one of the troops brought l-his own ox with him that night and slaughtered it there.

35 Thus Shaul set up an altar to the Lord; it was the first altar he erected to the Lord.

36 Shaul said, “Let us go down after the Philistines by night and plunder among them until the light of morning; and let us not leave a single survivor among them.” “Do whatever you please,” they replied. But the priest said, “Let us approach God here.”

37 So Shaul inquired of God, “Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will You deliver them into the hands of Israel?” But this time He did not respond to him.

38 Then Shaul said, “Come forward, all chief officers of the troops, and find out how this guilt was incurred today.

39 For as the Lord lives who brings victory to Israel, even if it was through my son Yonatan, he shall be put to death!” Not one soldier answered him.

40 And he said to all the Israelites, “You stand on one side, and my son Yonatan and I shall stand on the other.” The troops said to Shaul, “Do as you please.”

41 Shaul then said to the Lord, the God of Israel, “Show Thammim [meaning of Hebrew uncertain].” Yonatan and Shaul were indicated by lot, and the troops were cleared.

42 And Shaul said, “Cast the lots between my son and me”; and Yonatan was indicated.

43 Shaul said to Yonatan, “Tell me, what have you done?” And Yonatan told him, “I only tasted a bit of honey with the tip of the stick in my hand. I am ready to die.”

44 Shaul said, “Thus and more may God do: You shall be put to death, Yonatan!”

45 But the troops said to Shaul, “Shall Yonatan die, after bringing this great victory to Israel? Never! As the Lord lives, not a hair of his head shall fall to the ground! For he brought this day to pass with the help of God.” Thus the troops saved Yonatan and he did not die.

46 Shaul broke off his pursuit of the Philistines, and the Philistines returned to their homes.

47 After Shaul had secured his kingship over Israel, he waged war on every side against all his enemies: against the Moabites, Amoni, in Edom, and [against] the kings of Tzovah and the Philistines; and wherever he turned he worsted them.

48 He was triumphant, defeating the Amalekites and saving Israel from those who plundered it.

49 Shaul’s sons were: Yonatan, Ishvi [or Ishboshet or Eshbaal], and Malki-shua; and the names of his two daughters were Merav, the older, and Michal, the younger.

50 The name of Shaul’s wife was Achinoam daughter of Achimah-atz; and the name of his army commander was Aviner [usually Avner] son of Shaul’s uncle Ner. [Aviner means “my father is Ner.]

51 Kish, Shaul’s father, and Ner, Avner’s father, were sons of Aviel.

52 There was bitter war against the Philistines all the days of Shaul; and whenever Shaul noticed any stalwart man or warrior, he would take him into his service.

Chapter 15

1 Sh’muel said to Shaul, “I am the one the Lord sent to anoint you king over His people Israel. Therefore, listen to the Lord’s command!

2 “Thus said the Lord of Hosts: I am exacting the penalty for what Amalek did to Israel, for the assault he made upon them on the road, on their way up from Egypt.

3 “Now go, attack Amalek, and proscribe all that belongs to him. Spare no one, but kill alike men and women, infants and sucklings, oxen and sheep, camels and jackasses!”

4 Shaul mustered the troops and enrolled them at Telaim: 200,000 men on foot, and 10,000 men of Judah.

5 Then Shaul advanced as far as the city of Amalek and lay in wait [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] in the wadi.

6 Shaul said to the Kenites, “Come, withdraw at once from among the Amalekites, that I may not destroy you along with them; for you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they left Egypt.” So the Kenites withdrew from among the Amalekites.

7 Shaul destroyed Amalek from Chavilah all the way to Shur, which is close to Egypt,

8 and he captured King Agag of Amalek alive. He proscribed all the people, putting them to the sword;

9 but Shaul and the troops spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the second-born [Targum has “fatlings”], the lambs, and all else that was of value. They would not proscribe them; they proscribed only what was cheap and worthless [meaning of Hebrew uncertain].

10 The word of the Lord then came to Sh’muel:

11 “I regret that I made Shaul king, for he has turned away from Me and has not carried out My commands.” Sh’muel was distressed and he entreated the Lord all night long.

12 Early in the morning Sh’muel went to meet Shaul. Sh’muel was told, “Shaul went to Carmel, where he erected a monument for himself; then he left and went on down to Gilgal.”

13 When Sh’muel came to Shaul, Shaul said to him, “Blessed are you of the Lord! I have fulfilled the Lord’s command.”

14 “Then what,” demanded Sh’muel, “is this bleating of sheep in my ears, and the lowing of oxen that I hear?”

15 Shaul answered, “They were brought from the Amalekites, for the troops spared the choicest of the sheep and oxen for sacrificing to the Lord your God. And we proscribed the rest.”

16 Sh’muel said to Shaul, “Stop! Let me tell you what the Lord said to me last night!” “Speak,” he replied.

17 And Sh’muel said, “You may look small to yourself, but you are the head of the tribes of Israel. The Lord anointed you king over Israel,

18 “and the Lord sent you on a mission, saying, ‘Go and proscribe the sinful Amalekites; make war on them until you have exterminated them.’

19 “Why did you disobey the Lord and swoop down on the spoil in defiance of the Lord’s will [lit. “and do evil in the sight of the Lord”]?”

20 Shaul said to Sh’muel, “But I did obey the Lord! I performed the mission on which the Lord sent me: I captured King Agag of Amalek, and I proscribed Amalek,

21 and the troops took from the spoil some sheep and oxen—the best of what had been proscribed— to sacrifice to the Lord your God at Gilgal.”

22 But Sh’muel said: “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obedience to the Lord’s command? Surely, obedience is better than sacrifice, compliance than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination, defiance, like the iniquity of [the oracular idols known as] *t’rafim*. Because you rejected the Lord’s command, He has rejected you as king.”

24 Shaul said to Sh’muel, “I did wrong to transgress the Lord’s command and your instructions; but I was afraid of the troops and I yielded to them.

25 “Please, forgive my offense and come back with me, and I will bow low to the Lord.”

26 But Sh’muel said to Shaul, “I will not go back with you; for you have rejected the Lord’s command, and the Lord has rejected you as king over Israel.”

27 As Sh’muel turned to leave, Shaul seized the corner of his robe, and it tore.

28 And Sh’muel said to him, “The Lord has this day torn the kingship over Israel away from you and has given it to another who is worthier than you.

29 “Moreover, the Glory of Israel does not deceive or change His mind, for He is not human that He should change His mind.”

30 But [Shaul] pleaded, “I did wrong. Please, honor me in the presence of the elders of my people and in the presence of Israel, and come back with me until I have bowed low to the Lord your God.”

31 So Sh’muel followed Shaul back, and Shaul bowed low to the Lord.

32 Sh’muel said, “Bring forward to me King Agag of Amalek.” Agag approached him with faltering steps; and Agag said, “Ah, bitter death is at hand [meaning of Hebrew uncertain]!”

33 Sh’muel said: “As your sword has bereaved women, so shall your mother be bereaved among women.” And Sh’muel cut Agag down [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] before the Lord at Gilgal.

34 Sh’muel then departed for Ramah, and Shaul went up to his home at Giv’ah of Shaul.

35 Sh’muel never saw Shaul again to the day of his death. But Sh’muel grieved over Shaul, because the Lord regretted that He had made Shaul king over Israel.

Chapter 16

1 And the Lord said to Sh’muel, “How long will you grieve over Shaul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and set out; I am sending you to Yishai the Beit-lechemite, for I have decided on one of his sons to be king.”

2 Sh’muel replied, “How can I go? If Shaul hears of it, he will kill me.” The Lord answered, “Take a heifer with you, and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.’

3 “Invite Yishai to the sacrificial feast, and then I will make known to you what you shall do; you shall anoint for Me the one I point out to you.”

4 Sh’muel did what the Lord commanded. When he came to Beit-lechem, the elders of the city went out in alarm to meet him and said, “Do you come on a peaceful errand?”

5 “Yes,” he replied, “I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Purify yourselves and join me in the sacrificial feast.” He also instructed Yishai and his sons to purify themselves and invited them to the sacrificial feast.

6 When they arrived and he saw Eliav, he thought: “Surely the Lord’s anointed stands before Him.”

7 But the Lord said to Sh’muel, “Pay no attention to his appearance or his stature, for I have rejected him. For not as man sees [does the Lord see]; a man sees only what is visible, but the Lord sees into the heart.”

8 Then Yishai called Avinadav and had him pass before Sh’muel; but he said, “The Lord has not chosen this one either.”

9 Next Yishai presented Shammah; and again he said, “The Lord has not chosen this one either.”

10 Thus Yishai presented seven of his sons before Sh’muel, and Sh’muel said to Yishai, “The Lord has not chosen any of these.”

11 Then Sh’muel asked Yishai, “Are these all the boys you have?” He replied, “There is still the youngest; he is tending the flock.” And Sh’muel said to Yishai, “Send someone to bring him, for we will not sit down to eat [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] until he gets here.”

12 So they sent and brought him. He was ruddy-cheeked, bright-eyed [meaning of Hebrew uncertain], and handsome. And the Lord said, “Rise and anoint him, for this is the one.”

13 Sh’muel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord gripped David from that day on. Sh’muel then set out for Ramah.

14 Now the spirit of the Lord had departed from Shaul, and an evil spirit from the Lord began to terrify him.

15 Shaul’s courtiers said to him, “An evil spirit of God is terrifying you.

16 “Let our lord give the order and the courtiers in attendance on you will look for someone who is skilled at playing the lyre; whenever the evil spirit of God comes over you, he will play it and you will feel better.”

17 So Shaul said to his courtiers, “Find me someone who can play well and bring him to me.”

18 One of the attendants spoke up, “I have observed a son of Yishai the Beit-lechemite who is skilled in music; he is a stalwart fellow and a warrior, sensible in speech, and handsome in appearance, and the Lord is with him.”

19 Whereupon Shaul sent messengers to Yishai to say, “Send me your son David, who is with the flock.”

20 Yishai took a jackass [laden with] bread, a skin of wine, and a kid, and sent them to Shaul by his son David.

21 So David came to Shaul and entered his service; [Shaul] took a strong liking to [David] and made him one of his arms-bearers.

22 Shaul sent word to Yishai, “Let David remain in my service, for I am pleased with him.”

23 Whenever the [evil] spirit of God came upon Shaul, David would take the lyre and play it; Shaul would find relief and feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.

Chapter 17

1 The Philistines assembled their forces for battle; they massed at Sochoh of Judah, and encamped at Edes-damim, between Sochoh and Azekah.

2 Shaul and the men of Israel massed and encamped in the valley of Elah. They drew up their line of battle against the Philistines,

3 with the Philistines stationed on one hill and Israel stationed on the opposite hill; the ravine was between them.

4 A champion of the Philistine forces stepped forward; his name was Goliath of Gat, and he was six cubits and a span tall.

5 He had a bronze helmet on his head, and wore a breastplate of scale armor, a bronze breastplate weighing 5,000 shekels.

6 He had bronze greaves on his legs, and a bronze javelin [slung] from his shoulders.

7 The shaft of his spear was like a weaver’s bar, and the iron head of his spear weighed 600 shekels; and the shield-bearer marched in front of him.

8 He stopped and called out to the ranks of Israel and he said to them, “Why should you come out to engage in battle? I am *the* Philistine [its champion], and you are Shaul’s servants. Choose one of your men and let him come down against me.

9 If he bests me in combat and kills me, we will become your slaves; but if I best him and kill him, you shall be our slaves and serve us.”

10 And the Philistine ended, “I herewith defy the ranks of Israel. Get me a man and let’s fight it out!”

11 When Shaul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and terror-stricken.

12 David was the son of a certain Efrathite of Beit-lechem in Judah whose name was Yishai. He had eight sons, and in the days of Shaul the man was already old, advanced in years.

13 The three oldest sons of Yishai had left and gone with Shaul to the war. The names of his three sons who had gone to the war were Eliav the first-born, the next Avinadav, and the third Shammah;

14 and David was the youngest. The three oldest had followed Shaul,

15 and David would go back and forth from attending on Shaul to shepherd his father’s flock at Beit-lechem.

16 The Philistine stepped forward morning and evening and took his stand for 40 days.

17 Yishai said to his son David, “Take an eifah of this parched corn and these 10 loaves of bread for your brothers, and carry them quickly to your brothers in camp.

18 Take these 10 cheeses to the captain of their thousand. Find out how your brothers are and bring some token [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] from them.”

19 Shaul and they [the brothers] and all the men of Israel were in the valley of Elah, in the war against the Philistines.

20 Early next morning, David left someone in charge of the flock, took [the provisions], and set out, as his father Yishai had instructed him. He reached the barricade as the army was going out to the battle lines shouting the war cry.

21 Israel and the Philistines drew up their battle lines opposite each other.

22 David left his baggage with the man in charge of the baggage and ran toward the battle line and went to greet his brothers.

23 While he was talking to them, the champion, whose name was Goliath, the Philistine of Gat, stepped forward from the Philistine ranks and spoke the same words as before; and David heard him.

24 When the men of Israel saw the man, they fled in terror.

25 And the men of Israel were saying [among themselves], “Do you see that man coming out? He comes out to defy Israel! The man who kills him will be rewarded by the king with great riches; he will also give him his daughter in marriage and grant exemption [from royal levies] to his father’s house in Israel.”

26 David asked the men standing near him, “What will be done for the man who kills that Philistine and removes the disgrace from Israel? Who is that uncircumcised Philistine that he dares defy the ranks of the living God?”

27 The troops told him in the same words what would be done for the man who killed him.

28 When Eliav, his oldest brother, heard him speaking to the men, Eliav became angry with David and said, “Why did you come down here, and with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your impudence and your impertinence [lit. “the badness of your heart”]: you came down to watch the fighting!”

29 But David replied, “What have I done now? I was only asking!”

30 And he turned away from him toward someone else; he asked the same question, and the troops gave him the same answer as before.

31 The things David said were overheard and were reported to Shaul, who had him brought over.

32 David said to Shaul, “Let no man’s courage fail him. Your servant will go and fight that Philistine!”

33 But Shaul said to David, “You cannot go to that Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth!”

34 David replied to Shaul, “Your servant has been tending his father’s sheep, and if a lion or a bear came and carried off an animal from the flock,

35 “I would go after it and fight it and rescue it from its mouth. And if it attacked me, I would seize it by the beard and strike it down and kill it.

36 “Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and that uncircumcised Philistine shall end up like one of them, for he has defied the ranks of the living God.

37 The Lord,” David went on, “who saved me from lion and bear will also save me from that Philistine.” “Then go,” Shaul said to David, “and may the Lord be with you!”

38 Shaul clothed David in his own garment; he placed a bronze helmet on his head and fastened a breastplate on him.

39 David girded his sword over his garment. Then he tried to walk; but he was not used to it. And David said to Shaul, “I cannot walk in these, for I am not used to them.” So David took them off.

40 He took his stick, picked five smooth stones from the wadi, put them in the pocket of his shepherd’s bag and, sling in hand, he went toward the Philistine.

41 The Philistine, meanwhile, was coming closer to David, preceded by his shield-bearer.

42 When the Philistine caught sight of David, he scorned him, for he was but a boy, ruddy and handsome.

43 And the Philistine called out to David, “Am I a dog that you come against me with sticks?” The Philistine cursed David by his gods;

44 and the Philistine said to David, “Come here, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field.”

45 David replied to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come against you in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the ranks of Israel, whom you have defied.

46 “This very day the Lord will deliver you into my hands. I will kill you and cut off your head; and I will give the carcasses of the Philistine camp to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth. All the earth shall know that there is a God in Israel.

47 And this whole assembly shall know that the Lord can give victory without sword or spear. For the battle is the Lord’s, and He will deliver you into our hands.”

48 When the Philistine began to advance toward him again, David quickly ran up to the battle line to face the Philistine.

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

50 Thus David bested the Philistine with sling and stone; he struck him down and killed him. David had no sword;

51 so David ran up and stood over the Philistine, grasped his sword and pulled it from its sheath; and with it he dispatched him and cut off his head. When the Philistines saw that their warrior was dead, they ran.

52 The men of Israel and Judah rose up with a war cry and they pursued the Philistines all the way to Guy and up to the gates of Ekron; the Philistines fell mortally wounded along the road to Sha-arim up to Gat and Ekron.

53 Then the Israelites returned from chasing the Philistines and looted their camp.

54 David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem [after David’s capture of Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5)], and he put his weapons in his own tent.

55 When Shaul saw David going out to assault the Philistine, he asked his army commander Avner, “Whose son is that boy, Avner?” And Avner replied, “By your life, Your Majesty, I do not know.”

56 “Then find out whose son that young fellow is,” the king ordered.

57 So when David returned after killing the Philistine, Avner took him and brought him to Shaul, with the head of the Philistine still in his hand.

58 Shaul said to him, “Whose son are you, my boy?” And David answered, “The son of your servant Yishai the Beit-lechemite.”

Chapter 18

1 When [David] finished speaking with Shaul, Yonatan’s soul became bound up with the soul of David; Yonatan loved David as himself.

2 Shaul took him [into his service] that day and would not let him return to his father’s house.—

3 Yonatan and David made a pact, because [Yonatan] loved him as himself.

4 Yonatan took off the cloak and tunic he was wearing and gave them to David, together with his sword, bow, and belt.

5 David went out [with the troops], and he was successful in every mission on which Shaul sent him, and Shaul put him in command of all the soldiers; this pleased all the troops and Shaul’s courtiers, as well.

6 When they [the troops] came home and David returned from killing the Philistine, the women of all the towns of Israel came out singing and dancing to greet King Shaul with timbrels, shouting, and sistrums.

7 The women sang as they danced, and they chanted: “Shaul has slain his thousands; David, his tens of thousands!”

8 Shaul was much distressed and greatly vexed about the matter. For he said, “To David they have given tens of thousands, and to me they have given thousands. All that he lacks is the kingship!”

9 From that day on Shaul kept a jealous eye on David.

10 The next day, an evil spirit of God gripped Shaul and he began to rave in the house, while David was playing [the lyre], as he did daily. Shaul had a spear in his hand,

11 and Shaul threw the spear, thinking to pin David to the wall. But David eluded him twice.

12 Shaul was afraid of David, for the Lord was with him and had turned away from Shaul.

13 So Shaul removed him from his presence and appointed him chief of a thousand, to march at the head of the troops [lit. “and he went out and came in before the troops”].

14 David was successful in all his undertakings, for the Lord was with him;

15 and when Shaul saw that he was successful, he dreaded him.

16 All Israel and Judah loved David, for he marched at their head.

17 Shaul said to David, “Here is my older daughter, Merav; I will give her to you in marriage; in return, you be my warrior and fight the battles of the Lord.” Shaul thought: “Let not my hand strike him; let the hand of the Philistines strike him.”

18 David replied to Shaul, “Who am I and what is my life—my father’s family in Israel—that I should become Your Majesty’s son-in-law?”

19 But at the time that Merav, daughter of Shaul, should have been given to David, she was given in marriage to Adriel the M’cholati.

20 Now Michal daughter of Shaul had fallen in love with David; and when this was reported to Shaul, he was pleased.

21 Shaul thought: “I will give her to him, and she can serve as a snare for him, so that the Philistines may kill him.” So Shaul said to David, “You can become my son-in-law even now through the second one [meaning of Hebrew uncertain].”

22 And Shaul instructed his courtiers to say to David privately, “The king is fond of you and all his courtiers like you. So why not become the king’s son-in-law?”

23 When the king’s courtiers repeated these words to David, David replied, “Do you think that becoming the son-in-law of a king is a small matter, when I am but a poor man of no consequence?”

24 Shaul’s courtiers reported to him, “This is what David answered.”

25 And Shaul said, “Say this to David: ‘The king desires no other bride-price than the foreskins of a hundred Philistines, as vengeance on the king’s enemies.’” Shaul intended to bring about David’s death at the hands of the Philistines.

26 When his courtiers told this to David, David was pleased with the idea of becoming the king’s son-in-law. Before the time had expired [meaning of Hebrew uncertain],

27 David went out with his men and killed 200 Philistines [2 Samuel 3.14 has it as 100 Philistines, as does the Septuagint]; David brought their foreskins and they were counted out [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] for the king, that he might become the king’s son-in-law. Shaul then gave him his daughter Michal in marriage.

28 When Shaul realized that the Lord was with David and that Michal daughter of Shaul loved him [Septuagint reads “and that all Israel loved him”],

29 Shaul grew still more afraid of David; and Shaul was David’s enemy ever after.

30 The Philistine chiefs marched out [to battle]; and every time they marched out, David was more successful than all the other officers of Shaul. His reputation soared.

Chapter 19

1 Shaul urged his son Yonatan and all his courtiers to kill David. But Shaul’s son Yonatan was very fond of David,

2 and Yonatan told David, “My father Shaul is bent on killing you. Be on your guard tomorrow morning; get to a secret place and remain in hiding.

3 I will go out and stand next to my father in the field where you will be, and I will speak to my father about you. If I learn anything, I will tell you.”

4 So Yonatan spoke well of David to his father Shaul. He said to him, “Let not Your Majesty wrong his servant David, for he has not wronged you; indeed, all his actions have been very much to your advantage.

5 He took his life in his hands and killed the Philistine, and the Lord wrought a great victory for all Israel. You saw it and rejoiced. Why then should you incur the guilt of shedding the blood of an innocent man, killing David without cause?”

6 Shaul heeded Yonatan’s plea, and Shaul swore, “As the Lord lives, he shall not be put to death!”

7 Yonatan called David, and Yonatan told him all this. Then Yonatan brought David to Shaul, and he served him as before.

8 Fighting broke out again. David went out and fought the Philistines. He inflicted a great defeat upon them and they fled before him.

9 Then an evil spirit of the Lord came upon Shaul while he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand, and David was playing [the lyre].

10 Shaul tried to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he eluded Shaul, so that he drove the spear into the wall. David fled and got away. That night

11 Shaul sent messengers to David’s home to keep watch on him and to kill him in the morning. But David’s wife Michal told him, “Unless you run for your life tonight, you will be killed tomorrow.”

12 Michal let David down from the window and he escaped and fled.

13 Michal then took the household idol, laid it on the bed, and covered it with a cloth; and at its head she put a net of goat’s hair.

14 Shaul sent messengers to seize David; but she said, “He is ill.”

15 Shaul, however, sent back the messengers to see David for themselves. “Bring him up to me in the bed,” he ordered, “that he may be put to death.”

16 When the messengers came, they found the household idol in the bed, with the net of goat’s hair at its head.

17 Shaul said to Michal, “Why did you play that trick on me and let my enemy get away safely?” “Because,” Michal answered Shaul, “he said to me: ‘Help me get away or I’ll kill you.’”

18 David made good his escape, and he came to Sh’muel at Ramah and told him all that Shaul had done to him. He and Sh’muel went and stayed at Nayot.

19 Shaul was told that David was at Nayot in Ramah,

20 and Shaul sent messengers to seize David. They saw a band of prophets speaking in ecstasy, with Sh’muel standing by as their leader [meaning of Hebrew uncertain]; and the spirit of God came upon Shaul’s messengers and they too began to speak in ecstasy.

21 When Shaul was told about this, he sent other messengers; but they too spoke in ecstasy. Shaul sent a third group of messengers; and they also spoke in ecstasy.

22 So he himself went to Ramah. When he came to the great cistern at Secu, he asked, “Where are Sh’muel and David?” and was told that they were at Nayot in Ramah.

23 He was on his way there, to Nayot in Ramah, when the spirit of God came upon him, too; and he walked on, speaking in ecstasy, until he reached Nayot in Ramah.

24 Then he too stripped off his clothes and he too spoke in ecstasy before Sh’muel; and he lay naked all that day and all night. That is why people say, “Is Shaul too among the prophets?”

Chapter 20

1 David fled from Nayot in Ramah; he came to Yonatan and said, “What have I done, what is my crime and my guilt against your father, that he seeks my life?”

2 He replied, “Heaven forbid! You shall not die. My father does not do anything, great or small, without disclosing it to me; why should my father conceal this matter from me? It cannot be!”

3 David swore further, “Your father knows well that you are fond of me and has decided: Yonatan must not learn of this or he will be grieved. But, as the Lord lives and as you live, there is only a step between me and death.”

4 Yonatan said to David, “Whatever you want, I will do it for you.”

5 David said to Yonatan, “Tomorrow is the new month, and I am to sit with the king at the [festive Rosh Chodesh] meal. Instead, let me go and I will hide in the countryside until the third evening.

6 “If your father notes my absence, you say, ‘David asked my permission to run down to his home town, Beit-lechem, for the whole family has its annual sacrifice there.’

7 “If he says ‘Good,’ your servant is safe; but if his anger flares up, know that he is resolved to do harm.

8 “Deal faithfully with your servant, since you have taken your servant into a covenant of the Lord with you. And if I am guilty, kill me yourself, but don’t make me go back to your father.”

9 Yonatan replied, “Don’t talk like that! If I learn that my father has resolved to kill you, I will surely tell you about it.”

10 David said to Yonatan, “Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?”

11 Yonatan said to David, “Let us go into the open”; and they both went out into the open.

12 Then Yonatan said to David, “By the Lord, the God of Israel! I will sound out my father at this time tomorrow, [or] on the third day; and if [his response] is favorable for David, I will send a message to you at once and disclose it to you.

13 “But if my father intends to do you harm, may the Lord do thus to Yonatan and more if I do [not] disclose it to you and send you off to escape unharmed. May the Lord be with you, as He used to be with my father.

14 “Nor shall you fail to show me the Lord’s faithfulness, while I am alive; nor, when I am dead,

15 “shall you ever discontinue your faithfulness to my house—not even after the Lord has wiped out every one of David’s enemies from the face of the earth.

16 “Thus has Yonatan covenanted with the house of David; and may the Lord requite the enemies of David!”

17 Yonatan, out of his love for David, adjured him again, for he loved him as himself.

18 Yonatan said to him, “Tomorrow will be the [beginning of the] new month; and you will be missed when your seat remains vacant.

19 “So the day after tomorrow, go down all the way to the place where you hid the other time [see verse 19.2], and stay close to the Etzel stone.

20 “Now I will shoot three arrows to one side of it, as though I were shooting at a mark,

21 “and I will order the boy to go and find the arrows. If I call to the boy, ‘Hey! the arrows are on this side of you,’ be reassured and come, for you are safe and there is no danger—as the Lord lives!

22 But if, instead, I call to the lad, ‘Hey! the arrows are beyond you,’ then leave, for the Lord has sent you away.

23 As for the promise we made to each other, may the Lord be [witness] between you and me forever.”

24 David hid in the field. The new month came, and the king sat down to partake of the [traditional festive Rosh Chodesh] meal.

25 When the king took his usual place on the seat by the wall, Yonatan rose and Avner sat down at Shaul’s side; but David’s place remained vacant.

26 That day, however, Shaul said nothing. “It’s accidental,” he thought. “He must be [ritually] unclean and not yet cleansed.”

27 But on the day after the [beginning of the new] month, the second day, David’s place was vacant again. So Shaul said to his son Yonatan, “Why didn’t the son of Yishai come to the meal yesterday or today?”

28 Yonatan answered Shaul, “David begged leave of me to go to Beit-lechem.

29 “He said, ‘Please let me go, for we are going to have a family feast in our town and my brother has summoned me to it. Do me a favor, let me slip away to see my kinsmen.’ That is why he has not come to the king’s table.”

30 Shaul flew into a rage against Yonatan. “You son of a perverse, rebellious woman!” he shouted. “I know that you side with the son of Yishai—to your shame, and to the shame of your mother’s nakedness!

31 For as long as the son of Yishai lives on earth, neither you nor your kingship will be secure. Now then, have him brought to me, for he is marked for death.”

32 But Yonatan spoke up and said to his father, “Why should he be put to death? What has he done?”

33 At that, Shaul threw his spear at him to strike him down; and Yonatan realized that his father was determined to do away with David.

34 Yonatan rose from the table in a rage. He ate no food on the second day of the new month, because he was grieved about David, and because his father had humiliated him.

35 In the morning, Yonatan went out into the open for the meeting with David, accompanied by a young boy.

36 He said to the boy, “Run ahead and find the arrows that I shoot.” And as the boy ran, he shot the arrows past him.

37 When the boy came to the place where the arrows shot by Yonatan had fallen, Yonatan called out to the boy, “Hey, the arrows are beyond you!”

38 And Yonatan called after the boy, “Quick, hurry up. Don’t stop!” So Yonatan’s boy gathered the arrows and came back to his master.

39 —The boy suspected nothing; only Yonatan and David knew the arrangement.—

40 Yonatan handed the gear to his boy and told him, “Take these back to the town.”

41 When the boy got there, David emerged from his concealment at the Negev. He flung himself face down on the ground and bowed low three times. They kissed each other and wept together; David wept the longer.

42 Yonatan said to David, “Go in peace! For we two have sworn to each other in the name of the Lord: ‘May the Lord be [witness] between you and me, and between your offspring and mine, forever!’”

Chapter 21

1 David then went his way, and Yonatan returned to the town.

2 David went to the priest Achimelech at Nov. Ahimelech came out in alarm to meet David, and he said to him, “Why are you alone, and no one with you?”

3 David answered the priest Achimelech, “The king has ordered me on a mission, and he said to me, ‘No one must know anything about the mission on which I am sending you and for which I have given you orders.’ So I have directed my young men to such and such a place.

4 Now then, what have you got on hand? Any loaves of bread? Let me have them—or whatever is available.”

5 The priest answered David, “I have no ordinary bread on hand; there is only consecrated bread—provided the young men have kept away from women.”

6 In reply to the priest, David said, “I assure you that women have been kept from us, as always. Whenever I went on a mission, even if the journey was a common one, the vessels of the young men were consecrated; all the more then may consecrated food be put into their vessels today.”

7 So the priest gave him consecrated bread, because there was none there except the bread of display, which had been removed from the presence of the Lord, to be replaced by warm bread as soon as it was taken away.

8 Now one of Shaul’s officials was there that day, detained before the Lord; his name was Doeg the Edomite, Shaul’s chief herdsman.

9 David said to Achimelech, “Haven’t you got a spear or sword on hand? I didn’t take my sword or any of my weapons with me, because the king’s mission was urgent.”

10 The priest said, “There is the sword of Goliath the Philistine whom you slew in the valley of Elah; it is over there, wrapped in a cloth, behind the ephod. If you want to take that one, take it, for there is none here but that one.” David replied, “There is none like it; give it to me.”

11 That day David continued on his flight from Shaul and he came to King Achish of Gat.

12 The courtiers of Achish said to him, “Why, that’s David, king of the land! That’s the one of whom they sing as they dance: Shaul has slain his thousands; David, his tens of thousands.”

13 These words worried David and he became very much afraid of King Achish of Gat.

14 So he concealed his good sense from them; he feigned madness for their benefit [meaning of Hebrew uncertain]. He scratched marks on the doors of the gate and let his saliva run down his beard.

15 And Achish said to his courtiers, “You see the man is raving; why bring him to me?

16 “Do I lack madmen that you have brought this fellow to rave for me? Should this fellow enter my house?”

**Chapter** 22

1 David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adulam; and when his brothers and all his father’s house heard, they joined him down there.

2 Everyone who was in straits, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was desperate joined him, and he became their leader; there were about 400 men with him.

3 David went from there to Mitzpeh of Moab, and he said to the king of Moab, “Let my father and mother come [and stay] with you, until I know what God will do for me.”

4 So he b-led them to the king of Moab, and they stayed with him as long as David remained in the stronghold.

5 But the prophet Gad said to David, “Do not stay in the stronghold; go at once to the territory of Judah.” So David left and went to the forest of Cheret.

6 When Shaul heard that David and the men with him had been located—Shaul was then in Giv’ah, sitting under the tamarisk tree on the height, spear in hand, with all his courtiers in attendance upon him—

7 Shaul said to the courtiers standing about him, “Listen, men of Binyamin! Will the son of Yishai give fields and vineyards to every one of you? And will he make all of you captains of thousands or captains of hundreds?

8 Is that why all of you have conspired against me? For no one informs me when my own son makes a pact with the son of Yishai; no one is concerned for me and no one informs me when my own son has set my servant in ambush against me, as is now the case.”

9 Doeg the Edomite, who was standing among the courtiers of Shaul, spoke up: “I saw the son of Yishai come to Achimelech ben Achituv at Nov.

10 “He inquired of the Lord on his behalf and gave him provisions; he also gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine.”

11 “Thereupon the king sent for the priest Achimelech ben Achituv and for all the priests belonging to his father’s house at Nov. They all came to the king,

12 and Shaul said, “Listen to me, son of Achituv.” “Yes, my lord,” he replied.

13 And Shaul said to him, “Why have you and the son of Yishai conspired against me? You gave him food and a sword, and inquired of God for him—that he may rise in ambush against me, as is now the case.”

14 Achimelech replied to the king, “But who is there among all your courtiers as trusted as David, son-in-law of Your Majesty and obedient to your bidding, and esteemed in your household?

15 This is the first time that I inquired of God for him; -I have done no wrong. Let not Your Majesty find fault with his servant [or] with any of my father’s house; for your servant knew nothing whatever about all this.”

16 But the king said, “You shall die, Achimelech, you and all your father’s house.”

17 And the king commanded the guards standing by, “Turn about and kill the priests of the Lord, for they are in league with David; they knew he was running away and they did not inform me.” But the king’s servants would not raise a hand to strike down the priests of the Lord.

18 Thereupon the king said to Doeg, “You, Doeg, go and strike down the priests.” And Doeg the Edomite went and struck down the priests himself; that day, he killed 85 men who wore the linen ephod.

19 He put Nov, the town of the priests, to the sword: men and women, children and infants, oxen, jackasses, and sheep—to the sword.

20 But one son of Achimelech ben Achituv escaped—his name was Evyatar—and he fled to David.

21 When Evyatar told David that Shaul had killed the priests of the Lord,

22 David said to Evyatar, “I knew that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would tell Shaul. I am to blame for all the deaths in your father’s house.

23 Stay with me; do not be afraid; for whoever seeks your life must seek my life also. It will be my care to guard you.”

Chapter 23

1 David was told: “The Philistines are raiding Keilah and plundering the threshing floors.”

2 David consulted the Lord, “Shall I go and attack those Philistines?” And the Lord said to David, “Go; attack the Philistines and you will save Keilah.”

3 But David’s men said to him, “Look, we are afraid here in Judah, how much more if we go to Keilah against the forces of the Philistines!”

4 So David consulted the Lord again, and the Lord answered him, “March down at once to Keilah, for I am going to deliver the Philistines into your hands.”

5 David and his men went to Keilah and fought against the Philistines; he drove off their cattle and inflicted a severe defeat on them. Thus David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

6 When Evyatar ben Achimelech fled to David at Keilah, he brought down an ephod with him.

7 Shaul was told that David had come to Keilah, and Shaul thought, “God has delivered him into my hands, for he has shut himself in by entering a town with gates and bars.”

8 Shaul summoned all the troops for war, to go down to Keilah and besiege David and his men.

9 When David learned that Shaul was planning to harm him, he told the priest Evyatar to bring the ephod forward.

10 And David said, “O Lord, God of Israel, Your servant has heard that Shaul intends to come to Keilah and destroy the town because of me.

11 Will the citizens of Keilah deliver me into his hands? Will Shaul come down, as Your servant has heard? O Lord, God of Israel, tell Your servant!” And the Lord said, “He will.”

12 David continued, “Will the citizens of Keilah deliver me and my men into Shaul’s hands?” And the Lord answered, “They will.”

13 So David and his men, about 600 in number, left Keilah at once and moved about wherever they could. And when Shaul was told that David had got away from Keilah, he did not set out.

14 David was staying in the strongholds of the wilderness [of Judah; meaning of Hebrew uncertain]; he stayed in the hill country, in the wilderness of Zif. Shaul searched for him constantly, but God did not deliver him into his hands.

15 David was once at Choresh in the wilderness of Zif, when David learned that Shaul had come out to seek his life.

16 And Shaul’s son Yonatan came to David at Choresh and encouraged him in [the name of] God.

17 He said to him, “Do not be afraid: the hand of my father Shaul will never touch you. You are going to be king over Israel and I shall be second to you; and even my father Shaul knows this is so.”

18 And the two of them entered into a pact before the Lord. David remained in Choresh, and Yonatan went home. [In the rest of this chapter, there are many parts in which the meaning of Hebrew uncertain.]

19 Some Zifites went up to Shaul in Giv’ah and said, “David is hiding among us in the strongholds of Choresh, at the hill of Hakhakhilah south of Y’shimon.

20 “So if Your Majesty has the desire to come down, come down, and it will be our task to deliver him into Your Majesty’s hands.”

21 And Shaul replied, “May you be blessed of the Lord for the compassion you have shown me!

22 “Go now and prepare further. Look around and learn what places he sets foot on and who has seen him there, for I have been told he is a very cunning fellow.

23 “Look around and learn in which of all his hiding places he has been hiding, and return to me when you are certain. I will then go with you, and if he is in the region, I will search him out among all the clans of Judah.”

24 They left at once for Zif, ahead of Shaul; David and his men were then in the wilderness of Maon, in the Aravah, to the south of Y’shimon.

25 When Shaul and his men came to search, David was told about it; and he went down to the rocky region and stayed in the wilderness of Maon. On hearing this, Shaul pursued David in the wilderness of Maon.

26 Shaul was making his way along one side of a hill, and David and his men were on the other side of the hill. David was trying hard to elude Shaul, and Shaul and his men were trying to encircle David and his men and capture them,

27 when a messenger came and told Shaul, “Come quickly, for the Philistines have invaded the land.”

28 Shaul gave up his pursuit of David and went to meet the Philistines. That is why that place came to be called the Rock of Separation.

Chapter 24

1 David went from there and stayed in the wildernesses of En-gedi.

2 When Shaul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told that David was in the wilderness of En-gedi.

3 So Shaul took 3,000 picked men from all Israel and went in search of David and his men in the direction of the rocks of the wild goats [meaning of Hebrew uncertain];

4 and he came to the sheepfolds along the way. There was a cave there, and Shaul went in to relieve himself [lit. “to cover his feet”]. Now David and his men were sitting in the back of the cave.

5 David’s men said to him, “This is the day of which the Lord said to you, ‘I will deliver your enemy into your hands; you can do with him as you please.’” David went and stealthily cut off the corner of Shaul’s cloak.

6 But afterward David reproached himself for cutting off the corner of Shaul’s cloak.

7 He said to his men, “The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my lord—the Lord’s anointed—that I should raise my hand against him; for he is the Lord’s anointed.”

8 David rebuked his men and did not permit them to attack Shaul.

9 Then David also went out of the cave and called after Shaul, “My lord king!” Shaul looked around and David bowed low in homage, with his face to the ground.

10 And David said to Shaul, “Why do you listen to the people who say, ‘David is out to do you harm?’

11 “You can see for yourself now that the Lord delivered you into my hands in the cave today. And though I was urged to kill you, I showed you pity; for I said, ‘I will not raise a hand against my lord, since he is the Lord’s anointed.’

12 “Please, my father, take a close look at the corner of your cloak in my hand; for when I cut off the corner of your cloak, I did not kill you. You must see plainly that I have done nothing evil or rebellious, and I have never wronged you. Yet you are bent on taking my life.

13 “May the Lord judge between you and me! And may He take vengeance upon you for me, but my hand will never touch you.

14 “As the ancient proverb has it: ‘Wicked deeds come from wicked men!’ My hand will never touch you.

15 “Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog? A single flea?

16 “May the Lord be arbiter and may He judge between you and me! May He take note and uphold my cause, and vindicate me against you.”

17 When David finished saying these things to Shaul, Shaul said, “Is that your voice, my son David?” And Shaul broke down and wept.

18 He said to David, “You are right, not I; for you have treated me generously, but I have treated you badly.

19 “Yes, you have just revealed how generously you treated me, for the Lord delivered me into your hands and you did not kill me.

20 “If a man meets his enemy, does he let him go his way unharmed? Surely, the Lord will reward you generously for what you have done for me this day.

21 I know now that you will become king, and that the kingship over Israel will remain in your hands.

22 “So swear to me by the Lord that you will not destroy my descendants or wipe out my name from my father’s house.”

23 David swore to Shaul, Shaul went home, and David and his men went up to the strongholds.

Chapter 25

1 Sh’muel died, and all Israel gathered and made lament for him; and they buried him in Ramah, his home. David went down to the wilderness of Paran.

2 There was a man in Maon whose possessions were in Carmel. The man was very wealthy; he owned 3,000 sheep and a thousand goats. At the time, he was shearing his sheep in Carmel.

3 The man’s name was Naval, and his wife’s name was Avigayil. The woman was intelligent and beautiful, but the man, a Calebite, was a hard man and an evildoer.

4 David was in the wilderness when he heard that Naval was shearing his sheep.

5 David dispatched 10 young men, and David instructed the young men, “Go up to Carmel. When you come to Naval, greet him in my name.

6 Say as follows: ‘To life [meaning of Hebrew uncertain]! Greetings to you and to your household and to all that is yours!

7 “I hear that you are now doing your shearing. As you know, your shepherds have been with us; we did not harm them, and nothing of theirs was missing all the time they were in Carmel.

8 “Ask your young men and they will tell you. So receive these young men graciously, for we have come on a festive occasion. Please give your servants and your son David whatever you can.’”

9 David’s young men went and delivered this message to Naval in the name of David. When they stopped speaking,

10 Naval answered David’s servants, “Who is David? Who is the son of Yishai? There are many slaves nowadays who run away from their masters.

11 “Should I then take my bread and my water, and the meat that I slaughtered for my own shearers, and give them to men who come from I don’t know where?”

12 Thereupon David’s young men retraced their steps; and when they got back, they told him all this.

13 And David said to his men, “Gird on your swords.” Each girded on his sword; David too girded on his sword. About 400 men went up after David, while 200 remained with the baggage.

14 One of [Naval’s] young men told Avigayil, Naval’s wife, that David had sent messengers from the wilderness to greet their master, and that he had spurned them.

15 “But the men had been very friendly to us; we were not harmed, nor did we miss anything all the time that we went about with them while we were in the open.

16 “They were a wall about us both by night and by day all the time that we were with them tending the flocks.

17 “So consider carefully what you should do, for harm threatens our master and all his household; he is such a nasty fellow that no one can speak to him.”

18 Avigayil quickly got together 200 loaves of bread, two jars of wine, five dressed sheep, five seahs of parched corn, 100 cakes of raisin, and 200 cakes of pressed figs. She loaded them on jackasses,

19 and she told her young men, “Go on ahead of me, and I’ll follow you”; but she did not tell her husband Naval.

20 She was riding on the jackass and going down a trail on the hill, when David and his men appeared, coming down toward her; and she met them.

21 —Now David had been saying, “It was all for nothing that I protected that fellow’s possessions in the wilderness, and that nothing he owned is missing. He has paid me back evil for good.

22 May God do thus and more to the enemies of David if, by the light of morning, I leave a single male of his.”—

23 When Avigayil saw David, she quickly dismounted from the jackass and threw herself face down before David, bowing to the ground.

24 Prostrate at his feet, she pleaded, “Let the blame be mine, my lord, but let your handmaid speak to you; hear your maid’s plea.

25 “Please, my lord, pay no attention to that wretched fellow Naval. For he is just what his name says: His name means ‘boor’ and he is a boor. Your handmaid did not see the young men whom my lord sent.

26 “I swear, my lord, as the Lord lives and as you live—the Lord who has kept you from seeking redress by blood with your own hands—let your enemies and all who would harm my lord fare like Naval!

27 “Here is the present which your maidservant has brought to my lord; let it be given to the young men who are the followers of my lord.

28 “Please pardon your maid’s boldness. For the Lord will grant my lord an enduring house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the Lord, and no wrong is ever to be found in you.

29 “And if anyone sets out to pursue you and seek your life, the life of my lord will be bound up in the bundle of life in the care of the Lord; but He will fling away the lives of your enemies as from the hollow of a sling.

30 “And when the Lord has accomplished for my lord all the good He has promised you, and has appointed you ruler of Israel,

31 “do not let this be a cause of stumbling and of faltering courage to my lord that you have shed blood needlessly and that my lord sought redress with his own hands. And when the Lord has prospered my lord, remember your maid.”

32 “David said to Avigayil, “Praised be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me!

33 “And blessed be your prudence, and blessed be you yourself for restraining me fromseeking redress in blood by my own hands.

34 “For as sure as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives— who has kept me from harming you—had you not come quickly to meet me, not a single male of Naval’s line would have been left by daybreak.”

35 David then accepted from her what she had brought him, and he said to her, “Go up to your home safely. See, I have heeded your plea and respected your wish.”

36 When Avigayil came home to Naval, he was having a feast in his house, a feast fit for a king; Naval was in a merry mood and very drunk, so she did not tell him anything at all until daybreak.

37 The next morning, when Naval had slept off the wine, his wife told him everything that had happened; and his courage died within him, and he became like a stone.

38 About 10 days later the Lord struck Naval and he died.

39 When David heard that Naval was dead, he said, “Praised be the Lord who championed my cause against the insults of Naval and held back His servant from wrongdoing; the Lord has brought Naval’s wrongdoing down on his own head.” David sent messengers to propose marriage to Avigayil, to take her as his wife.

40 When David’s servants came to Avigayil at Carmel and told her that David had sent them to her to make her his wife,

41 she immediately bowed low with her face to the ground and said, “Your handmaid is ready to be your maidservant, to wash the feet of my lord’s servants.”

42 Then Avigayil rose quickly and mounted an jackass, and with five of her maids in attendance she followed David’s messengers; and she became his wife.

43 Now David had taken Achinoam of Yizrael [Jezreel]; so both of them became his wives.

44 Shaul had given his daughter Michal, David’s wife, to Palti ben Laish from Gallim.

Chapter 26

1 The Zifites came to Shaul at Giv’ah and said, “David is hiding in the hill of Hakhakhilah facing Y’shimon.”

2 Shaul went down at once to the wilderness of Zif, together with 3,000 picked men of Israel, to search for David in the wilderness of Zif,

3 and Shaul encamped on the hill of Hakhakhilah which faces Y’shimon, by the road. When David, who was then living in the wilderness, learned that Shaul had come after him into the wilderness,

4 David sent out scouts and made sure that Shaul had come.

5 David went at once to the place where Shaul had encamped, and David saw the spot where Shaul and his army commander, Avner ben Ner, lay asleep. Shaul lay asleep inside the barricade [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] and the troops were posted around him.

6 David spoke up and asked Achimelech the Chiti and Avishai ben Tz’ruiah, Yoav’s brother, “Who will go down with me into the camp to Shaul?” And Avishai answered, “I will go down with you.”

7 So David and Avishai approached the troops by night, and found Shaul fast asleep inside the barricade [meaning of Hebrew uncertain], his spear stuck in the ground at his head, and Avner and the troops sleeping around him.

8 And Avishai said to David, “God has delivered your enemy into your hands today. Let me pin him to the ground with a single thrust of the spear. I will not have to strike him twice.”

9 But David said to Avishai, “Don’t do him violence! No one can lay hands on the Lord’s anointed with impunity.”

10 And David went on, “As the Lord lives, the Lord Himself will strike him down, or his time will come and he will die, or he will go down to battle and perish.

11 “But the Lord forbid that I should lay a hand on the Lord’s anointed! Just take the spear and the water jar at his head and let’s be off.”

12 So David took away the spear and the water jar at Shaul’s head, and they left. No one saw or knew or woke up; all remained asleep; a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen upon them.

13 David crossed over to the other side and stood afar on top of a hill; there was considerable distance between them.

14 And David shouted to the troops and to Avner ben Ner, “Avner, aren’t you going to answer?” And Avner shouted back, “Who are you to shout at the king?”

15 And David answered Avner, “You are a man, aren’t you? And there is no one like you in Israel! So why didn’t you keep watch over your lord the king? For one of our troops came to do violence to your lord the king.

16 “You have not given a good account of yourself! As the Lord lives, you deserve to die, because you did not keep watch over your lord, the Lord’s anointed. Look around, where are the king’s spear and the water jar that were at his head?”

17 Shaul recognized David’s voice, and he asked, “Is that your voice, my son David?” And David replied, “It is, my lord king.”

18 And he went on, “But why does my lord continue to pursue his servant? What have I done, and what wrong am I guilty of ?

19 “Now let my lord the king hear his servant out. If the Lord has incited you against me, let Him be appeased by an offering; but if it is men, may they be accursed of the Lord! For they have driven me out today, so that I cannot have a share in the Lord’s possession, but am told, ‘Go and worship other gods.’

20 “Oh, let my blood not fall to the ground, away from the presence of the Lord! For the king of Israel has come out to seek a single flea—as if he were hunting a partridge in the hills.”

21 And Shaul answered, “I am in the wrong. Come back, my son David, for I will never harm you again, seeing how you have held my life precious this day. Yes, I have been a fool, and I have erred so very much.”

22 David replied, “Here is Your Majesty’s spear. Let one of the young men come over and get it.

23 “And the Lord will requite every man for his right conduct and loyalty—for this day the Lord delivered you into my hands and I would not raise a hand against the Lord’s anointed.

24 “And just as I valued your life highly this day, so may the Lord value my life and may He rescue me from all trouble.”

25 Shaul answered David, “May you be blessed, my son David. You shall achieve, and you shall prevail.” David then went his way, and Shaul returned home.

Chapter 27

1 David said to himself, “Some day I shall certainly perish at the hands of Shaul. The best thing for me is to flee to the land of the Philistines; Shaul will then give up hunting me throughout the territory of Israel, and I will escape him.”

2 So David and the 600 men with him went and crossed over to King Achish ben Maoch of Gat.

3 David and his men stayed with Achish in Gat, each man with his family, and David with his two wives, Achinoam the Yizraeli and Avigayil wife of Naval the Carmelite.

4 And when Shaul was told that David had fled to Gat, he did not pursue him any more.

5 David said to Achish, “If you please, let a place be granted me in one of the country towns where I can live; why should your servant remain with you in the royal city?”

6 At that time Achish granted him Tziklag; that is how Tziklag came to belong to the kings of Judah, as is still the case.

7 The length of time that David lived in Philistine territory was a year and four months.

8 David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Gizrites, and the Amalekites—who were the inhabitants of the region of Olam, all the way to Shur and to the land of Egypt.

9 When David attacked a region, he would leave no man or woman alive; he would take flocks, herds, jackasses, camels, and clothing. When he returned and cameb to Achish,

10 Achish would ask, “Where did you raid today?” and David would reply, “The Negev of Judah,” or “the Negev of the Y’rachm’eli,” or “the Negev of the Kini.”

11 David would leave no man or woman alive to be brought to Gat; for he thought, “They might tell about us: David did this.” Such was his practice as long as he stayed in the territory of the Philistines.

12 Achish trusted David. He thought: “He has aroused the wrath of his own people Israel [by raiding them], and so he will be my vassal forever.”

Chapter 28

1 At that time the Philistines mustered their forces for war, to take the field against Israel. Achish said to David, “You know, of course, that you and your men must march out with my forces.”

2 David answered Achish, “You surely know what your servant will do.” “In that case,” Achish replied to David, “I will appoint you my bodyguard for life.”

3 Now Sh’muel had died and all Israel made lament for him; and he was buried in his own town of Ramah. And Shaul had forbidden [recourse to] ghosts and familiar spirits in the land.

4 The Philistines mustered and they marched to Shunem and encamped; and Shaul gathered all Israel, and they encamped at Gilboa.

5 When Shaul saw the Philistine force, his heart trembled with fear.

6 And Shaul inquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim, or by prophets.

7 Then Shaul said to his courtiers, “Find me a woman who consults ghosts, so that I can go to her and inquire through her.” And his courtiers told him that there was a woman in En-dor who consulted ghosts.

8 Shaul disguised himself; he put on different clothes and set out with two men. They came to the woman by night, and he said, “Please divine for me by a ghost. Bring up for me the one I shall name to you.”

9 But the woman answered him, “You know what Shaul has done, how he has banned [the use of] ghosts and familiar spirits in the land. So why are you laying a trap for me, to get me killed?”

10 Shaul swore to her by the Lord: “As the Lord lives, you won’t get into trouble over this.”

11 At that, the woman asked, “Whom shall I bring up for you?” He answered, “Bring up Sh’muel for me.”

12 Then the woman recognized Sh’muel, and she shrieked loudly, and said to Shaul, “Why have you deceived me? You are Shaul!”

13 The king answered her, “Don’t be afraid. What do you see?” And the woman said to Shaul, “I see a divine being coming up from the earth.”

14 “What does he look like?” he asked her. “It is an old man coming up,” she said, “and he is wrapped in a robe.” Then Shaul knew that it was Sh’muel; and he bowed low in homage with his face to the ground.

15 Sh’muel said to Shaul, “Why have you disturbed me and brought me up?” And Shaul answered, “I am in great trouble. The Philistines are attacking me and God has turned away from me; He no longer answers me, either by prophets or in dreams. So I have called you to tell me what I am to do.”

16 Sh’muel said, “Why do you ask me, seeing that the Lord has turned away from you and has become your adversary?

17 “The Lord has done for Himself [some versions have “to you”] as He foretold through me: The Lord has torn the kingship out of your hands and has given it to your fellow, to David,

18 “because you did not obey the Lord and did not execute His wrath upon the Amalekites. That is why the Lord has done this to you today.

19 “Further, the Lord will deliver the Israelites who are with you into the hands of the Philistines. Tomorrow your sons and you will be with me; and the Lord will also deliver the Israelite forces into the hands of the Philistines.”

20 At once Shaul flung himself prone on the ground, terrified by Sh’muel’s words. Besides, there was no strength in him, for he had not eaten anything all day and all night.

21 The woman went up to Shaul and, seeing how greatly disturbed he was, she said to him, “Your handmaid listened to you; I took my life in my hands and heeded the request you made of me.

22 “So now you listen to me: Let me set before you a bit of food. Eat, and then you will have the strength to go on your way.”

23 He refused, saying, “I will not eat.” But when his courtiers as well as the woman urged him, he listened to them; he got up from the ground and sat on the bed.

24 The woman had a stall-fed calf in the house; she hastily slaughtered it, and took flour and kneaded it, and baked some unleavened cakes.

25 She set this before Shaul and his courtiers, and they ate. Then they rose and left the same night.

Chapter 29

1 The Philistines mustered all their forces at Afek, while Israel was encamping at the spring in Yizrael.

2 The [five] Philistine lords came marching, each with his units of hundreds and of thousands; and David and his men came marching last, with Achish.

3 The Philistine officers asked, “Who are those Hebrews?” “Why, that’s David, the servant of King Shaul of Israel,” Achish answered the Philistine officers. “He has been with me for a year or more [meaning of Hebrew phrase uncertain], and I have found no fault in him from the day he defected until now.”

4 But the Philistine officers were angry with him; and the Philistine officers said to him, “Send the man back; let him go back to the place you assigned him. He shall not march down with us to the battle, or else he may become our adversary in battle. For with what could that fellow appease his master if not with the heads of these men [a euphemism for “our heads”]?

5 Remember, he is the David of whom they sang as they danced: Shaul has slain his thousands; David, his tens of thousands.”

6 Achish summoned David and said to him, “As the Lord lives, you are an honest man, and I would like to have you serve in my forces; for I have found no fault with you from the day you joined me until now. But you are not acceptable to the other lords.

7 So go back in peace, and do nothing to displease the Philistine lords.”

8 David, however, said to Achish, “But what have I done, what fault have you found in your servant from the day I appeared before you to this day, that I should not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?”

9 Achish replied to David, “I know; you are as acceptable to me as an angel of God. But the Philistine officers have decided that you must not march out with us to the battle.

10 So rise early in the morning, you and your lord’s servants who came with you—rise early in the morning, and leave as soon as it is light.” [Meaning of parts of this verse are uncertain. Septuagint reads “and go to the place that I have assigned you; and harbor no evil thought in your heart, for you are acceptable to me.”]

11 Accordingly, David and his men rose early in the morning to leave, to return to the land of the Philistines, while the Philistines marched up to Yizrael.

Chapter 30

1 By the time David and his men arrived in Tziklag, on the third day, the Amalekites had made a raid into the Negev and against Tziklag; they had stormed Tziklag and burned it down.

2 They had taken the women in it captive, low-born and high-born alike; they did not kill any, but carried them off and went their way.

3 When David and his men came to the town and found it burned down, and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive,

4 David and the troops with him broke into tears, until they had no strength left for weeping.

5 David’s two wives had been taken captive, Achinoam of Yizrael and Avigayil wife of Naval from Carmel.

6 David was in great danger, for the troops threatened to stone him; for all the troops were embittered on account of their sons and daughters. But David sought strength in the Lord his God.

7 David said to the priest Evyatar ben Achimelech, “Bring the ephod up to me.” When Evyatar brought up the ephod to David,

8 David inquired of the Lord, “Shall I pursue those raiders? Will I overtake them?” And He answered him, “Pursue, for you shall overtake and you shall rescue.”

9 So David and the 600 men with him set out, and they came to the Wadi B’sor, where a halt was made by those who were to be left behind.

10 David continued the pursuit with 400 men; 200 men had halted, too faint to cross the Wadi B’sor.

11 They came upon an Egyptian in the open country and brought him to David. They gave him food to eat and water to drink;

12 he was also given a piece of pressed fig cake and two cakes of raisins. He ate and regained his strength, for he had eaten no food and drunk no water for three days and three nights.

13 Then David asked him, “To whom do you belong and where are you from?” “I am an Egyptian boy,” he answered, “the slave of an Amalekite. My master abandoned me when I fell ill three days ago.

14 “We had raided the Negev of the Cheretites, and [the Negev] of Judah, and the Negev of Calev; we also burned down Tziklag.”

15 And David said to him, “Can you lead me down to that band?” He replied, “Swear to me by God that you will not kill me or deliver me into my master’s hands, and I will lead you down to that band.”

16 So he led him down, and there they were, scattered all over the ground, eating and drinking and making merry because of all the vast spoil they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah.

17 David attacked them from before dawn until the evening of the next day [meaning of Hebrew uncertain]; none of them escaped, except 400 young men who mounted camels and got away.

18 David rescued everything the Amalekites had taken; David also rescued his two wives.

19 Nothing of theirs was missing—young or old, sons or daughters, spoil or anything else that had been carried off—David recovered everything.

20 David took all the flocks and herds, which [the troops] drove ahead of the other livestock [meaning of Hebrew phrase uncertain]; and they declared, “This is David’s spoil.”

21 When David reached the 200 men who were too faint to follow David and who had been left at the Wadi B’sor, they came out to welcome David and the troops with him; David came forward with the troops and greeted them.

22 But all the mean and churlish fellows among the men who had accompanied David spoke up, “Since they did not accompany us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we seized— except that each may take his wife and children and go.”

23 David, however, spoke up, “You must not do that, my brothers, in view of what the Lord has granted us, guarding us and delivering into our hands the band that attacked us.

24 “How could anyone agree with you in this matter? The share of those who remain with the baggage shall be the same as the share of those who go down to battle; they shall share alike.”

25 So from that day on it was made a fixed rule for Israel, continuing to the present day.

26 When David reached Tziklag, he sent some of the spoil to the elders of Judah and to his friends [meaning of Hebrew phrase uncertain], saying, “This is a present for you from our spoil of the enemies of the Lord.”

27 [He sent the spoil to the elders] in Beit-El, Ramot-negev, and Yatir;

28 in Aroer, Sifmot, and Eshtemoa;

29 in Racal, in the towns of the Y’rachm’eli, and in the towns of the Kini;

30 in Chormah, Bor-ashan, and Atach;

31 and to those in Khevron—all the places where David and his men had roamed.

Chapter 31

1 The Philistines attacked Israel, and the men of Israel fled before the Philistines and [many] fell on Mount Gilboa.

2 The Philistines pursued Shaul and his sons, and the Philistines struck down Yonatan, Avinadav, and Malki-shua, sons of Shaul.

3 The battle raged around Shaul, and some of the archers hit him, and he was severely wounded by the archers.

4 Shaul said to his arms-bearer, “Draw your sword and run me through, so that the uncircumcised may not run me through and make sport of me.” But his arms-bearer, in his great awe, refused; whereupon Shaul grasped the sword and fell upon it.

5 When his arms-bearer saw that Shaul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him.

6 Thus Shaul and his three sons and his arms-bearer, as well as all his men, died together on that day.

7 And when the men of Israel on the other side of the valley and on the other side of the Jordan [meaning of Hebrew phrase uncertain] saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Shaul and his sons were dead, they abandoned the towns and fled; the Philistines then came and occupied them.

8 The next day the Philistines came to strip the slain, and they found Shaul and his three sons lying on Mount Gilboa.

9 They cut off his head and stripped him of his armor, and they sent them throughout the land of the Philistines, to spread the news in the temples of their idols and among the people.

10 They placed his armor in the temple of Ashtarot, and they impaled his body on the wall of Beit-shan.

11 When the inhabitants of Yavesh-gil’ad heard about it—what the Philistines had done to Shaul—

12 all their stalwart men set out and marched all night; they removed the bodies of Shaul and his sons from the wall of Beit-shan and came to Yavesh and burned them there.

13 Then they took the bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Yavesh, and they fasted for seven days.