The Book of Second Samuel

The reign of King David is the subject of Second Samuel, which is composed of two main parts. The first part (1.1-8 .18) tells of David's rise to power, and the second (9 .1-20.26) of his sin and the ensuing troubles in his family. The book concludes with an appendix (chapters 21-24) consisting of miscellaneous prose and poetic materials that offer many new details concerning David. A list of David's chief officials (8 .16-18; 20.23-26) is found between the major sections of the book. Second Samuel depicts David as highly successful in his career: He conquers Jerusalem, makes it his administrative and religious center, liberates Israel definitively from Philistine domination, and even creates an empire. In Chapter 7, which many see as the key theological chapter in the book, David is promised an eternal dynasty. In the second half of the book, David makes grave mistakes, and he consequently undergoes great suffering, although he ultimately retains kingship. The book's final four chapters break the implied chronological order of the rest of the book, and may be seen as an appendix comprised of miscellaneous prose and poetic materials. — Shimon Bar-Efrat, z”l, Revised by Marc Zvi Brettler, The Jewish Study Bible, 2nd edition

Chapter 1

1 After the death of Shaul—David had already returned from defeating the Amaleki— David stayed two days in Tziklag.

2 On the third day, a man came from Shaul’s camp, with his clothes rent and earth on his head; and as he approached David, he flung himself to the ground and bowed low.

3 David said to him, “Where are you coming from?” He answered, “I have just escaped from the camp of Israel.”

4 “What happened?” asked David. “Tell me!” And he told him how the troops had fled the battlefield, and that, moreover, many of the troops had fallen and died; also that Shaul and his son Yonatan were dead.

5 “How do you know,” David asked the young man who brought him the news, “that Shaul and his son Yonatan are dead?”

6 The young man who brought him the news answered, “I happened to be at Mount Gilboa, and I saw Shaul leaning on his spear, and the chariots and horsemen closing in on him.

7 He looked around and saw me, and he called to me. When I responded, ‘At your service,’

8 he asked me, ‘Who are you?’ And I told him that I was an Amaleki.

9 Then he said to me, ‘Stand over me, and finish me off, for I am in agony and am barely alive [meaning of the Hebrew phrase is uncertain].’

10 So I stood over him and finished him off, for I knew that he would never rise from where he was lying [meaning of the Hebrew phrase is uncertain]. Then I took the crown from his head and the armlet from his arm, and I have brought them here to my lord.”

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

12 They lamented and wept, and they fasted until evening for Shaul and his son Yonatan, and for the soldiers of the Lord [Septuagint reads “Judah”] and the House of Israel who had fallen by the sword.

13 David said to the young man who had brought him the news, “Where are you from?” He replied, “I am the ben a resident alien, an Amaleki.”

14 “How did you dare,” David said to him, “to lift your hand and kill the Lord’s anointed?”

15 Thereupon David called one of the attendants and said to him, “Come over and strike him!” He struck him down and he died.

16 And David said to him, “Your blood be on your own head! Your own mouth testified against you when you said, ‘I put the Lord’s anointed to death.’”

17 And David intoned this dirge over Shaul and his son Yonatan—

18 He ordered the Judahites to be taught [The Song of the] Bow [meaning of the Hebrew phrase is uncertain]. It is recorded in the Book of Yashar [presumably a collection of war songs; this is the only reference in either Book of Samuel of an external document being used].

19 Your glory, O Israel,  
Lies slain on your heights;  
How have the mighty fallen!

20 Tell it not in Gath,  
Do not proclaim it in the streets of Ashkelon,  
Lest the daughters of the Philistine rejoice,  
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised exult.

21 O hills of Gilboa—  
Let there be no dew or rain on you,  
Or bountiful fields, [meaning of Hebrew uncertain. Emendation yields “springs from the deep”]  
For there the shield of warriors lay rejected,  
The shield of Shaul,  
Polished with oil no more.

22 From the blood of slain,  
From the fat of warriors—  
The bow of Yonatan  
Never turned back;  
The sword of Shaul  
Never withdrew empty.

23 Shaul and Yonatan,  
Beloved and cherished,  
Never parted  
In life or in death!  
They were swifter than eagles,  
They were stronger than lions!

24 Daughters of Israel,  
Weep over Shaul,  
Who clothed you in crimson and finery,  
Who decked your robes with jewels of gold.

25 How have the mighty fallen  
In the thick of battle—  
Yonatan, slain on your heights!

26 I grieve for you,  
My brother Yonatan,  
You were most dear to me.  
Your love was wonderful to me  
More than the love of women.

27 How have the mighty fallen,  
The weapons of war [Shaul and Yonatan] perished!

Chapter 2

1 Sometime afterward, David inquired of the Lord, “Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?” The Lord answered, “Yes.” David further asked, “Which one shall I go up to?” And the Lord replied, “To Khevron.”

2 So David went up there, along with his two wives, Achinoam of Yizrael and Avigayil wife of Naval the Carmeli.

3 David also took the men who were with him, each with his family, and they settled in the towns about Khevron.

4 The men of Judah came and there they anointed David king over the House of Judah. David was told about the men of Yavesh-Gil’ad who buried Shaul.

5 So David sent messengers to the men of Yavesh-Gil’ad and said to them, “May you be blessed of the Lord because you performed this act of faithfulness to your lord Shaul and buried him.

6 May the Lord in turn show you true faithfulness; and I too will reward you generously because you performed this act.

7 Now take courage and be brave men; for your lord Shaul is dead and the House of Judah have already anointed me king over them.”

8 But Avner ben Ner, Shaul’s army commander, had taken Ish-boshet ben Shaul and brought him across to Machanayim [Ish-boshet means “Man of Shame,” and was deliberately altered from his original name, Ish-baal, “man of Baal”; see 1 Chronicles 8.33 and 9.39]

9 and made him king over Gil’ad, the Ashuri, Yizrael, Efrayim, and Binyamin—over all Israel.

10 Ish-boshet ben Shaul was ***40*** years old when he became king of Israel, and he reigned two years. But the House of Judah supported David.

11 The length of time that David reigned in Khevron over the House of Judah was seven years and six months.

12 Once Avner ben Ner and the soldiers of Ish-boshet ben Shaul marched out from Machanayim to Giv’on,

13 and Yoav ben Tz’ruyah and the soldiers of David [also] came out. They confronted one another at the pool of Giv’on: one group sat on one side of the pool, and the other group on the other side of the pool.

14 Avner said to Yoav, “Let the young men come forward and sport before us [engage in single combat].” “Yes, let them,” Yoav answered.

15 They came forward and were counted off, ***12*** for Binyamin and Ish-boshet ben Shaul, and ***12*** of David’s soldiers.

16 Each one grasped his opponent’s head [with his hand and thrust] his dagger into his opponent’s side; thus they fell together. That place, which is in Giv’on, was called Chelkat ­Hatzurim [Field of Flints (or Blades)].

17 A fierce battle ensued that day, and Avner and the men of Israel were routed by David’s soldiers.

18 The three sons of Tz’ruyahg were there—Yoav, Avishai, and Asahel. Asahel was swift of foot, like a gazelle in the open field.

19 And Asahel ran after Avner, swerving neither right nor left in his pursuit of Avner.

20 Avner looked back and shouted, “Is that you, Asahel?” “Yes, it is,” he called back.

21 Avner said to him, “Turn to the right or to the left, and seize one of our boys and strip off his tunic.” But Asahel would not leave off.

22 Avner again begged Asahel, “Stop pursuing me, or I’ll have to strike you down. How will I look your brother Yoav in the face?”

23 When he refused to desist, Avner struck him in the belly with b-a backward thrust+ of his spear and the spear protruded from his back. He fell there and died on the spot. And all who came to the place where Asahel fell and died halted;

24 but Yoav and Avishai con­tinued to pursue Avner. And the sun was setting as they reached the hill of Ammah, which faces Giah on the road to the wilderness of Giv’on.

25 The Binyaminites rallied behind Avner, forming a single company; and they took up a position on the top of a hill.

26 Avner then called out to Yoav, “Must the sword devour forever? You know how bitterly it’s going to end! How long will you delay ordering your troops to stop the pursuit of their kinsmen?”

27 And Yoav re­plied, “As God lives, if you hadn’t spoken up, the troops would have given up the pursuit of their kinsmen only the next morning [meaning uncertain, it may mean this morning].”

28 Yoav then sounded the horn, and all the troops halted; they ceased their pursuit of Israel and stopped the fighting.

29 Avner and his men marched through the Aravah all that night and, after crossing the Jordan, they marched through all of Bitron [meaning of Hebrew phrase uncertain] until they came to Machanayim.

***30*** After Yoav gave up the pursuit of Avner, he assembled all the troops and found ***19*** of David’s soldiers missing, besides Asahel.

***31*** David’s soldiers, on the other hand, defeated the Binyaminites and the men under Avner and killed 360 men [meaning of Hebrew phrase uncertain].

***32*** They bore Asahel away and buried him in his father’s tomb in Bet-lechem. Then Yoav and his men marched all night; day broke upon them in Khevron.

Chapter 3

***1*** The war between the House of Shaul and the House of David was long-drawn-out; but David kept growing stronger, while the House of Shaul grew weaker. [The narrative resumes in Verse 6].

***2*** Sons were born to David in Khevron: His first-born was Amnon, by Achinoam of Yizrael; [the list of David’s wives and sons here differs somewhat from the parallel list in 1 Chronicles 3.1-3]

***3*** his second was Khilav, by Avigayil wife of Naval the Carmeli; the third was Avshalom ben Maacah, bat King Talmai of G’shur;

***4*** the fourth was Adoniyah ben Chagit; the fifth was Sh’fatyah ben Avital;

***5*** and the sixth was Yitr’am, by David’s wife Eglah. These were born to David in Khevron.

***6*** During the war between the House of Shaul and the House of David, Avner supported the House of Shaul.

***7*** Now Shaul had a concubine named Ritzpah, bat Ayah; and he [Ish-boshet] said to Avner, “Why have you lain with my father’s concubine?”

***8*** Avner was very upset by what Ish-boshet said, and he replied, “Am I a dog’s head from Judah? [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] Here I have been loyally serving the House of your father Shaul and his kinsfolk and friends, and I have not betrayed you into the hands of David; yet this day you reproach me over a woman!

***9*** May God do thus and more to Avner if I do not do for David as the Lord swore to him—

***10*** to transfer the kingship from the House of Shaul, and to establish the throne of David over Israel and Judah from Dan to Beer-Sheva.”

***11*** He [Ish-boshet] could say nothing more in reply to Avner, because he was afraid of him.

***12*** Avner immediately sent messengers to David, saying,”To whom shall the land belong?” and to say [further], [meaning of Hebrew phrase uncertain] “Make a pact with me, and I will help you and bring all Israel over to your side.”

***13*** He replied, “Good; I will make a pact with you. But I make one demand upon you: Do not appear before me unless you bring Michal bat Shaul when you come before me.”

***14*** David also sent messengers to Ish-boshet ben Shaul, to say, “Give me my wife Michal, for whom I paid the bride-price of 100 Philistine foreskins.” [In First Samuel 18.27, the number is “200”]

***15*** So Ish-boshet sent and had her taken away from [her] husband, Paltiel ben Laish.

***16*** Her husband walked with her as far as Bachurim, weeping as he followed her; then Avner ordered him to turn back, and he went back.

***17*** Avner had conferred with the elders of Israel, saying, “You have wanted David to be king over you all along.

***18*** Now act! For the Lord has said concerning David: I will deliver My people Israel from the hands of the Philistines and all its other enemies through My servant David.”

***19*** Avner also talked with the Binyaminites; then Avner went and informed David in Khevron of all the wishes of Israel and of the whole House of Binyamin.

***20*** When Avner came to David in Khevron, accompanied by 20 men, David made a feast for Avner and the men with him.

***21*** Avner said to David, “Now I will go and rally all Israel to Your Majesty. They will make a pact with you, and you can reign over all that your heart desires.” And David dismissed Avner, who went away unharmed.

***22*** Just then David’s soldiers and Yoav returned from a raid, bringing much plunder with them; Avner was no longer with David in Khevron, for he had been dismissed and had gone away unharmed.

***23*** When Yoav and the whole force with him arrived, Yoav was told that Avner ben Ner had come to the king, had been dismissed by him, and had gone away unharmed.

***24*** Yoav went to the king and said, “What have you done? Here Avner came to you; why did you let him go? Now he has gotten away!

***25*** Don’t you know that Avner ben Ner came only to deceive you, to learn your comings and goings and to find out all that you are planning?”

***26*** Yoav left David and sent messengers after Avner, and they brought him back from the cistern of Sirah; but David knew nothing about it.

***27*** When Avner returned to Khevron, Yoav took him aside within the gate to talk to him privately; there he struck him in the belly. Thus [Avner] died for shedding the blood of Asahel, Yoav’s brother.

***28*** Afterward, when David heard of it, he said, “Both I and my kingdom are forever innocent before the Lord of shedding the blood of Avner ben Ner.

***29*** May [the guilt] fall upon the head of Yoav and all his father’s house. May the house of Yoav never be without someone suffering from a discharge or an eruption, or a male who handles the spindle [i.e., a man fit only for woman’s work], or one slain by the sword, or one lacking bread.”—

***30*** Now Yoav and his brother Avishai had killed Avner because he had killed their brother Asahel during the battle at Giv’on.

—***31*** David then ordered Yoav and all the troops with him to rend their clothes, gird on sackcloth, and make lament before Avner; and King David himself walked behind the bier.

***32*** And so they buried Avner at Khevron; the king wept aloud by Avner’s grave, and all the troops wept.

***33*** And the king intoned this dirge over Avner, “Should Avner have died the death of a churl?

***34*** Your hands were not bound,  
Your feet were not put in fetters;  
But you fell as one falls  
Before treacherous men!”  
And all the troops continued to weep over him.

***35*** All the troops came to urge David to eat something while it was still day; but David swore, “May God do thus to me and more if I eat bread or anything else before sundown.”

***36*** All the troops took note of it and approved, just as all the troops approved everything else the king did. [meaning of Hebrew verse is uncertain]

***37*** That day all the troops and all Israel knew that it was not by the king’s will that Avner ben Ner was killed.

***38*** And the king said to his soldiers, “You well know that a prince, a great man in Israel, has fallen this day.

***39*** And today I am weak, even though anointed king; those men, the sons of Tz’ruyah, are too savage for me. May the Lord requite the wicked for their wickedness!”

Chapter 4

***1*** When [Ish-boshet] ben Shaul heard that Avner had died in Khevron, he lost heart [lit. “his hands weakened”] and all Israel was alarmed.

***2*** The ben Shaul [had] two company commanders, one named Baanah and the other Raychav, sons of Rimmon the B’ehroti—Binyaminites, since B’ehrot too was considered part of Binyamin.

***3*** The B’ehroti had fled to Gittaim [in Binyamin], where they have sojourned to this day.

(***4*** Yonatan ben Shaul had a son whose feet were crippled. He was five years old when the news about Shaul and Yonatan came from Yizrael, and his nurse picked him up and fled; but as she was fleeing in haste, he fell and was lamed. His name was M’fiboshet.) [As with Ish-boshet/Ish-baal in 2 .8 above, the original form of the name, M’rib-baal, is preserved in 1 Chronicles 8 .34 ; 9 .40. This subject is resumed in chapter 9.]

***5*** Raychav and Baanah, sons of Rimmon the B’ehroti, started out, and they reached the home of Ish-boshet at the heat of the day, when he was taking his midday rest.

***6*** So they went inside the house, as though fetching wheat, and struck him in the belly. Raychav and his brother Baanah slipped by,

***7*** and entered the house while he was asleep on his bed in his bedchamber; and they stabbed him to death. They cut off his head and took his head and made their way all night through the Aravah.

***8*** They brought the head of Ish-boshet to David in Khevron. “Here,” they said to the king, “is the head of your enemy, Ish-boshet ben Shaul, who sought your life. This day the Lord has avenged my lord the king upon Shaul and his offspring.”

***9*** But David answered Raychav and his brother Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the B’ehroti, and said to them, “As the Lord lives, who has rescued me from every trouble:

***10*** The man who told me in Tziklag that Shaul was dead thought he was bringing good news. But instead of rewarding him for the news, I seized and killed him. [The account in Verses 1-3 and 6-10 is to be found also, with variations, in 1 Chronicles 11 .1-9.]

***11*** How much more, then, when wicked men have killed a blameless man in bed in his own house! I will certainly avenge his blood on you, and I will rid the earth of you.”

***12*** David gave orders to the young men, who killed them; they cut off their hands and feet and hung them up by the pool in Khevron. And they took the head of Ish-boshet and buried it in the grave of Avner at Khevron.

Chapter 5

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

***2*** Long before now, when Shaul was king over us, it was you who b-led Israel in war [lit. “led Israel out and in.”]; and the Lord said to you: You shall shepherd My people Israel; you shall be ruler of Israel.”

***3***All the elders of Israel came to the king at Khevron, and King David made a pact with them in Khevron before the Lord. And they anointed David king over Israel.

***4*** David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned ***40*** years.

***5*** In Khevron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.

***6*** The king and his men set out for Jerusalem against the Y’vusi who inhabited the region. David was told, “You will never get in here! c-Even the blind and the lame will turn you back.” (They meant: David will never enter here.)-c

***7*** But David captured the stronghold of Zion; it is now the City of David.

***8*** On that occasion David said, “Those who attack the Y’vusi shall reach the water channel and [strike down] the lame and the blind, who are hateful to David.” That is why they say: “No one who is blind or lame may enter the House.” [meaning of Hebrew verse uncertain]

***9*** David occupied the stronghold and renamed it the City of David; David also fortified the surrounding area, from the Millo [a citadel] inward.

***10*** David kept growing stronger, for the Lord, the God of Hosts, was with him.

***11*** eKing Hiram of Tyre sent envoys to David with cedar logs, carpenters, and stonemasons; and they built a palace for David. [The account in Verses 11-25 is to be found also, with variations, in 1 Chronicles 14.1-16.]

***12*** Thus David knew that the Lord had established him as king over Israel and had exalted his kingship for the sake of His people Israel.

***13*** After he left Khevron, David took more concubines and wives in Jerusalem, and more sons and daughters were born to David.

***14*** These are the names of the children born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shovav, Natan, and Sh’lomo;

***15*** Yivchar, Elishua, Nefeg, and Yafia;

***16*** Elishama, Elyada, and Elifelet.

[Verses 17 -25 continue the narrative of Verse 3.17] When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, the Philistines marched up in search of David; but David heard of it, and he went down to the fastness [probably the stronghold of Adullam].

***18*** The Philistines came and spread out over the Valley of Rephaim.

***19*** David inquired of the Lord, “Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hands?” And the Lord answered David, “Go up, and I will deliver the Philistines into your hands.”

***20*** Thereupon David marched to Baal-perazim [“Baal of Breaches”], and David defeated them there. And he said, “The Lord has broken through my enemies before me as waters break through [a dam].” That is why that place was named Baal-perazim.i=

***21*** The Philistines abandoned their idols there, and David and his men carried them off.

***22*** Once again the Philistines marched up and spread out over the Valley of Rephaim.

***23*** David inquired of the Lord, and He answered, “Do not go up, but circle around behind them and confront them at the baca [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] trees.

***24*** And when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the baca trees, then go into action, for the Lord will be going in front of you to attack the Philistine forces.”

***25*** David did as the Lord had commanded him; and he routed the Philistines from Geba all the way to Gezer.

Chapter 6

***1*** David again assembled all the picked men of Israel, 30,000 strong.

***2*** Then David and all the troops that were with him set out from Baalim of Judah to bring up from there the Ark of God to which the Name was attached, the name Lord of Hosts Enthroned on the Cherubim.

***3*** They loaded the Ark of God onto a new cart and conveyed it from the house of Avinadav, which was on the hill; and Avinadav’s sons, Uzzah and Achio, guided the new cart.

***4*** They conveyed it from Avinadav’s house on the hill, [Uzzah walking] alongside the Ark of God and Achio walking in front of the Ark.

***5*** Meanwhile, David and all the House of Israel danced before the Lord to [the sound of] all kinds of cypress wood [instruments], [meaning of Hebrew phrase uncertain] with lyres, harps, timbrels, sistrums, and cymbals.

***6*** But when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out for the Ark of God and grasped it, for the oxen had stumbled.

***7*** The Lord was incensed at Uzzah. And God struck him down on the spot for his indiscretion [1 Chronicles 13.10 reads “because he had laid a hand on the Ark”], and he died there beside the Ark of God.

***8*** David was distressed because the Lord had inflicted a breach upon Uzzah; and that place was named Perez-uzzah [“the Breach of Uzzah”], as it is still called.

***9*** David was afraid of the Lord that day; he said, “How can I let the Ark of the Lord come to me?”

***10*** So David would not bring the Ark of the Lord to his place in the City of David; instead, David diverted it to the house of Oved-edom the Giti.

***11*** The Ark of the Lord remained in the house of Oved-edom the Giti three months, and the Lord blessed Oved-edom and his whole household.

***12*** It was reported to King David: “The Lord has blessed Oved-edom’s house and all that belongs to him because of the Ark of God.” Thereupon David went and brought up the Ark of God from the house of Oved-edom to the City of David, amid rejoicing.

***13*** When the bearers of the Ark of the Lord had moved forward six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling.

***14*** David whirled with all his might before the Lord; David was girt with a linen ephod.

***15*** Thus David and all the House of Israel brought up the Ark of the Lord with shouts and with blasts of the horn.

***16*** As the Ark of the Lord entered the City of David, Michal bat Shaul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and whirling before the Lord; and she despised him for it.

***17*** They brought in the Ark of the Lord and set it up in its place inside the tent which David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and offerings of well-being before the Lord.

***18*** When David finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of Hosts.

***19*** And he distributed among all the people—the entire multitude of Israel, man and woman alike—to each a loaf of bread, a cake made in a pan, and a raisin cake. Then all the people left for their homes.

***20*** David went home to greet his household. And Michal bat Shaul came out to meet David and said, “Didn’t the king of Israel do himself honor today—exposing himself today in the sight of the slavegirls of his subjects, as one of the riffraff might expose himself!”

***21*** David answered Michal, “It was before the Lord who chose me instead of your father and all his family and appointed me ruler over the Lord’s people Israel! I will dance before the Lord

***22*** and dishonor myself even more, and be low in my own [Septuagint reads “in your”] esteem; but among the slavegirls that you speak of I will be honored.”

***23*** So to her dying day Michal bat Shaul had no children.

Chapter 7

[This chapter is found, with variations, also in 1 Chronicles 17.]

***1*** When the king was settled in his palace and the Lord had granted him safety from all the enemies around him,

***2*** the king said to the prophet Natan: “Here I am dwelling in a house of cedar, while the Ark of the Lord abides in a tent!”

***3*** Natan said to the king, “Go and do whatever you have in mind, for the Lord is with you.”

***4*** But that same night the word of the Lord came to Natan:

***5*** “Go and say to My servant David: Thus said the Lord: Are you the one to build a house for Me to dwell in?

***6*** From the day that I brought the people of Israel out of Egypt to this day I have not dwelt in a house, but have moved about in Tent and Tabernacle.

***7*** As I moved about wherever the Israelites went, did I ever reproach any of the tribal leaders whom I appointed to care for My people Israel: Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?

***8*** “Further, say thus to My servant David: Thus said the Lord of Hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the flock, to be ruler of My people Israel,

***9*** and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut down all your enemies before you. Moreover, I will give you great renown like that of the greatest men on earth.

***10*** I will establish a home for My people Israel and will plant them firm, so that they shall dwell secure and shall tremble no more. Evil men shall not oppress them any more as in the past,

***11*** ever since I appointed chieftains over My people Israel. I will give you safety from all your enemies. “The Lord declares to you that He, the Lord, will establish a house [i.e. a dynasty] for you.

***12*** When your days are done and you lie with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own issue, and I will establish his kingship.

***13*** He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish his royal throne forever.

***14*** I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to Me. When he does wrong, I will chastise him with the rod of men and the affliction of mortals [i.e. only as a human father would];

***15*** but I will never withdraw My favor from him as I withdrew it from Shaul, whom I removed to make room for you [from before you].

***16*** Your house and your kingship shall ever be secure before you; your throne shall be established forever.”

***17*** Natan spoke to David in accordance with all these words and all this prophecy.

***18*** Then King David came and sat before the Lord, and he said, “What am I, O Lord God, and what is my family, that You have brought me thus far?

***19*** Yet even this, O Lord God, has seemed too little to You; for You have spoken of Your servant’s house also for the future. May that be the law for the people [meaning of Hebrew phrase uncertain], O Lord God.

***20*** What more can David say to You? You know Your servant, O Lord God.

***21*** For Your word’s sake and of Your own accord [meaning of Hebrew phrase uncertain] You have wrought this great thing, and made it known to Your servant.

***22*** You are great indeed, O Lord God! There is none like You and there is no other God but You, as we have always heard.

***23*** And who is like Your people Israel, a unique nation on earth, whom God went and redeemed as His people, winning renown for Himself and doing great and marvelous deeds for them [and] for Your land—[driving out] nations and their gods before Your people, whom You redeemed for Yourself from Egypt.

***24*** You have established Your people Israel as Your very own people forever; and You, O Lord, have become their God.

***25*** “And now, O Lord God, fulfill Your promise to Your servant and his house forever; and do as You have promised.

***26*** And may Your name be glorified forever, in that men will say, ‘The Lord of Hosts is God over Israel’; and may the house of Your servant David be established before You.

***27*** Because You, O Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, have revealed to Your servant that You will build a house for him, Your servant has ventured to offer this prayer to You.

***28*** And now, O Lord God, You are God and Your words will surely come true, and You have made this gracious promise to Your servant.

***29*** Be pleased, therefore, to bless Your servant’s house, that it abide before You forever; for You, O Lord God, have spoken. May Your servant’s house be blessed forever by Your blessing.”

Chapter 8

[This chapter is reproduced, with some variations, in 1 Chronicles 18.]

***1*** Some time afterward, David attacked the Philistines and subdued them; and David took Meteg-ammah from the Philistines.

***2*** He also defeated the Moabites. He made them lie down on the ground and he measured them off with a cord; he measured out two lengths of cord for those who were to be put to death, and one length for those to be spared [i.e., he repeatedly doomed twice the number he spared]. And the Moabites became tributary vassals of David.

***3*** David defeated Hadadezer ben Rechov, king of Tzovah, who was then on his way to restore his monument at the Euphrates River.

***4*** David captured 1,700 horsemen and 20,000 foot soldiers of his force; and David hamstrung all the chariot horses, except for 100 which he retained.

***5*** And when the Arameans of Damascus came to the aid of King Hadadezer of Tzovah, David struck down 22,000 of the Arameans.

***6*** David stationed garrisons in Aram of Damascus, and the Arameans became tributary vassals of David. The Lord gave David victory wherever he went.

***7*** David took the gold shields [or quivers] carried by Hadadezer’s retinue and brought them to Jerusalem;

***8*** and from Betach and B’rotai, towns of Hadadezer, King David took a vast amount of copper.

***9*** When King To-i of Chamah heard that David had defeated the entire army of Hadadezer,

***10*** To-i sent his son Yoram to King David to greet him and to congratulate him on his military victory over Hadadezer—for Hadadezer had been at war with To-i. [Yoram] brought with him objects of silver, gold, and copper.

***11*** King David dedicated these to the Lord, along with the other silver and gold that he dedicated, [taken] from all the nations he had conquered:

***12*** from Edom, Moab, and Ammon; from the Philistines and the Amaleki, and from the plunder of Hadadezer ben Rechov, king of Tzovah.

***13*** David gained fame when he returned from defeating Edom in the Valley of Salt, 18,000 in all.

***14*** He stationed garrisons in Edom—he stationed garrisons in all of Edom—and all the Edomites became vassals of David. The Lord gave David victory wherever he went.

***15*** David reigned over all Israel, and David executed true justice among all his people.

***16*** Yoav ben Tz’ruyah was commander of the army; Y’hoshofat ben Achilud was recorder;

***17*** Tzadok ben Achituv and Achimelech ben Aviatahr were priests; Seraiah was scribe;

***18*** B’nayahu ben Y’hoyada was commander of the Cheretites and the Peletites; and David’s sons were priests.

Chapter 9

***1*** David inquired, “Is there anyone still left of the House of Shaul with whom I can keep faith for the sake of Yonatan?”

***2*** There was a servant of the House of Shaul named Tziva, and they summoned him to David. “Are you Tziva?” the king asked him. ”Yes, sir,” he replied.

***3*** The king continued, “Is there anyone at all left of the House of Shaul with whom I can keep faith as pledged before God [see 1 Sam. 20.14]?” Tziva answered the king, “Yes, there is still a son of Yonatan whose feet are crippled.”

***4*** “Where is he?” the king asked, and Tziva said to the king, “He is in the house of Machir ben Ammiel, in Lo-d’var.”

***5*** King David had him brought from the house of Machir ben Ammiel, at Lo-d’var;

***6*** and when M’fiboshet ben Yonatan ben Shaul came to David, he flung himself on his face and prostrated himself. David said, “M’fiboshet!” and he replied, “At your service, sir.”

***7*** David said to him, “Don’t be afraid, for I will keep faith with you for the sake of your father Yonatan. I will give you back all the land of your grandfather Shaul; moreover, you shall always eat at my table.”

***8*** [M’fiboshet] prostrated himself again, and said, “What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog like me?”

***9*** The king summoned Tziva, Shaul’s steward, and said to him, “I give to your master’s grandson everything that belonged to Shaul and to his entire family.

***10*** You and your sons and your slaves shall farm the land for him and shall bring in [its yield] to provide food for your master’s grandson [or household] to live on; but M’fiboshet, your master’s grandson, shall always eat at my table.” —Tziva had 15 sons and 20 slaves.—

***11*** Tziva said to the king, “Your servant will do just as my lord the king has commanded him.” ”M’fiboshet shall eat at my table like one of the king’s sons.”

***12*** M’fiboshet had a young son named Mikha; and all the members of Tziva’s household worked for M’fiboshet.

***13*** M’fiboshet lived in Jerusalem, for he ate regularly at the king’s table. He was lame in both feet.

Chapter 10

1 Some time afterward, the king of Ammon died, and his son Chanun succeeded him as king.

***2*** David said, “I will keep faith with Chanun ben Nachash, just as his father kept faith with me.” He sent his courtiers with a message of condolence to him over his father. But when David’s courtiers came to the land of Ammon,

***3*** the Ammonite officials said to their lord Chanun, “Do you think David is really honoring your father just because he sent you men with condolences? Why, David has sent his courtiers to you to explore and spy out the city, and to overthrow it.”

***4*** So Chanun seized David’s courtiers, clipped off one side of their beards and cut away half of their garments at the buttocks, and sent them off.

***5*** When David was told of it, he dispatched men to meet them, for the men were greatly embarrassed. And the king gave orders: “Stop in Jericho until your beards grow back; then you can return.”

***6*** The Ammonites realized that they had incurred the wrath of David; so the Ammonites sent agents and hired Arameans of Bet-r’chov and Arameans of Tzovah—20,000 foot soldiers—the king of Maacah [with] 1,000 men, and 12,000 men from Tov.

***7*** On learning this, David sent out Yoav and the whole army—[including] the professional fighters.

***8*** The Ammonites marched out and took up their battle position at the entrance of the gate, while the Arameans of Tzovah and R’chov and the men of Tov and Maacah took their stand separately in the open.

***9*** Yoav saw that there was a battle line against him both front and rear. So he made a selection from all the picked men of Israel and arrayed them against the Arameans,

***10*** and the rest of the troops he put under the command of his brother Avishai and arrayed them against the Ammonites.

***11*** [Yoav] said, “If the Arameans prove too strong for me, you come to my aid; and if the Ammonites prove too strong for you, I will come to your aid.

***12*** Let us be strong and resolute for the sake of our people and the land [towns] of our God; and the Lord will do what He deems right.”

***13*** Yoav and the troops with him marched into battle against the Arameans, who fled before him.

***14*** And when the Ammonites saw that the Arameans had fled, they fled before Avishai and withdrew into the city. So Yoav broke off the attack against the Ammonites, and went to Jerusalem.

***15*** When the Arameans saw that they had been routed by Israel, they regrouped their forces.

***16*** Hadadezer [many editions read “Hadarezer…Hadarezer’s”] sent for and brought out the Arameans from across the Euphrates; they came to Chelam, led by Shovach, Hadadezer’s army commander.

***17*** David was informed of it; he assembled all Israel, crossed the Jordan, and came to Chelam. The Arameans drew up their forces against David and attacked him;

***18*** but the Arameans were put to flight by Israel. David killed 700 Aramean charioteers and 40,000 horsemen [1 Chronicles 19.18 reads “foot soldiers”]; he also struck down Shovach, Hadadezer’s army commander, who died there.

***19*** And when all the vassal kings of Hadadezer saw that they had been routed by Israel, they submitted to Israel and became their vassals. And the Arameans were afraid to help the Ammonites any more.

Chapter 11

1 At the turn of the year, the season when kings go out [to battle], David sent Yoav with his officers and all Israel with him, and they devastated Ammon and besieged Rabbah; David remained in Jerusalem.

***2*** Late one afternoon, David rose from his couch and strolled on the roof of the royal palace; and from the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful,

***3*** and the king sent someone to make inquiries about the woman. He reported, “She is Batsheva bat Eliam, wife of Uriah the Hittite.”

***4*** David sent messengers to fetch her; she came to him and he lay with her—she had just purified herself after her period—and she went back home.

***5*** The woman conceived, and she sent word to David, “I am pregnant.”

***6*** Thereupon David sent a message to Yoav, “Send Uriah the Hittite to me”; and Yoav sent Uriah to David.

***7*** When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Yoav and the troops were faring and how the war was going.

***8*** Then David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house and bathe your feet.” When Uriah left the royal palace, a present from the king followed him.

***9*** But Uriah slept at the entrance of the royal palace, along with the other officers of his lord, and did not go down to his house.

***10*** When David was told that Uriah had not gone down to his house, he said to Uriah, “You just came from a journey; why didn’t you go down to your house?”

***11*** Uriah answered David, “The Ark and Israel and Judah are located at Sukkot, and my master Yoav and Your Majesty’s men are camped in the open; how can I go home and eat and drink and sleep with my wife? As you live, by your very life [meaning of Hebrew phrase uncertain], I will not do this!”

***12*** David said to Uriah, “Stay here today also, and tomorrow I will send you off.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. The next day,

***13*** David summoned him, and he ate and drank with him until he got him drunk; but in the evening, [Uriah] went out to sleep in the same place, with his lord’s officers; he did not go down to his home.

***14*** In the morning, David wrote a letter to Yoav, which he sent with Uriah.

***15*** He wrote in the letter as follows: “Place Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest; then fall back so that he may be killed.”

***16*** So when Yoav was besieging the city, he stationed Uriah at the point where he knew that there were able warriors.

***17*** The men of the city sallied out and attacked Yoav, and some of David’s officers among the troops fell; Uriah the Hittite was among those who died.

***18*** Yoav sent a full report of the battle to David.

***19*** He instructed the messenger as follows: “When you finish reporting to the king all about the battle,

***20*** the king may get angry and say to you, ‘Why did you come so close to the city to attack it? Didn’t you know that they would shoot from the wall?

***21*** Who struck down Avimelech ben Y’rubeshet [Y’rubaal]? Was it not a woman who dropped an upper millstone on him from the wall at Tevetz, from which he died? Why did you come so close to the wall?’ Then say: ‘Your servant Uriah the Hittite was among those killed.’”

***22*** The messenger set out; he came and told David all that Yoav had sent him to say.

***23*** The messenger said to David, “First the men prevailed against us and sallied out against us into the open; then we drove them back up to the entrance to the gate.

***24*** But the archers shot at your men from the wall and some of Your Majesty’s men fell; your servant Uriah the Hittite also fell.”

***25*** Whereupon David said to the messenger, “Give Yoav this message: ‘Do not be distressed about the matter. The sword always takes its toll [lit. “consumes the like and the like”]. Press your attack on the city and destroy it!’ Encourage him!”

***26*** When Uriah’s wife heard that her husband Uriah was dead, she lamented over her husband.

***27*** After the period of mourning was over, David sent and had her brought into his palace; she became his wife and she bore him a son. But the Lord was displeased with what David had done,

Chapter 12

***1*** and the Lord sent Natan to David. He came to him and said, “There were two men in the same city, one rich and one poor.

***2*** The rich man had very large flocks and herds,

***3*** but the poor man had only one little ewe lamb that he had bought. He tended it and it grew up together with him and his children: it used to share his morsel of bread, drink from his cup, and nestle in his bosom; it was like a daughter to him.

***4*** One day, a traveler came to the rich man, but he was loath to take anything from his own flocks or herds to prepare a meal for the guest who had come to him; so he took the poor man’s lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.”

***5*** David flew into a rage against the man, and said to Natan, “As the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die!

***6*** He shall pay for the lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and showed no pity.”

***7*** And Natan said to David, “That man is you! Thus said the Lord, the God of Israel: ‘It was I who anointed you king over Israel and it was I who rescued you from the hand of Shaul.

***8*** I gave you your master’s house and possession of your master’s wives; and I gave you the House of Israel and Judah; and if that were not enough, I would give you twice as much more.

***9*** Why then have you flouted the command of the Lord and done what displeases Him? You have put Uriah the Hittite to the sword; you took his wife and made her your wife and had him killed by the sword of the Ammonites.

***10*** Therefore the sword shall never depart from your House—because you spurned Me by taking the wife of Uriah the Hittite and making her your wife.’

***11*** Thus said the Lord: ‘I will make a calamity rise against you from within your own house; I will take your wives and give them to another man before your very eyes, and he shall sleep with your wives under this very sun.

***12*** You acted in secret, but I will make this happen in the sight of all Israel and in broad daylight.’”

***13*** David said to Natan, “I stand guilty before the Lord!” And Natan replied to David, “The Lord has remitted your sin; you shall not die.

***14*** However, since you have spurned the enemies of the Lord [the phrase is intended to avoid saying “spurned the Lord”] by this deed, even the child about to be born to you shall die.”

***15*** Natan went home, and the Lord afflicted the child that Uriah’s wife had borne to David, and it became critically ill.

***16*** David entreated God for the boy; David fasted, and he went in and spent the night lying [“in sackcloth,” in some Septuagint manuscripts] on the ground.

***17*** The senior servants of his household tried to induce him to get up from the ground; but he refused, nor would he partake of food with them.

***18*** On the seventh day the child died. David’s servants were afraid to tell David that the child was dead; for they said, “We spoke to him when the child was alive and he wouldn’t listen to us; how can we tell him that the child is dead? He might do something terrible.”

***19*** When David saw his servants talking in whispers, David understood that the child was dead; David asked his servants, “Is the child dead?” “Yes,” they replied.

***20*** Thereupon David rose from the ground; he bathed and anointed himself, and he changed his clothes. He went into the House of the Lord and prostrated himself. Then he went home and asked for food, which they set before him, and he ate.

***21*** His courtiers asked him, “Why have you acted in this manner? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept; but now that the child is dead, you rise and take food!”

***22*** He replied, “While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept because I thought: ‘Who knows? The Lord may have pity on me, and the child may live.’

***23*** But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will never come back to me.”

***24*** David consoled his wife Batsheva; he went to her and lay with her. She bore a son and she named him Sh’lomo. The Lord favored him,

***25*** and He sent a message through the prophet Natan; and he was named Y’didyah [Jedidiah, “Beloved of the Lord”] at the instance of the Lord.

***26*** Yoav attacked Rabbah of Ammon and captured the royal city.

***27*** Yoav sent messengers to David and said, “I have attacked Rabbah and I have already captured the water city [meaning of Hebrew uncertain; perhaps the source of the water supply].

***28*** Now muster the rest of the troops and besiege the city and capture it; otherwise I will capture the city myself, and my name will be connected with it.”

***29*** David mustered all the troops and marched on Rabbah, and he attacked it and captured it.

***30*** The crown was taken from the head of their king [Hebrew “malkam,” perhaps equivalent to “Milcom,” the Ammonite deity] and it was placed on David’s head—it weighed a talent of gold, and [on it] were precious stones. He also carried off a vast amount of booty from the city.

***31*** He led out the people who lived there and set them to work with saws, iron threshing boards, and iron axes, or assigned them to brickmaking; David did this to all the towns of Ammon. Then David and all the troops returned to Jerusalem. [Verses 30 -31 are found also in 1 Chronicles 20.2-3]

Chapter 13

***1*** This happened s ben Shimahometime afterward: Avshalom ben David had a beautiful sister named Tamar, and Amnon ben David became infatuated with her.

***2***Amnon was so distraught because of his [half-]sister Tamar that he became sick; for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her.

***3***Amnon had a friend named Yonadav ben Shimah, [Shimah being] David’s brother; Yonadav was a very clever man.

***4*** He asked him, “Why are you so dejected, O prince, morning after morning? Tell me!” Amnon replied, “I am in love with Tamar, the sister of my brother Avshalom!”

***5*** Yonadav said to him, “Lie down in your bed and pretend you are sick. When your father comes to see you, say to him, ‘Let my sister Tamar come and give me something to eat. Let her prepare the food in front of me, so that I may look on, and let her serve it to me.’”

***6*** Amnon lay down and pretended to be sick. The king came to see him, and Amnon said to the king, “Let my sister Tamar come and prepare a couple of cakes in front of me, and let her bring them to me.”

***7*** David sent a message to Tamar in the palace, “Please go to the house of your brother Amnon and prepare some food for him.”

***8*** Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon, who was in bed. She took dough and kneaded it into cakes in front of him, and cooked the cakes.

***9*** She took the pan and set out [the cakes; meaning of Hebrew uncertain], but Amnon refused to eat and ordered everyone to withdraw. After everyone had withdrawn,

***10*** Amnon said to Tamar, “Bring the food inside and feed me.” Tamar took the cakes she had made and brought them to her brother inside.

***11*** But when she served them to him, he caught hold of her and said to her, “Come lie with me, sister.”

***12*** But she said to him, “Don’t, brother. Don’t force me. Such things are not done in Israel! Don’t do such a vile thing!

***13*** Where will I carry my shame? And you, you will be like any of the scoundrels in Israel! Please, speak to the king; he will not refuse me to you.”

***14*** But he would not listen to her; he overpowered her and lay with her by force.

***15*** Then Amnon felt a very great loathing for her; indeed, his loathing for her was greater than the passion he had felt for her. And Amnon said to her, “Get out!”

***16*** She pleaded with him, “Please don’t commit this wrong; to send me away would be even worse [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] than the first wrong you committed against me.” But he would not listen to her.

***17*** He summoned his young attendant and said, “Get that woman out of my presence, and bar the door behind her.”

—***18*** She was wearing an ornamented tunic,b for maiden princesses were customarily dressed in such garments [meaning of Hebrew uncertain].—His attendant took her outside and barred the door after her.

***19*** Tamar put dust on her head and rent the ornamented tunic she was wearing; she put her hands on her head [a gesture of wild grief] and walked away, screaming loudly as she went.

***20*** Her brother Avshalom said to her, “Was it your brother Amnon who did this to you? For the present, sister, keep quiet about it; he is your brother. Don’t brood over the matter.” And Tamar remained in her brother Avshalom’s house, forlorn.

***21*** When King David heard about all this, he was greatly upset [Septuagint adds “but he did not rebuke his son Amnon, for he favored him, since he was his first-born”].

***22*** Avshalom didn’t utter a word to Amnon, good or bad; but Avshalom hated Amnon because he had violated his sister Tamar.

***23*** Two years later, when Avshalom was having his flocks sheared at Baal-chatzor near Efrayim, Avshalom invited all the king’s sons.

***24*** And Avshalom came to the king and said, “Your servant is having his flocks sheared. Would Your Majesty and your retinue accompany your servant?”

***25*** But the king answered Avshalom, “No, my son. We must not all come, or we’ll be a burden to you.” He urged him, but he would not go, and he said good-bye to him.

***26*** Thereupon Avshalom said, “In that case, let my brother Amnon come with us,” to which the king replied, “He shall not go with you.”

***27*** But Avshalom urged him, and he sent with him Amnon and all the other princes [Septuagint adds “and Avshalom made a feast fit for a king”].

***28*** Now Avshalom gave his attendants these orders: “Watch, and when Amnon is merry with wine and I tell you to strike down Amnon, kill him! Don’t be afraid, for it is I who give you the order. Act with determination, like brave men!”

***29*** Avshalom’s attendants did to Amnon as Avshalom had ordered; whereupon all the other princes mounted their mules and fled.

***30*** They were still on the road when a rumor reached David that Avshalom had killed all the princes, and that not one of them had survived.

***31*** At this, David rent his garment and lay down on the ground, and all his courtiers stood by with their clothes rent.

***32*** But Yonadav, the son of David’s brother Shimah, said, “My lord must not think that all the young princes have been killed. Only Amnon is dead; for this has been determined by the command of Avshalom ever since his sister Tamar was violated.

***33*** So my lord the king must not think for a moment that all the princes are dead; Amnon alone is dead.”

***34*** Meanwhile, Avshalom had fled. The watchman on duty looked up and saw a large crowd coming from the road to his rear, from the side of the hill.

***35*** Yonadav said to the king, “See, the princes have come! It is just as your servant said.”

***36*** As he finished speaking, the princes came in and broke into weeping; and David and all his courtiers wept bitterly, too.

***37*** Avshalom had fled, and he came to Talmai ben Ammihud, king of G’shur. And [King David] mourned over his son a long time.

***38*** Avshalom, who had fled to G’shur, remained there three years.

***39*** And King David was pining away for Avshalom, for [the king] had gotten over Amnon’s death.

Chapter 14

***1*** Yoav ben Tz’ruyah could see that the king’s mind was on Avshalom;

***2*** so Yoav sent to Tekoa and brought a clever woman from there. He said to her, “Pretend you are in mourning; put on mourning clothes and don’t anoint yourself with oil; and act like a woman who has grieved a long time over a departed one.

***3*** Go to the king and say to him thus and thus.” And Yoav told her what to say [lit. “and he put words into her mouth”].

***4*** The woman of Tekoa came to the king, flung herself face down to the ground, and prostrated herself. She cried out, “Help, O king!”

***5*** The king asked her, “What troubles you?” And she answered, “Alas, I am a widow, my husband is dead.

***6*** Your maidservant had two sons. The two of them came to blows out in the fields where there was no one to stop them, and one of them struck the other and killed him.

***7*** Then the whole clan confronted your maidservant and said, ‘Hand over the one who killed his brother, that we may put him to death for the slaying of his brother, even though we wipe out the [last] heir.’ Thus they would quench the last ember remaining to me, and leave my husband without name or remnant upon the earth.”

***8*** The king said to the woman, “Go home. I will issue an order in your behalf.”

***9*** And the woman of Tekoa said to the king, “My lord king, may the guilt be on me and on my ancestral house; Your Majesty and his throne are guiltless.”

***10*** The king said, “If anyone says anything more to you, have him brought to me, and he will never trouble you again.”

***11*** She replied, “Let Your Majesty be mindful of the Lord your God and restrain the blood avenger bent on destruction, so that my son may not be killed.” And he said, “As the Lord lives, not a hair of your son shall fall to the ground.”

***12*** Then the woman said, “Please let your maidservant say another word to my lord the king.” “Speak on,” said the king.

***13*** And the woman said, “Why then have you planned the like against God’s people? In making this pronouncement, Your Majesty condemns himself in that Your Majesty does not bring back his own banished one.

***14*** We must all die; we are like water that is poured out on the ground and cannot be gathered up. God will not take away the life of one who makes plans so that no one may be kept banished [meaning of Hebrew uncertain. The apparent sense is: God will not punish you for bringing back the banished Avshalom].

***15*** And the reason I have come to say these things to the king, my lord, is that the people have frightened me. Your maidservant thought I would speak to Your Majesty; perhaps Your Majesty would act on his handmaid’s plea.

***16*** For Your Majesty would surely agree to deliver his handmaid from the hands of anyone [who would seek to] cut off both me and my son from the heritage [i.e., people] of God.

***17*** Your maidservant thought, ‘Let the word of my lord the king provide comfort; for my lord the king is like an angel of God, understanding everything, good and bad.’ May the Lord your God be with you.”

***18*** In reply, the king said to the woman, “Do not withhold from me anything I ask you!” The woman answered, “Let my lord the king speak.”

***19*** The king asked, “Is Yoav in league with you in all this?” The woman replied, “As you live, my lord the king, f-it is just as my lord the king says [lit. “there is no turning to the right or to the left of what my lord the king says].” Yes, your servant Yoav was the one who instructed me, and it was he who told your maidservant everything she was to say.

***20*** It was to conceal the real purpose of the matter that your servant Yoav did this thing. My lord is as wise as an angel of God, and he knows all that goes on in the land.”

***21*** Then the king said to Yoav, “I will do this thing. Go and bring back my boy Avshalom.”

***22*** Yoav flung himself face down on the ground and prostrated himself. Yoav blessed the king and said, “Today your servant knows that he has found favor with you, my lord king, for Your Majesty has granted his servant’s request.”

***23*** And Yoav went at once to G’shur and brought Avshalom to Jerusalem.

***24*** But the king said, “Let him go directly to his house and not present himself to me.” So Avshalom went directly to his house and did not present himself to the king.

***25*** No one in all Israel was so admired for his beauty as Avshalom; from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head he was without blemish.

***26*** When he cut his hair—he had to have it cut every year, for it grew too heavy for him—the hair of his head weighed 200 shekels by the royal weight.

***27*** Avshalom had three sons and a daughter whose name was Tamar; she was a beautiful woman.

***28*** Avshalom lived in Jerusalem two years without appearing before the king.

***29*** Then Avshalom sent for Yoav, in order to send him to the king; but Yoav would not come to him. He sent for him a second time, but he would not come.

***30*** So [Avshalom] said to his servants, “Look, Yoav’s field is next to mine, and he has barley there. Go and set it on fire.” And Avshalom’s servants set the field on fire.

***31*** Yoav came at once to Avshalom’s house and said to him, “Why did your servants set fire to my field?”

***32*** Avshalom replied to Yoav, “I sent for you to come here; I wanted to send you to the king to say [on my behalf]: ‘Why did I leave G’shur? I would be better off if I were still there. Now let me appear before the king; and if I am guilty of anything, let him put me to death!’”

***33*** Yoav went to the king and reported to him; whereupon he summoned Avshalom. He came to the king and flung himself face down to the ground before the king. And the king kissed Avshalom.

Chapter 15

***1*** Sometime afterward, Avshalom provided himself with a chariot, horses, and 50 outrunners.

***2*** Avshalom used to rise early and stand by the road to the city gates; and whenever a man had a case that was to come before the king for judgment, Avshalom would call out to him, “What town are you from?” And when he answered, “Your servant is from such and such a tribe in Israel,”

***3*** Avshalom would say to him, “It is clear that your claim is right and just, but there is no one assigned to you by the king to hear it.”

***4*** And Avshalom went on, “If only I were appointed judge in the land and everyone with a legal dispute came before me, I would see that he got his rights.”

***5*** And if a man approached to bow to him, [Avshalom] would extend his hand and take hold of him and kiss him.

***6*** Avshalom did this to every Israelite who came to the king for judgment. Thus Avshalom won away the hearts of the men of Israel.

***7*** After a period of 40 years [some Septuagint manuscripts read 4 years] had gone by, Avshalom said to the king, “Let me go to Khevron and fulfill a vow that I made to the Lord.

***8*** For your servant made a vow when I lived in G’shur of Aram: If the Lord ever brings me back to Jerusalem, I will worship the Lord [in Khevron].”

***9*** The king said to him, “Go in peace”; and so he set out for Khevron.

***10*** But Avshalom sent agents to all the tribes of Israel to say, “When you hear the blast of the horn, announce that Avshalom has become king in Khevron.”

***11*** Two hundred men of Jerusalem accompanied Avshalom; they were invited and went in good faith, suspecting nothing.

***12*** Avshalom also sent [to fetch] Achitofel the Gilonite, David’s counselor, from his town, Giloh, when the sacrifices were to be offered. The conspiracy gained strength, and the people supported Avshalom in increasing numbers.

***13*** Someone came and told David, “The loyalty of the men of Israel has veered toward Avshalom.”

***14*** Whereupon David said to all the courtiers who were with him in Jerusalem, “Let us flee at once, or none of us will escape from Avshalom. We must get away quickly, or he will soon overtake us and bring down disaster upon us and put the city to the sword.”

***15*** The king’s courtiers said to the king, “Whatever our lord the king decides, your servants are ready.”

***16*** So the king left, followed by his entire household, except for 10 concubines whom the king left to mind the palace.

***17*** The king left, followed by all the people [his courtiers], and they stopped at the last house [meaning of Hebrew uncertain].

***18*** All his followers marched past him, including all the Cheretites and all the Pelehites; and all the Gittites, 600 men who had accompanied him from Gath, also marched by the king.

***19*** And the king said to Ittai the Gittite, “Why should you too go with us? Go back and stay with the [new] king, for you are a foreigner and you are also an exile from your country.

***20*** You came only yesterday; should I make you wander about with us today, when I myself must go wherever I can? Go back, and take your kinsmen with you, [in] true faithfulness.”

***21*** Ittai replied to the king, “As the Lord lives and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, there your servant will be, whether for death or for life!”

***22*** And David said to Ittai, “Then march by.” And Ittai the Gittite and all his men and all the children who were with him marched by.

***23*** The whole countryside wept aloud as the troops marched by. The king crossed the Kidron Valley, and all the troops crossed by the road to the wilderness.

***24*** Then Tzadok appeared, with all the Levites carrying the Ark of the Covenant of God; and they set down the Ark of God until all the people had finished marching out of the city. Evyatar also came up.

***25*** But the king said to Tzadok, “Take the Ark of God back to the city. If I find favor with the Lord, He will bring me back and let me see it and its abode.

***26*** And if He should say, ‘I do not want you,’ I am ready; let Him do with me as He pleases.”

***27*** And the king said to the priest Tzadok,”Do you understand? You return to the safety of the city with your two sons, your own son Achima-atz and Evyatar’s son Y’honatan.

***28*** Look, I shall linger in the steppes of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me.”

***29*** Tzadok and Evyatar brought the Ark of God back to Jerusalem, and they stayed there.

***30*** David meanwhile went up the slope of the [Mount of] Olives, weeping as he went; his head was covered and he walked barefoot. And all the people who were with him covered their heads and wept as they went up.

***31*** David [was] told that Achitofel was among the conspirators with Avshalom, and he prayed, “Please, O Lord, frustrate Achitofel’s counsel!”

***32*** When David reached the top, where people would prostrate themselves to God, Chushai the Archite was there to meet him, with his robe torn and with earth on his head.

***33*** David said to him, “If you march on with me, you will be a burden to me.

***34*** But if you go back to the city and say to Avshalom, ‘I will be your servant, O king; I was your father’s servant formerly, and now I will be yours,’ then you can nullify Achitofel’s counsel for me.

***35*** You will have the priests Tzadok and Evyatar there, and you can report everything that you hear in the king’s palace to the priests Tzadok and Evyatar.

***36*** Also, their two sons are there with them, Tzadok’s son Achima-atz and Evyatar’s son Y’honatan; and through them you can report to me everything you hear.”

***37*** And so Chushai, the friend of David, reached the city as Avshalom was entering Jerusalem.

Chapter 16

***1*** David had passed a little beyond the summit when Tziva the servant of M’fiboshet came toward him with a pair of saddled asses carrying 200 loaves of bread, 100 cakes of raisin, 100 cakes of figs [lit. summer fruit], and a jar of wine.

***2*** The king asked Tziva, “What are you doing with these?” Tziva answered, “The asses are for Your Majesty’s family to ride on, the bread and figs are for the attendants to eat, and the wine is to be drunk by any who are exhausted in the wilderness.”

***3*** ”And where is your master’s son?” the king asked. “He is staying in Jerusalem,” Tziva replied to the king, “for he thinks that the House of Israel will now give him back the throne of his grandfather.”

***4*** The king said to Tziva, “Then all that belongs to M’fiboshet is now yours!” And Tziva replied, “I bow low. Your Majesty is most gracious to me.”

***5*** As King David was approaching Bachurim, a member of Shaul’s clan—a man named Shimi ben Gera—came out from there, hurling insults as he came.

***6*** He threw stones at David and all King David’s courtiers, while all the troops and all the warriors were at his right and his left.

***7*** And these are the insults that Shimi hurled: “Get out, get out, you criminal, you villain!

***8*** The Lord is paying you back for all your crimes against the family of Shaul, whose throne you seized. The Lord is handing over the throne to your son Avshalom; you are in trouble because you are a criminal!”

***9*** Avishai ben Tz’ruyah said to the king, “Why let that dead dog abuse my lord the king? Let me go over and cut off his head!”

***10*** But the king said, “What has this to do with you, you sons of Tz’ruyah? He is abusing [me] only because the Lord told him to abuse David; and who is to say, ‘Why did You do that?’”

***11*** David said further to Avishai and all the courtiers, “If my son, my own issue, seeks to kill me, how much more the Binyaminite! Let him go on hurling abuse, for the Lord has told him to.

***12*** Perhaps the Lord will look upon my punishment and recompense me for the abuse [Shimi] has uttered today.”

***13*** David and his men continued on their way, while Shimi walked alongside on the slope of the hill, insulting him as he walked, and throwing stones at him and flinging dirt.

***14*** The king and all who accompanied him arrived [some Septuagint manuscripts add “at the Jordan”] exhausted, and he rested there.

***15*** Meanwhile Avshalom and all the people, the men of Israel, arrived in Jerusalem, together with Achitofel.

***16*** When Chushai the Archite, David’s friend, came before Avshalom, Chushai said to Avshalom, “Long live the king! Long live the king!”

***17*** But Avshalom said to Chushai, “Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why didn’t you go with your friend?”

***18*** “Not at all!” Chushai replied. “I am for the one whom the Lord and this people and all the men of Israel have chosen, and I will stay with him.

***19*** Furthermore, whom should I serve, if not David’s son? As I was in your father’s service, so I will be in yours.”

***20*** Avshalom then said to Achitofel, “What do you advise us to do?”

***21*** And Achitofel said to Avshalom, “Have intercourse with your father’s concubines, whom he left to mind the palace; and when all Israel hears that you have dared the wrath of your father, all who support you will be encouraged.”

***22*** So they pitched a tent for Avshalom on the roof, and Avshalom lay with his father’s concubines before the eyes of all Israel.

—***23*** In those days, the advice which Achitofel gave was accepted like an oracle sought from God; that is how all the advice of Achitofel was esteemed both by David and by Avshalom.

Chapter 17

***1*** And Achitofel said to Avshalom, “Let me pick 12,000 men and set out tonight in pursuit of David.

***2*** I will come upon him when he is weary and disheartened, and I will throw him into a panic; and when all the troops with him flee, I will kill the king alone.

***3*** And I will bring back all the people to you; when all have come back [except] the man you are after [meaning of Hebrew uncertain], all the people will be at peace.”

***4*** The advice pleased Avshalom and all the elders of Israel.

***5*** But Avshalom said, “Summon Chushai the Archite as well, so we can hear what he too has to say.”

***6*** Chushai came to Avshalom, and Avshalom said to him, “This is what Achitofel has advised. Shall we follow his advice? If not, what do you say?”

***7*** Chushai said to Avshalom, “This time the advice that Achitofel has given is not good.

***8*** You know,” Chushai continued, “that your father and his men are courageous fighters, and they are as desperate as a bear in the wild robbed of her whelps. Your father is an experienced soldier, and he will not spend the night with the troops;

***9*** even now he must be hiding in one of the pits or in some other place. And if any of them fall at the first attack, whoever hears of it will say, ‘A disaster has struck the troops that follow Avshalom’;

***10*** and even if he is a brave man with the heart of a lion, he will be shaken—for all Israel knows that your father and the soldiers with him are courageous fighters.

***11*** So I advise that all Israel from Dan to Beer-Sheva—as numerous as the sands of the sea—be called up to join you, and that you yourself march into battle.

***12*** When we come upon him in whatever place he may be, we’ll descend on him [as thick] as dew falling on the ground; and no one will survive, neither he nor any of the men with him.

***13*** And if he withdraws into a city, all Israel will bring ropes to that city and drag its stones as far as the riverbed, until not even a pebble of it is left.”

***14*** Avshalom and all Israel agreed that the advice of Chushai the Archite was better than that of Achitofel.—The Lord had decreed that Achitofel’s sound advice be nullified, in order that the Lord might bring ruin upon Avshalom.

***15*** Then Chushai told the priests Tzadok and Evyatar, “This is what Achitofel advised Avshalom and the elders of Israel; this is what I advised.

***16*** Now send at once and tell David, ‘Do not spend the night at the fords of the wilderness, but cross over at once; otherwise the king and all the troops with him will be annihilated.’”

***17*** Y’honatan and Achima-atz were staying at En-rogel, and a slave girl would go and bring them word and they in turn would go and inform King David. For they themselves dared not be seen entering the city.

***18*** But a boy saw them and informed Avshalom. They left at once and came to the house of a man in Bachurim who had a well in his courtyard. They got down into it,

***19*** and the wife took a cloth, spread it over the mouth of the well, and scattered groats on top of it, so that nothing would be noticed.

***20*** When Avshalom’s servants came to the woman at the house and asked where Achima-atz and Y’honatan were, the woman told them that they had crossed a bit beyond the water [meaning of Hebrew uncertain]. They searched, but found nothing; and they returned to Jerusalem.

***21*** After they were gone, [Achima-atz and Y’honatan] came up from the well and went and informed King David. They said to David, “Go and cross the water quickly, for Achitofel has advised thus and thus concerning you.”

***22*** David and all the troops with him promptly crossed the Jordan, and by daybreak not one was left who had not crossed the Jordan.

***23*** When Achitofel saw that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his ass and went home to his native town. He set his affairs in order, and then he hanged himself. He was buried in his ancestral tomb.

***24*** David had reached Machanayim when Avshalom and all the men of Israel with him crossed the Jordan.

***25*** Avshalom had appointed Amasa army commander in place of Yoav; Amasa was the son of a man named Yitra the Israelite, who had married Avigal bat Nachash and sister of Yoav’s mother Tz’ruyah.

***26*** The Israelites and Avshalom encamped in the district of Gil’ad.

***27*** When David reached Machanayim, Shovi ben Nachash from Rabbat-ammon, Machir ben Ammiel from Lo-d’var, and Barzillai the Gil’adi from Rogelim

***28*** presented couches, basins, and earthenware; also wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans, lentils, parched grain,

***29*** honey, curds, a flock, and cheese from the herd for David and the troops with him to eat. For they knew that the troops must have grown hungry, faint, and thirsty in the wilderness.

Chapter 18

***1*** David mustered the troops who were with him and set over them captains of thousands and captains of hundreds.

***2*** David sent out the troops, one-third under the command of Yoav, one-third under the command of Yoav’s brother Avishai ben Tz’ruyah, and one-third under the command of Ittai the Gittite. And David said to the troops, “I myself will march out with you.”

***3*** But the troops replied, “No! For if some of us flee, the rest will not be concerned about us; even if half of us should die, the others will not be concerned about us. But you are worth ten thousand of us. Therefore, it is better for you to support us from the town.”

***4*** And the king said to them, “I will do whatever you think best.” So the king stood beside the gate as all the troops marched out by their hundreds and thousands.

***5*** The king gave orders to Yoav, Abishai, and Ittai: “Deal gently with my boy Avshalom, for my sake.” All the troops heard the king give the order about Avshalom to all the officers.

***6*** The troops marched out into the open to confront the Israelites,c and the battle was fought in the forest of Efrayim.

***7*** The Israelite troops were routed by David’s followers, and a great slaughter took place there that day—20,000 men.

***8*** The battle spread out over that whole region, and the forest devoured more troops that day than the sword.

***9*** Avshalom encountered some of David’s followers. Avshalom was riding on a mule, and as the mule passed under the tangled branches of a great terebinth, his hair got caught in the terebinth; he was held [hanging] between heaven and earth as the mule under him kept going.

***10*** One of the men saw it and told Yoav, “I have just seen Avshalom hanging from a terebinth.”

***11*** Yoav said to the man who told him, “You saw it! Why didn’t you kill him then and there? I would have owed you 10 shekels of silver and a belt.”

***12*** But the man answered Yoav, “Even if I had a thousand shekels of silver in my hands, I would not raise a hand against the king’s son. For the king charged you and Avishai and Ittai in our hearing, ‘Watch over my boy Avshalom, for my sake.’

***13*** If I betrayed myself [by killing Avshalom]—and nothing is hidden from the king—you would have stood aloof.”

***14*** Yoav replied, “Then I will not wait for you.” He took three darts in his hand and drove them into Avshalom’s chest. [Avshalom] was still alive in the thick growth of the terebinth,

***15*** when 10 of Yoav’s young arms-bearers closed in and struck at Avshalom until he died.

***16*** Then Yoav sounded the horn, and the troops gave up their pursuit of the Israelites; for Yoav held the troops in check.

***17*** They took Avshalom and flung him into a large pit in the forest, and they piled up a very great heap of stones over it. Then all the Israelites fled to their homes.

—***18*** Now Avshalom, in his lifetime, had taken the pillar which is in the Valley of the King and set it up for himself; for he said, “I have no son to keep my name alive.” He had named the pillar after himself, and it has been called Avshalom’s Monument to this day.

***19*** Achima-atz ben Tzadok said, “Let me run and report to the king that the Lord has vindicated him against his enemies.”

***20*** But Yoav said to him, “You shall not be the one to bring tidings today. You may bring tidings some other day, but you’ll not bring any today; for the king’s son is dead!”

***21*** And Yoav said to a Cushite, “Go tell the king what you have seen.” The Cushite bowed to Yoav and ran off.

***22*** But Achima-atz ben Tzadok again said to Yoav, “No matter what, let me run, too, behind the Cushite.” Yoav asked, “Why should you run, my boy, when you have no news worth telling [meaning of Hebrew uncertain]?”

***23*** “I am going to run anyway.” “Then run,” he said. So Achima-atz ran by way of the Plain, and he passed the Cushite.

***24*** David was sitting between the two [the inner and the outer] gates. The watchman on the roof of the gate walked over to the city wall. He looked up and saw a man running alone.

***25*** The watchman called down and told the king; and the king said, “If he is alone, he has news to report.” As he was coming nearer,

***26*** the watchman saw another man running; and he called out to the gatekeeper, “There is another man running alone.” And the king said, “That one, too, brings news.”

***27*** The watchman said, “I can see that the first one runs like Achima-atz ben Tzadok”; to which the king replied, “He is a good man, and he comes with good news.”

***28*** Achima-atz called out and said to the king, “All is well!” He bowed low with his face to the ground and said, “Praised be the Lord your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king.”

***29*** The king asked, “Is my boy Avshalom safe?” And Achima-atz answered, “I saw a large crowd when Your Majesty’s servant Yoav was sending your servant off, but I don’t know what it was about.”

***30*** The king said, “Step aside and stand over there”; he stepped aside and waited.

***31*** Just then the Cushite came up; and the Cushite said, “Let my lord the king be informed that the Lord has vindicated you today against all who rebelled against you!”

***32*** The king asked the Cushite, “Is my boy Avshalom safe?” And the Cushite replied, “May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rose against you to do you harm fare like that young man!”

Chapter 19

***1*** The king was shaken. He went up to the upper chamber of the gateway and wept, moaning these words as he went, “My son Avshalom! O my son, my son Avshalom! If only I had died instead of you! O Avshalom, my son, my son!”

***2*** Yoav was told that the king was weeping and mourning over Avshalom.

***3*** And the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the troops, for that day the troops heard that the king was grieving over his son.

***4*** The troops stole into town that day like troops ashamed after running away in battle.

***5*** The king covered his face and the king kept crying aloud, “O my son Avshalom! O Avshalom, my son, my son!”

***6*** Yoav came to the king in his quarters and said, “Today you have humiliated all your followers, who this day saved your life, and the lives of your sons and daughters, and the lives of your wives and concubines,

***7*** by showing love for those who hate you and hate for those who love you. For you have made clear today that the officers and men mean nothing to you. I am sure that if Avshalom were alive today and the rest of us dead, you would have preferred it.

***8*** Now arise, come out and placate your followers! For I swear by the Lord that if you do not come out, not a single man will remain with you overnight; and that would be a greater disaster for you than any disaster that has befallen you from your youth until now.”

***9*** So the king arose and sat down in the gateway; and when all the troops were told that the king was sitting in the gateway, all the troops presented themselves to the king. Now the Israelites had fled to their homes.

***10*** All the people throughout the tribes of Israel were arguing: Some said, “The king saved us from the hands of our enemies, and he delivered us from the hands of the Philistines; and just now he had to flee the country because of Avshalom.

***11*** But Avshalom, whom we anointed over us, has died in battle; why then do you sit idle instead of escorting the king back?”

***12*** The talk of all Israel reached the king in his quarters. So King David sent this message to the priests Tzadok and Evyatar: “Speak to the elders of Judah and say, ‘Why should you be the last to bring the king back to his palace?

***13*** You are my kinsmen, my own flesh and blood! Why should you be the last to escort the king back?’

***14*** And to Amasa say this, ‘You are my own flesh and blood. May God do thus and more to me if you do not become my army commander permanently in place of Yoav!’”

***15*** So [Amasa] swayed the hearts of all the Judahites as one man; and they sent a message to the king: “Come back with all your followers.”

***16*** The king started back and arrived at the Jordan; and the Judahites went to Gilgal to meet the king and to conduct the king across the Jordan.

***17*** Shimi ben Gera, the Binyaminite from Bachurim, hurried down with the Judahites to meet King David,

***18*** accompanied by a thousand Binyaminites. And Tziva, the servant of the House of Shaul, together with his 15 sons and 20 slaves, rushed down to the Jordan ahead of the king

***19*** while the crossing was being made, to escort the king’s family over, and to do whatever he wished. Shimi ben Gera flung himself before the king as he was about to cross the Jordan.

***20*** He said to the king, “Let not my lord hold me guilty, and do not remember the wrong your servant committed on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem; let Your Majesty give it no thought.

***21*** For your servant knows that he has sinned; so here I have come down today, the first of all the House of Joseph, to meet my lord the king.”

***22*** Thereupon Avishai ben Tz’ruyah spoke up, “Shouldn’t Shimi be put to death for that—insulting the Lord’s anointed?”

***23*** But David said, “What has this to do with you,” you sons of Tz’ruyah, that you should cross me today? Should a single Israelite be put to death today? Don’t I know that today I am again king over Israel?”

***24*** Then the king said to Shimi, “You shall not die”; and the king gave him his oath.

***25*** M’fiboshet, the grandson of Shaul, also came down to meet the king. He had not pared his toenails, or trimmed his mustache, or washed his clothes from the day that the king left until the day he returned safe.

***26*** When he came [from] Jerusalem to meet the king, the king asked him, “Why didn’t you come with me, M’fiboshet?”

***27*** He replied, “My lord the king, my own servant deceived me. Your servant planned to saddle his ass and ride on it and go with Your Majesty—for your servant is lame.

***28*** [Tziva] has slandered your servant to my lord the king. But my lord the king is like an angel of the Lord; do as you see fit.

***29*** For all the members of my father’s family deserved only death from my lord the king; yet you set your servant among those who ate at your table. What right have I to appeal further to Your Majesty?”

***30*** The king said to him, “You need not speak further. I decree that you and Tziva shall divide the property.”

***31*** And M’fiboshet said to the king, “Let him take it all, as long as my lord the king has come home safe.”

***32*** Barzillai the Gil’adi had come down from Rogelin and passed on to the Jordan with the king, to see him off at the Jordan.

***33*** Barzillai was very old, 80 years of age; and he had provided the king with food during his stay at Machanayim, for he was a very wealthy man.

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

***35*** But Barzillai said to the king, “How many years are left to me that I should go up with Your Majesty to Jerusalem?

***36*** I am now 80 years old. Can I tell the difference between good and bad? Can your servant taste what he eats and drinks? Can I still listen to the singing of men and women? Why then should your servant continue to be a burden to my lord the king?

***37*** Your servant could barely cross the Jordan with your Majesty! Why should Your Majesty reward me so generously?

***38*** Let your servant go back, and let me die in my own town, near the graves of my father and mother. But here is your servant Kimham; let him cross with my lord the king, and do for him as you see fit.”

***39*** And the king said, “Kimham shall cross with me, and I will do for him as you see fit; and anything you want me to do, I will do for you.”

***40*** All the troops crossed the Jordan; and when the king was ready to cross, the king kissed Barzillai and bade him farewell; and [Barzillai] returned to his home.

***41*** The king passed on to Gilgal, with Kimham accompanying him; and all the Judahite soldiers and part of the Israelite army escorted the king across.

***42*** Then all the men of Israel came to the king and said to the king, “Why did our kinsmen, the men of Judah, steal you away and escort the king and his family across the Jordan, along with all David’s men?”

***43*** All the men of Judah replied to the men of Israel, “Because the king is our relative! Why should this upset you? Have we consumed anything that belongs to the king? Has he given us any gifts?”

***44*** But the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, “We have 10 shares in the king, and in David, too, we have more than you. Why then have you slighted us? Were we not the first to propose that our king be brought back?” However, the men of Judah prevailed over the men of Israel.

Chapter 20

***1*** A scoundrel named Sheva ben Bichri, a Binyaminite, happened to be there. He sounded the horn and proclaimed: “We have no portion in David, No share in Jesse’s son! Every man to his tent, O Israel!”

***2*** All the men of Israel left David and followed Sheva ben Bichri; but the men of Judah accompanied their king from the Jordan to Jerusalem.

***3*** David went to his palace in Jerusalem, and the king took the 10 concubines he had left to mind the palace and put them in a guarded place; he provided for them, but he did not cohabit with them. They remained in seclusion until the day they died, in living widowhood.

***4*** The king said to Amasa, “Call up the men of Judah to my standard, and report here three days from now.”

***5*** Amasa went to call up Judah, but he took longer than the time set for him.

***6*** And David said to Avishai, “Now Sheva ben Bichri will cause us more trouble than Avshalom. So take your lord’s servants and pursue him, before he finds fortified towns and eludes us [meaning of Hebrew uncertain].”

***7*** Yoav’s men, the Cheretites and Peletites, and all the warriors, marched out behind him. They left Jerusalem in pursuit of Sheva ben Bichri.

***8*** They were near the great stone in Giv’on when Amasa appeared before them. Yoav was wearing his military dress, with his sword girded over it and fastened around his waist in its sheath; and, as he stepped forward, it fell out [meaning of Hebrew sentence is uncertain].

***9*** Yoav said to Amasa, “How are you, brother?” and with his right hand Yoav took hold of Amasa’s beard as if to kiss him.

***10*** Amasa was not on his guard against the sword in Yoav’s [left] hand, and [Yoav] drove it into his belly so that his entrails poured out on the ground and he died; he did not need to strike him a second time. Yoav and his brother Avishai then set off in pursuit of Sheva ben Bichri,

***11*** while one of Yoav’s henchmen stood by him [the corpse] and called out, “Whoever favors Yoav, and whoever is on David’s side, follow Yoav!”

***12*** Amasa lay in the middle of the road, drenched in his blood; and the man saw that everyone stopped. And when he saw that all the people were stopping, he dragged Amasa from the road into the field and covered him with a garment.

***13*** Once he was removed from the road, everybody continued to follow Yoav in pursuit of Sheva ben Bichri.

***14*** [Sheva] had passed through all the tribes of Israel up to Avel of Bet-maacah; and all the B’eri assembled and followed him inside.

***15*** [Yoav’s men] came and besieged him in Avel of Bet-maacah; they threw up a siege-mound against the city and it stood against the rampart [meaning of Hebrew uncertain]. All the troops with Yoav were engaged in battering the wall,

***16*** when a clever woman shouted from the city, “Listen! Listen! Tell Yoav to come over here so I can talk to him.”

***17*** He approached her, and the woman asked, “Are you Yoav?” “Yes,” he answered; and she said to him, “Listen to what your handmaid has to say.” “I’m listening,” he replied.

***18*** And she continued, “In olden times people used to say,’Let them inquire of Avel [meaning of Hebrew uncertain],’ and that was the end of the matter.

***19*** I am one of those who seek the welfare of the faithful in Israel. But you seek to bring death upon a mother city in Israel! Why should you destroy the Lord’s possession?”

***20*** Yoav replied, “Far be it, far be it from me to destroy or to ruin!

***21*** Not at all! But a certain man from the hill country of Efrayim, named Sheva ben Bichri, has rebelled against King David. Just hand him alone over to us, and I will withdraw from the city.” The woman assured Yoav, “His head shall be thrown over the wall to you.”

***22*** The woman came to all the people with her clever plan; and they cut off the head of Sheva ben Bichri and threw it down to Yoav. He then sounded the horn; all the men dispersed to their homes, and Yoav returned to the king in Jerusalem.

***23*** Yoav was commander of the whole army [of] Israel; B’nayahu ben Y’hoyada was commander of the Cheretites and the Peletites;

***24*** Adoram was in charge of forced labor; Y’hoshofat ben Achilud was recorder;

***25*** Sh’va was scribe; and Tzadok and Evyatar were priests.

***26*** E-ra the Yairite also served David as priest.

Chapter 21

***1*** There was a famine during the reign of David, year after year for three years. David inquired of the Lord, and the Lord replied, “It is because of the bloodguilt of Shaul and [his] house, for he put some Giv’onites to death.”

***2*** The king summoned the Giv’onites and spoke to them.—Now the Giv’onites were not of Israelite stock, but a remnant of the Amorites, to whom the Israelites had given an oath; and Shaul had tried to wipe them out in his zeal for the people of Israel and Judah.—

***3*** David asked the Giv’onites, “What shall I do for you? How shall I make expiation, so that you may bless the Lord’s own people?”

***4*** The Giv’onites answered him, “We have no claim for silver or gold against Shaul and his household; and we have no claim on the life of any other man in Israel.” And [David] responded, “Whatever you say I will do for you.”

***5*** Thereupon they said to the king, “The man who massacred us and planned *to exterminate us, so that we* [meaning of italicized Hebrew uncertain] should not survive in all the territory of Israel

—***6*** let seven of his male issue be handed over to us, and we will impale them before the Lord in Giv’ah of Shaul, the chosen of the Lord.” And the king replied, “I will do so.”

***7*** The king spared M’fiboshet ben Yonatan ben Shaul, because of the oath before the Lord between the two, between David and Yonatan ben Shaul.

***8*** Instead, the king took Armoni and M’fiboshet [not the same man as in verse 7 above], the two sons that Ritzpah bat Ayah bore to Shaul, and the five sons that Merav bat Shaul [Merav according to some manuscripts and BT Sanhedrin 19b, but Michal in most manuscripts][[1]](#footnote-1) bore to Adriel ben Barzillai the M’cholati,

***9*** and he handed them over to the Giv’onites. They impaled them on the mountain before the Lord; all seven of them perished at the same time. They were put to death in the first days of the harvest, the beginning of the barley harvest.

***10*** Then Ritzpah bat Ayah took sackcloth and spread it on a rock for herself, and she stayed there from the beginning of the harvest until rain from the sky fell on the bodies; she did not let the birds of the sky settle on them by day or the wild beasts [approach] by night.

***11*** David was told what Shaul’s concubine Ritzpah bat Ayah had done.

***12*** And David went and took the bones of Shaul and of his son Yonatan from the citizens of Yavesh-Gil’ad, who had made off with them from the public square of Bet-shan, where the Philistines had hung them up on the day the Philistines killed Shaul at Gilboa.

***13*** He brought up the bones of Shaul and of his son Yonatan from there; and he gathered the bones of those who had been impaled.

***14*** And they buried the bones of Shaul and of his son Yonatan in Tzela, in the territory of Binyamin, in the tomb of his father Kish. And when all that the king had commanded was done, God responded to the plea of the land thereafter.

***15*** Again war broke out between the Philistines and Israel, and David and the men with him went down and fought the Philistines; David grew weary,

***16*** and Yishbi-b’nov [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] tried to kill David.—He was a descendant of the Rafah [apparently a race of giants]; his bronze spear weighed 300 shekels and he wore new armor.—

***17*** But Avishai ben Tz’ruyah came to his aid; he attacked the Philistine and killed him. It was then that David’s men declared to him on oath, “You shall not go with us into battle any more, lest you extinguish the lamp of Israel!”

***18*** After this, fighting broke out again with the Philistines, at Gov; that was when Sib’echai the Chushati killed Saf, a descendant of the Rafah.

***19*** Again there was fighting with the Philistines at Gov; and Elchanan ben Ya-arei Or’gim the Bet-lechemite killed Goliath the Gittite, whose spear had a shaft like a weaver’s bar.

***20*** Once again there was fighting, at Gath. There was a giant of a man [meaning of Hebrew uncertain], who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, 24 in all; he too was descended from the Rafah.

***21*** When he taunted Israel, Y’honatan, the son of David’s brother Shimei, killed him.

***22*** Those four were descended from the Rafah in Gath, and they fell by the hands of David and his men.

Chapter 22

1 David addressed the words of this song to the Lord, after the Lord had saved him from the hands of all his enemies and from the hands of Shaul. [The poem that follows occurs again as Psalms 18, with a number of variations, some of which will be noted below.]

***2*** He said: O Lord, my crag, my fastness, my deliverer!

***3*** O God, the rock [lit. “the God of my rock”; Psalms 18.3, “my God, my rock”] wherein I take shelter:  
My shield, my mighty champion [lit. “horn of rescue”], my fortress and refuge!  
My savior, You who rescue me from violence!

***4*** All praise! I called on the Lord,  
And I was delivered from my enemies.

***5*** For the breakers of Death encompassed me,  
The torrents of Belial [the netherworld, like “Death” and “Sheol”] terrified me;

***6*** The snares of Sheol encircled me,  
The coils of Death engulfed me.

***7*** In my anguish I called on the Lord,  
Cried out to my God;  
In His Abode [Temple] He heard my voice,  
My cry entered His ears.

***8*** Then the earth rocked and quaked,  
The foundations of heaven [Psalms 18.8, “mountains”] shook—  
Rocked by His indignation.

***9*** Smoke went up from His nostrils,  
From His mouth came devouring fire;  
Live coals blazed forth from Him.

***10*** He bent the sky and came down,  
Thick cloud beneath His feet.

***11*** He mounted a cherub and flew;  
He was seen [Psalm18.11, gliding] on the wings of the wind.

***12*** He made pavilions of darkness about Him,  
Dripping clouds, huge thunderheads;

***13*** In the brilliance before Him  
Blazed fiery coals.

***14*** The Lord thundered forth from heaven,  
The Most High sent forth His voice;

***15*** He let loose bolts, and scattered them [the enemies in Verse 4]; Lightning, and put them to rout.

***16*** The bed of the sea was exposed,  
The foundations of the world were laid bare  
By the mighty roaring of the Lord,  
At the blast of the breath of His nostrils.

***17*** He reached down from on high, He took me,  
Drew me out of the mighty waters [the torrents of Belial in verse 5];

***18*** He rescued me from my enemy so strong,  
From foes too mighty for me.

***19*** They attacked me on my day of calamity,  
But the Lord was my stay.

***20*** He brought me out to freedom,  
He rescued me because He was pleased with me.

***21*** The Lord rewarded me according to my merit,  
He requited the cleanness of my hands.

***22*** For I have kept the ways of the Lord  
And have not been guilty before my God;

***23*** I am mindful of all His rules  
And have not departed from His laws.

***24*** I have been blameless before Him,  
And have guarded myself against sinning—

***25*** And the Lord has requited my merit,  
According to my purity in His sight.

***26*** With the loyal You deal loyally;  
With the blameless hero [Psalms 18.26, “man”] blamelessly.

***27*** With the pure You act in purity,  
And with the perverse You are wily.

***28*** To humble folk You give victory,  
And You look with scorn on the haughty [lit. “And lower Your eyes on the haughty”; Psalms 18.28, “But haughty eyes You humble”].

***29*** You, O Lord, are my lamp;  
The Lord lights up my darkness.

***30*** With You, I can rush a barrier,  
With my God, I can scale a wall.

***31*** The way of God is perfect,  
The word of the Lord is pure.  
He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him.

***32*** Yea, who is a god except the Lord,  
Who is a rock except God?—

***33*** The God, my mighty stronghold [Psalms 18.33 “who girded me with might”]  
Who kept my path secure [meaning of Hebrew uncertain; Psalms 18.33, “made”];

***34*** Who made my legs like a deer’s,  
And set me firm on the heights;

***35*** Who trained my hands for battle,  
So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze!

***36*** You have granted me the shield of Your protection  
And Your providence has made me great [meaning of Hebrew uncertain].

***37*** You have let me stride on freely,  
And my feet have not slipped.

***38*** I pursued my enemies and wiped them out,  
I did not turn back till I destroyed them.

***39*** I destroyed them, I struck them down;  
They rose no more, they lay at my feet.

***40*** You have girt me with strength for battle,  
Brought low my foes before me,

***41*** Made my enemies turn tail before me,  
My foes—and I wiped them out.

***42*** They looked [Psalms 18,.42 “cried”], but there was none to deliver;  
To the Lord, but He answered them not.

***43*** I pounded them like dust of the earth,  
Stamped, crushed them like dirt of the streets.

***44*** You have rescued me from the strife of peoples,  
Kept me to be [Psalms 18.44, “made me”] a ruler of nations;  
Peoples I knew not must serve me.

***45*** Aliens have cringed before me,  
Paid me homage at the mere report of me.

***46*** Aliens have lost courage  
And come trembling out of their fastnesses [meaning of Hebrew uncertain].

***47*** The Lord lives! Blessed is my rock!  
Exalted be God, the rock Who gives me victory;

***48*** The God who has vindicated me  
And made peoples subject to me,

***49*** Rescued me from my enemies,  
Raised me clear of my foes,  
Saved me from lawless men!

***50*** For this I sing Your praise among the nations  
And hymn Your name:

***51*** Tower of victory [Hebrew *migdawl* (מגדול); both the k’tiv[[2]](#footnote-2) and Psalms 18.51 read *magdeel* (מגדיל), “He accords wondrous victories”] to His king,  
Who deals graciously with His anointed,  
With David and his offspring evermore.

Chapter 23

***1*** These are the last words of David [[meaning of much of this poem, verses 1-7, is uncertain]:  
The utterance of David ben Jesse,  
The utterance of the man set on high,  
The anointed of the God of Jacob,  
The favorite of the songs of Israel:

***2*** The spirit of the Lord has spoken through me,  
His message is on my tongue;

***3*** The God of Israel has spoken,  
The Rock of Israel said concerning me:  
“He who rules men justly,  
He who rules in awe of God

***4*** Is like the light of morning at sunrise,  
A morning without clouds—  
Through sunshine and rain  
[Bringing] vegetation out of the earth.”

***5*** Is not my House established before God?  
For He has granted me an eternal pact,  
Drawn up in full and secured.  
Will He not cause all my success  
And [my] every desire to blossom?

***6*** But the wicked shall all  
Be raked aside like thorns;  
For no one will take them in his hand.

***7*** Whoever touches them  
Must arm himself with iron  
And the shaft of a spear;  
And they must be burned up on the spot.

***8*** These are the names of David’s warriors: Yoshev-bashevet, a Tach-k’moni, the chief officer—he is Adino the Etzni; [he wielded his spear (preserved in 1 Chronicles 11.11 and in some Septuagint versions)] against 800 and slew them on one occasion.

***9*** Next to him was Eleazar ben Dodo ben Achochi. He was one of the three warriors with David when they defied the Philistines gathered there for battle. The Israelite soldiers retreated,

***10*** but he held his ground. He struck down Philistines until his arm grew tired and his hand stuck to his sword; and the Lord wrought a great victory that day. Then the troops came back to him—but only to strip [the slain].

***11*** Next to him was Shammah ben Ahgei the Harari. The Philistines had gathered in force [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] where there was a plot of ground full of lentils; and the troops fled from the Philistines.

***12*** But [Shammah] took his stand in the middle of the plot and defended it, and he routed the Philistines. Thus the Lord wrought a great victory.

***13*** Once, during the harvest [meaning of Hebrew uncertain], three of the 30 chiefs went down to David at the cave of Adullam, while a force of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Refaim.

***14*** David was then in the stronghold, and a Philistine garrison was then at Bet-lechem.

***15*** David felt a craving and said, “If only I could get a drink of water from the cistern which is by the gate of Bet-lechem!”

***16*** So the three warriors got through the Philistine camp and drew water from the cistern which is by the gate of Bet-lechem, and they carried it back. But when they brought it to David he would not drink it, and he poured it out as a libation to the Lord.

***17*** For he said, “The Lord forbid that I should do this! Can [I drink]j the blood of the men who went at the risk of their lives?” So he would not drink it. Such were the exploits of the three warriors.

***18*** Avishai, the brother of Yoav ben Tz’ruyah, was head of another three [some versions say 30]. He once wielded his spear against 300 and slew them.

***19*** He won a name among the three; since he was the most highly regarded among the three [or 30], he became their leader. However, he did not attain to the three.

***20*** B’nayahu ben Y’hoyada, from Kavtz’ayl, was a brave soldier [Hebrew reads “the son of a brave soldier”] who performed great deeds. He killed the two of Ariel of Moab [meaning of Hebrew uncertain]. Once, on a snowy day, he went down into a pit and killed a lion.

***21*** He also killed an Egyptian, a huge man [meaning of Hebrew uncertain 1 Chronicles 11.23 reads “a giant of a man”]. The Egyptian had a spear in his hand, yet [B’nayahu] went down against him with a club, wrenched the spear out of the Egyptian’s hand, and killed him with his own spear.

***22*** Such were the exploits of B’nayahu ben Y’hoyada; and he won a name among the three [or 30] warriors.

***23*** He was highly regarded among the 30, but he did not attain to the three. David put him in charge of his bodyguard [meaning of Hebrew uncertain].

***24*** Among the 30 were Asahel, the brother of Yoav; Elchanan ben Dodo [from] Bet-lechem,

***25*** Shammah the Charodi, Elika the Charodi,

***26*** Cheletz the Palti, Eera ben Ikkesh from Tekoa,

***27*** Aviezer of Anatot, M’vunai the Chushati,

***28*** Tzalmon the Achochi, Mahrai the N’tofi,

***29*** Chelev ben Baanah the N’tofi, Ittai ben Rivai from Giv’ah of the Binyaminites,

***30*** B’nayahu of Piraton, Hiddai of Nachale-gaash,

***31*** Avi-alvon the Arvati, Azmavet the Barchumi,

***32*** Elyachba of Shaalvon, sons of Yashen, Y’honatan [meaning of Hebrew uncertain],

***33*** Shammah the Harari, Achiam ben Sharar the Harari,

***34*** Elifelet ben Achasbai son of the Maacatite, Eliam ben Achitofel the Gilonite,

***35*** Chetzrai the Carmeli, Paarai the Arbi,

***36*** Igal ben Natan from Tzovah, Bani the Gadi,

***37*** Tzelek the Amoni, Nachrai the B’ayroti—the arms-bearer of Yoav ben Tz’ruyah—

***38*** Eera the Yitri, Garev the Yitri,

***39*** U-riah the Chiti: 37 in all. [The Septuagint and 1 Chronicles 11 differ from the foregoing lists in verses 8-38 , and from each other in the number and forms of the names.]

[Chapter 24, the last in the Books of Samuel, is also found, with some variations, in 1 Chronicles 21.1-7.]

Chapter 24

***1*** The anger of the Lord again flared up against Israel [see above 21.1-14]; and He incited David against them, saying, “Go and number Israel and Judah.”

***2*** The king said to Yoav, his army commander, “Make the rounds of all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beer-Sheva, and take a census of the people, so that I may know the size of the population.”

***3*** Yoav answered the king, “May the Lord your God increase the number of the people a hundredfold, while your own eyes see it! But why should my lord king want this?”

***4*** However, the king’s command to Yoav and to the officers of the army remained firm; and Yoav and the officers of the army set out, at the instance of the king, to take a census of the people of Israel.

***5*** They crossed the Jordan and encamped at Aroer, on the right side of the town, which is in the middle of the wadi of Gad, and [went on] to Yazer.

***6*** They continued to Gil’ad and to the region of Tachtim-chodshi, and they came to Dan-yaan and around to Sidon.

***7*** They went onto the fortress of Tyre and all the towns of the Chivi and K’nani, and finished at Beer-Sheva in southern Judah.

***8*** They traversed the whole country, and then they came back to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and 20 days.

***9*** Yoav reported to the king the number of the people that had been recorded: in Israel there were 800,000 soldiers ready to draw the sword, and the men of Judah numbered 500,000.

***10*** But afterward David reproached himself for having numbered the people. And David said to the Lord, “I have sinned grievously in what I have done. Please, O Lord, remit the guilt of Your servant, for I have acted foolishly.”

***11*** When David rose in the morning, the word of the Lord had come to the prophet Gad, David’s seer:

***12*** “Go and tell David, ‘Thus said the Lord: I hold three things over you; choose one of them, and I will bring it upon you.’”

***13*** Gad came to David and told him; he asked, “Shall a seven-year famine come upon you in the land, or shall you be in flight from your adversaries for three months while they pursue you, or shall there be three days of pestilence in your land? Now consider carefully what reply I shall take back to Him who sent me.”

***14*** David said to Gad, “I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for His compassion is great; and let me not fall into the hands of men.” [The Septuagint adds “So David chose the pestilence. It was the time of the wheat harvest.”]

***15*** The Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from morning until the set time [meaning of Hebrew uncertain]; and 70,000 of the people died, from Dan to Beer-Sheva.

***16*** But when the angel extended his hand against Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord renounced further punishment and said to the angel who was destroying the people, “Enough! Stay your hand!” The angel of the Lord was then by the threshing floor of Aravnah the Y’vusi.

***17*** When David saw the angel who was striking down the people, he said to the Lord, “I alone am guilty, I alone have done wrong; but these poor sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand fall upon me and my father’s house!”

***18*** Gad came to David the same day and said to him, “Go and set up an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Aravnah the Y’vusi.”

***19*** David went up, following Gad’s instructions, as the Lord had commanded.

***20*** Aravnah [who was threshing wheat, according to 2 Chronicles 21.20; the text there has his name as Ornan] looked out and saw the king and his courtiers approaching him. So Aravnah went out and bowed low to the king, with his face to the ground.

***21*** And Aravnah asked, “Why has my lord the king come to his servant?” David replied, “To buy the threshing floor from you, that I may build an altar to the Lord and that the plague against the people may be checked.”

***22*** And Aravnah said to David, “Let my lord the king take it and offer up whatever he sees fit. Here are oxen for a burnt offering, and the threshing boards and the gear of the oxen for wood.

***23*** All this, O king [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] Aravnah gives to Your Majesty. And may the Lord your God,” Aravnah added, “respond to you with favor!”

***24*** But the king replied to Aravnah, “No, I will buy them from you at a price. I cannot sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that have cost me nothing.” So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for 50 shekels of silver.

***25*** And David built there an altar to the Lord and sacrificed burnt offerings and offerings of well-being. The Lord responded to the plea for the land, and the plague against Israel was checked.

1. From BT Sanhedrin 19b: “The Gemara asks: [I]sn’t it written, ‘And the five sons of Michal bat Shaul, whom she bore to Adriel….’ But did Michal give birth to these children? Didn’t Merav give birth to them for Adriel [after all, she was the one married to Adriel; Michal was married to Palti]? Rather, Merav gave birth to them and died, and Michal raised them in her house. Therefore, the children were called by her name, to teach you that with regard to anyone who raises an orphan in his house, the verse ascribes him credit as if he gave birth to him. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The k’tiv is a Masoretic correction; in this case changing how a word is pronounced from how it’s vowelized in the text. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)