

THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL

The birth and call of Samuel

1¹THERE WAS A MAN FROM RAMATHAIM, a Zuphite from the hill-country of Ephraim, named Elkanah son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph an Ephraimite; ²and he had two wives named Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah was childless. ³This man used to go up from his own town every year to worship and to offer sacrifice to the LORD of Hosts in Shiloh. There Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD. ⁴On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he gave several shares of the meat to his wife Peninnah with all her sons and daughters; ⁵but, although he loved Hannah, he gave her only one share, because the LORD had not granted her children. ⁶Further, Hannah's rival used to torment her and humiliate her because she had no children. ⁷Year after year this happened when they went up to the house of the LORD; her rival used to torment her. Once when she was in tears and would not eat, ⁸her husband Elkanah said to her, 'Hannah, why are you crying and eating nothing? Why are you so miserable? Am I not more to you than ten sons?' ⁹-¹⁰After they had finished eating and drinking at the sacrifice at Shiloh, Hannah rose in deep distress, and stood before the LORD and prayed to him, weeping bitterly. Meanwhile Eli the priest was sitting on his seat beside the door of the temple of the LORD. ¹¹Hannah made a vow in these words: 'O LORD of Hosts, if thou wilt deign to take notice of my trouble and remember me, if thou wilt not forget me but grant me offspring, then I will give the child to the LORD for his whole life, and no razor shall ever touch his head.' ¹²For a long time she went on praying before the LORD, while Eli watched her lips. ¹³Hannah was praying silently; but, although her voice could not be heard, her lips were moving and Eli took her for a drunken woman. ¹⁴He said to her, 'Enough of this drunken behaviour! Go away till the wine has worn off.' ¹⁵'No, sir,' she answered, 'I am a sober person, I have drunk no wine or strong drink, and I have been pouring out my heart before the LORD. ¹⁶Do not think me so degraded, sir; all this time I have been speaking out of the fullness of my grief and misery.' ¹⁷'Go in peace,' said Eli, 'and may the God of Israel answer the prayer you have made to him.' ¹⁸Hannah said, 'May I be worthy of your kindness.' And she went away and took something to eat, no longer downcast. ¹⁹Next morning they were up early and, after prostrating themselves before the LORD, returned to their own home at Ramah. Elkanah had intercourse with his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. ²⁰She conceived, and in due time bore a son, whom she named Samuel, 'because', she said, 'I asked the LORD for him.'

²¹Elkanah, with his whole household, went up to make the annual sacrifice to the LORD and to redeem his vow. ²²Hannah did not go with them, but said to her husband, 'When the child is weaned I will come up with him to enter the presence of the LORD, and he shall [come up ... he shall: *or* bring him up, and he shall come into the presence of the LORD and] stay there always.' ²³Her husband Elkanah said to her, 'Do what you think best; stay at home until you have weaned him. Only, may the LORD indeed see your vow fulfilled.' So the woman stayed and nursed her son until she had weaned him;

²⁴and when she had weaned him, she took him up with her. She took also a bull three years old, an ephah of meal, and a flagon of wine, and she brought him, child as he was, into the house of the LORD at Shiloh. ²⁵They slaughtered the bull, and brought the boy to Eli. ²⁶Hannah said to him, 'Sir, as sure as you live, I am the woman who stood near you here praying to the LORD. ²⁷It was this boy that I prayed for and the LORD has given me what I asked. What I asked I have received; ²⁸and now I lend him to the LORD; for his whole life he is lent to the LORD.' And they prostrated themselves there before the LORD.

2¹Then Hannah offered this prayer:

My heart rejoices in the LORD,
in the LORD I now hold my head high;
my mouth is full of derision of my foes,
exultant because thou hast saved me.

²There is none except thee,
none so holy as the LORD,
no rock like our God.

³Cease your proud boasting,
let no word of arrogance pass your lips;
for the LORD is a god of all knowledge:
he governs all that men do.

⁴Strong men stand in mute [in mute: *prob. rdg, Heb obscure*] dismay
but those who faltered put on new strength.

⁵Those who had plenty sell themselves for a crust,
and the hungry grow strong again.
The barren woman has seven children,
and the mother of many sons is left to languish.

⁶The LORD kills and he gives life,
he sends down to Sheol, he can bring the dead up again.

⁷The LORD makes a man poor, he makes him rich,
he brings down and he raises up.

⁸He lifts the weak out of the dust
and raises the poor from the dunghill;
to give them a place among the great,
to set them in seats of honour.

For the foundations of the earth are the LORD's,
he has built the world upon them.

⁹He will guard the footsteps of his saints,
while the wicked sink into silence and gloom;
not by mere strength shall a man prevail.

¹⁰Those that stand against the LORD will be terrified
when the High God [the High God: *prob. rdg, Heb upon him*] thunders out of
heaven.

The LORD is judge even to the ends of the earth,

he will give strength to his king
and raise high the head of his anointed prince.

¹¹Then Elkanah went to Ramah with his household, but the boy remained behind in the service of the LORD under Eli the priest.

¹²Now Eli's sons were scoundrels and had no regard for the LORD. ¹³The custom of the priests in their dealings with the people was this: when a man offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come while the flesh was stewing ¹⁴and would thrust a three-pronged fork into the cauldron or pan or kettle or pot; and the priest would take whatever the fork brought out. This should have been their practice whenever Israelites came to sacrifice at Shiloh; but now under Eli's sons, ¹⁵even before the fat was burnt, the priest's servant came and said to the man who was sacrificing, 'Give me meat to roast for the priest; he will not accept what has been already stewed, only raw meat.'
¹⁶And if the man answered 'Let them burn the fat first, and then take what you want', he said, 'No, give it to me now, or I will take it by force.'
¹⁷The young men's sin was very great in the LORD's sight; for they brought the LORD's sacrifice into general contempt.

¹⁸Samuel continued in the service of the LORD, a mere boy with a linen ephod fastened round him. ¹⁹Every year his mother made him a little cloak and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice. ²⁰Eli would give his blessing to Elkanah and his wife and say, 'The LORD grant you children by this woman in place of the one for which you asked him [for which ... him: *or* which you lent him].' Then they went home again.

²¹The LORD showed his care for Hannah, and she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters; meanwhile the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD.

²²Eli, now a very old man, had heard how his sons were treating all the Israelites, and how they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence. ²³So he said to them, 'Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people how wickedly you behave. ²⁴Have done with it, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear spreading among the LORD's people. ²⁵If a man sins against another man, God will intervene; but if a man sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?' For all this, they did not listen to their father's rebuke, for the LORD meant that they should die.
²⁶But the young Samuel, as he grew up, commended himself to the LORD and to men.

²⁷Now a man of God came to Eli and said, 'This is the word of the LORD: You know that I revealed myself to your forefather when he and his family were in Egypt in slavery in the house of Pharaoh. ²⁸You know that I chose him from all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to mount the steps of my altar, to burn sacrifices and to carry [*Or wear*] the ephod before me; and that I assigned all the food-offerings of the Israelites to your family. ²⁹Why then do you show disrespect for my sacrifices and the offerings which I have ordained? What makes you resent them? Why do you honour your sons more than me by letting them batten on the choicest offerings of my people Israel? ³⁰The LORD's word was, "I promise that your house and your father's house shall serve before me for

all time"; but now his word is, "I will have no such thing: I will honour those who honour me, and those who despise me shall meet with contempt. ³¹The time is coming when I will lop off every limb of your own and of your father's family, so that no man in your house shall come to old age. ³²You will even resent [You ... resent: *prob. rdg, Heb obscure*] the prosperity I give to Israel; never again shall there be an old man in your house. ³³If I allow any to survive to serve my altar, his eyes will grow dim and his appetite fail, his issue will be weaklings and die off. ³⁴The fate of your two sons shall be a sign to you: Hophni and Phinehas shall both die on the same day. ³⁵I will appoint for myself a priest who will be faithful, who will do what I have in my mind and in my heart. I will establish his family to serve in perpetual succession before my anointed king. ³⁶Any of your family that still live will come and bow humbly before him to beg a fee, a piece of silver and a loaf, and will ask for a turn of priestly duty to earn a crust of bread." ' "

3¹So the child Samuel was in the LORD's service under his master Eli. Now in those days the word of the LORD was seldom heard, and no vision was granted. ²But one night Eli, whose eyes were dim and his sight failing, was lying down in his usual place, ³while Samuel slept in the temple of the LORD where the Ark of God was. Before the lamp of God had gone out, ⁴the LORD called him, and Samuel answered, 'Here I am', ⁵and ran to Eli saying, 'You called me: here I am.' 'No, I did not call you,' said Eli; 'lie down again.' So he went and lay down. ⁶The LORD called Samuel again, and he got up and went to Eli. 'Here I am,' he said; 'surely you called me.' 'I did not call, my son,' he answered; 'lie down again.' ⁷Now Samuel had not yet come to know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not been disclosed to him. ⁸When the LORD called him for the third time, he again went to Eli and said, 'Here I am; you did call me.' Then Eli understood that it was the LORD calling the child; ⁹he told Samuel to go and lie down and said, 'If he calls again, say, "Speak, LORD; thy servant hears thee." ' So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

¹⁰The LORD came and stood there, and called, 'Samuel, Samuel', as before. Samuel answered, 'Speak; thy servant hears thee.' ¹¹The LORD said, 'Soon I shall do something in Israel which will ring in the ears of all who hear it. ¹²When that day comes I will make good every word I have spoken against Eli and his family from beginning to end. ¹³You are to [*prob. rdg, Heb I will*] tell him that my judgement on his house shall stand for ever because [*because: prob. rdg, Heb in guilt*] he knew of his sons' blasphemies against God [*against God: prob. original reading, altered in Heb to to them*] and did not rebuke them. ¹⁴Therefore I have sworn to the family of Eli that their abuse of sacrifices and offerings shall never be expiated.'

¹⁵Samuel lay down till morning and then opened the doors of the house of the LORD, but he was afraid to tell Eli about the vision. ¹⁶Eli called Samuel: 'Samuel, my son', he said; and he answered, 'Here I am.' ¹⁷Eli asked, 'What did the LORD say to you? Do not hide it from me. God forgive you if you hide one word of all that he said to you.' ¹⁸Then Samuel told him everything and hid nothing. Eli said, 'The LORD must do what is good in his eyes.'

¹⁹As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him, and none of his words went unfulfilled.

²⁰From Dan to Beersheba, all Israel recognized that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD. ²¹So the LORD continued to appear in Shiloh, because he had revealed himself there to Samuel [*prob. rdg, Heb adds according to the word of the LORD*].

The struggle with the Philistines

⁴SO SAMUEL'S WORD HAD AUTHORITY throughout Israel. And the time came when the Philistines mustered for battle against Israel, and the Israelites went out to meet them. The Israelites encamped at Ebenezer and the Philistines at Aphek. ²The Philistines drew up their lines facing the Israelites, and when they joined battle the Israelites were routed by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men on the field. ³When the army got back to the camp, the elders of Israel asked, 'Why did the LORD let us be routed today by the Philistines? Let us fetch the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD from Shiloh to go with us and deliver us from the power of our enemies.' ⁴So the people sent to Shiloh and fetched the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD of Hosts, who is enthroned upon the cherubim; Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the Ark. ⁵When the Ark came into the camp all the Israelites greeted it with a great shout, and the earth rang with the shouting. ⁶The Philistines heard the noise and asked, 'What is this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews?' When they knew that the Ark of the LORD had come into the camp, ⁷they were afraid and cried, 'A god has come into the camp. We are lost! No such thing has ever happened before. ⁸We are utterly lost! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the very gods who broke the Egyptians and crushed them in the wilderness. ⁹Courage, Philistines, and act like men, or you will become slaves to the Hebrews as they were yours. Be men, and fight!' ¹⁰The Philistines then gave battle, and the Israelites were defeated and fled to their homes. It was a great defeat, and thirty thousand Israelite foot-soldiers perished. ¹¹The Ark of God was taken, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were killed.

¹²A Benjamite ran from the battlefield and reached Shiloh on the same day, his clothes rent and dust on his head. ¹³When he arrived Eli was sitting on a seat by the road to Mizpah, for he was deeply troubled about the Ark of God. The man entered the city with his news, and all the people cried out in horror. ¹⁴When Eli heard it, he asked, 'What does this uproar mean?' the man hurried to Eli and told him. ¹⁵Eli was ninety-eight years old and sat staring with sightless eyes; ¹⁶so the man said to him, 'I am the man who has just arrived from the battle; this very day I have escaped from the field.' Eli asked, 'What is the news, my son?' ¹⁷The runner answered, 'The Israelites have fled from the Philistines; utter panic has struck the army; your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are killed, and the Ark of God is taken.' ¹⁸At the mention of the Ark of God, Eli fell backwards from his seat by the gate and broke his neck, for he was old and heavy. So he died; he had been judge over Israel for forty years. ¹⁹His daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was with child and near her time, and when she heard of the capture of the Ark and the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband, her labour suddenly began and she crouched down and was delivered. ²⁰As she lay dying, the women who attended her said, 'Do not be afraid; you have a son.' But she did not answer or heed what they said. ²¹Then they named the boy Ichabod [*That is No-glory*], saying, 'Glory has departed from Israel' (in allusion to the capture of the Ark of God and the death of

her father-in-law and her husband); ²²'Glory has departed from Israel,' they said, 'because the Ark of God is taken.'

5¹After the Philistines had captured the Ark of God, they brought it from Eben-ezer to Ashdod; ²and there they carried it into the temple of Dagon and set it beside Dagon himself. ³When the people of Ashdod rose next morning, there was Dagon fallen face downwards before the Ark of the LORD; so they took him and put him back in his place. ⁴Next morning when they rose, Dagon had again fallen face downwards before the Ark of the LORD, with his head and his two hands lying broken off beside his platform; only Dagon's body remained on it. ⁵This is why from that day to this the priests of Dagon and all who enter the temple of Dagon at Ashdod do not set foot upon Dagon's platform.

⁶Then the LORD laid a heavy hand upon the people of Ashdod; he threw them into distress and plagued them with tumours, and their territory swarmed with rats [*Or mice*]. There was death and destruction all through the city. ⁷When the men of Ashdod saw this, they said, 'The Ark of the God of Israel shall not stay here, for he has laid a heavy hand upon us and upon Dagon our god.' ⁸So they sent and called all the Philistine princes together to ask what should be done with the Ark. They said, 'Let the Ark of the God of Israel be taken across to Gath.' They took it there, ⁹and after its arrival the hand of the LORD caused great havoc in the city; he plagued everybody, high and low alike, with the tumours which broke out. ¹⁰Then they sent the Ark of God on to Ekron. When the Ark reached Ekron, the people cried, 'They have brought the Ark of the God of Israel over to us, to kill us and our families.' ¹¹So they summoned all the Philistine princes and said, 'Send the Ark of the God of Israel away; let it go back to its own place, or it will be the death of us all.' There was death and destruction all through the city; for the hand of God lay heavy upon it. ¹²Even those who did not die were plagued with tumours; the cry of the city went up to heaven.

6¹When the Ark of the LORD had been in their territory for seven months, ²the Philistines summoned the priests and soothsayers and asked, 'What shall we do with the Ark of the LORD? Tell us how we ought to send it back to its own place.' ³They answered, 'If you send the Ark of the God of Israel back, do not let it go without a gift, but send it back with a gift for him by way of indemnity; then you will be healed and restored to favour; there is no reason why his hand should not be lifted from you.' ⁴When they were asked, 'What gift shall we send back to him?', they answered, 'Send five tumours modelled in gold and five gold rats, one for each of the Philistine princes, for the same plague afflicted all of you and your princes. ⁵Make models of your tumours and of the rats which are ravaging the land, and give honour to the God of Israel; perhaps he will relax the pressure of his hand on you, on your god, and on your land. ⁶Why should you be stubborn like Pharaoh and the Egyptians? Remember how this god made sport of them until they let Israel go. ⁷Now make a new wagon ready with two milch-cows which have never been yoked; harness the cows to the wagon, and take their calves from them and drive them back to their stalls. ⁸Then take the Ark of the LORD and put it on the wagon, place in a casket, beside it, the gold offerings that you are sending to him as an indemnity, and let it go where it will. ⁹Watch it: if it goes up towards its own territory to Beth-shemesh, then it is the LORD who has done us this great injury; but if not, then we shall know that his hand has not touched us, but we

have been the victims of chance.'

¹⁰The men did this. They took two milch-cows and harnessed them to a wagon, shutting up their calves in the stall, ¹¹and they placed the Ark of the LORD on the wagon together with the casket, the gold rats, and the models of their haemorrhoids. ¹²Then the cows went straight in the direction of Beth-shemesh; they kept to the same road, lowing as they went and turning neither right nor left, while the Philistine princes followed them as far as the territory of Beth-shemesh. ¹³Now the people of Beth-shemesh were harvesting their wheat in the Vale, and when they looked up and saw the Ark they rejoiced at the sight of it. ¹⁴The wagon came to the farm of Joshua of Beth-shemesh and halted there. Close by stood a great stone; so they chopped up the wood of the wagon and offered the cows as a whole-offering to the LORD. ¹⁵Then the Levites lifted down the Ark of the LORD and the casket containing the gold offerings, and laid them on the great stone; and the men of Beth-shemesh offered whole-offerings and shared-offerings that day to the LORD. ¹⁶The five princes of the Philistines watched all this, and returned to Ekron the same day.

¹⁷These golden haemorrhoids which the Philistines sent back as a gift of indemnity to the LORD were for Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron, one for each city. ¹⁸The gold rats were for all the towns of the Philistines governed by the five princes, both fortified towns and open settlements. The great stone where they deposited the Ark of the LORD stands witness on the farm of Joshua of Beth-shemesh to this very day.

¹⁹But the sons of Jeconiah did not rejoice with the rest of the men of Beth-shemesh when they welcomed the Ark of the LORD, and he struck down seventy of them. The people mourned because the LORD had struck them so heavy a blow, ²⁰and the men of Beth-shemesh said, 'No one is safe in the presence of the LORD, this holy God. To whom can we send it, to be rid of him?' ²¹So they sent this message to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim: 'The Philistines have returned the Ark of the LORD; come down and take charge of it.' ⁷¹Then the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took the Ark of the LORD away; they brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill and consecrated his son Eleazar as its custodian.

Samuel judge over Israel

²SO FOR A LONG WHILE the Ark was housed in Kiriath-jearim; and after some time, twenty years later, there was a movement throughout Israel to follow the LORD. ³So Samuel addressed these words to the whole nation: 'If your return to the LORD is whole-hearted, banish the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from your shrines; turn to the LORD with heart and mind, and worship him alone, and he will deliver you from the Philistines.' ⁴The Israelites then banished the Baalim and the Ashtaroth, and worshipped the LORD alone.

⁵Samuel summoned all Israel to an assembly at Mizpah, so that he might intercede with the LORD for them. ⁶When they had assembled there, they drew water and poured it out before the LORD and fasted all day, confessing that they had sinned against the LORD. It was at Mizpah that Samuel acted as judge over Israel.

⁷When the Philistines heard that the Israelites had assembled at Mizpah, their princes marched against them. The Israelites heard that the Philistines were advancing, and they were afraid. ⁸They said to Samuel, 'Do not cease to pray for us to the LORD our God to save us from the power of the Philistines.' ⁹Thereupon Samuel took a sucking lamb, offered it up complete as a whole-offering and prayed aloud to the LORD on behalf of Israel; and the LORD answered his prayer. ¹⁰As Samuel was offering the sacrifice and the Philistines were advancing to battle with the Israelites, the LORD thundered loud and long over the Philistines and threw them into confusion. They fled in panic before the Israelites, ¹¹who set out from Mizpah in pursuit and kept up the slaughter of the Philistines till they reached a point below Beth-car. ¹²There Samuel took a stone and set it up as a monument between Mizpah and]eshanah [*prob. rdg, (cp 2Chr. 13.19); Heb the tooth*], naming it Eben-ezer [*That is Stone of Help*], 'for to this point', he said, 'the LORD has helped us.' ¹³Thus the Philistines were subdued and no longer encroached on the territory of Israel; and the hand of the LORD was against them as long as Samuel lived. ¹⁴The cities they had captured were restored to Israel, and from Ekron to Gath the borderland was freed from their control. Between Israel and the Amorites peace was maintained. ¹⁵Samuel acted as judge in Israel as long as he lived, ¹⁶and every year went on circuit to Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpah; he dispensed justice at all these places, ¹⁷returning always to Ramah. That was his home and the place from which he governed Israel, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

Saul anointed king

8¹WHEN SAMUEL GREW OLD, he appointed his sons to be judges in Israel. ²The eldest son was named Joel and the second Abiah; they acted as judges in Beersheba. ³His sons did not follow in their father's footsteps but were intent on their own profit, taking bribes and perverting the course of justice. ⁴So all the elders of Israel met, and came to Samuel at Ramah ⁵and said to him, 'You are now old and your sons do not follow in your footsteps; appoint us a king to govern us, like other nations.' ⁶But their request for a king to govern them displeased Samuel, and he prayed to the LORD. ⁷The LORD answered Samuel, 'Listen to the people and all that they are saying; they have not rejected you, it is I whom they have rejected, I whom they will not have to be their king. ⁸They are now doing to you just what they have done to me since I brought them up from Egypt: they have forsaken me and worshipped other gods. ⁹Hear what they have to say now, but give them a solemn warning and tell them what sort of king will govern them.' ¹⁰Samuel told the people who were asking him for a king all that the LORD had said to him. ¹¹'This will be the sort of king who will govern you', he said. 'He will take your sons and make them serve in his chariots and with his cavalry, and will make them run before his chariot. ¹²Some he will appoint officers over units of a thousand and units of fifty. Others will plough his fields and reap his harvest; others again will make weapons of war and equipment for mounted troops. ¹³He will take your daughters for perfumers, cooks, and confectioners, ¹⁴and will seize the best of your cornfields, vineyards, and olive-yards, and give them to his lackeys. ¹⁵He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage to give to his eunuchs and lackeys. ¹⁶Your slaves, both men and women, and the best of your cattle and your asses he will seize and put

to his own use. ¹⁷He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. ¹⁸When that day comes, you will cry out against the king whom you have chosen; but it will be too late, the LORD will not answer you.' ¹⁹The people refused to listen to Samuel; 'No,' they said, 'we will have a king over us; ²⁰then we shall be like other nations, with a king to govern us, to lead us out to war and fight our battles.' ²¹So Samuel, when he had heard what the people said, told the LORD; ²²and he answered, 'Take them at their word and appoint them a king.' Samuel then dismissed all the men of Israel to their homes.

9¹There was a man from the district of Benjamin, whose name was Kish son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Bechorath, son of Aphiah a Benjamite. He was a man of substance, ²and had a son named Saul, a young man in his prime; there was no better man among the Israelites than he. He was a head taller than any of his fellows.

³One day some asses belonging to Saul's father Kish had strayed, so he said to his son Saul, 'Take one of the servants with you, and go and look for the asses.' ⁴They crossed the hill-country of Ephraim and went through the district of Shalisha but did not find them; they passed through the district of Shaalim but they were not there; they passed through the district of Benjamin but again did not find them. ⁵When they had entered the district of Zuph, Saul said to the servant with him, 'Come, we ought to turn back, or my father will stop thinking about the asses and begin to worry about us.' ⁶The servant answered, 'There is a man of God in the city here, who has a great reputation, because everything he says comes true. Suppose we go there; he may tell us something about this errand of ours.' ⁷Saul said, 'If we do go, what shall we offer him? There is no food left in our packs and we have no present for the man of God, nothing at all.' ⁸The servant answered him again, 'Wait! I have here a quarter-shekel of silver. I can give that to the man, to tell us what we should do.' ¹⁰ [vv9 and 10 transposed] Saul said, 'Good! Let us go to him.' So they went to the city where the man of God was. ⁹(In days gone by in Israel, when a man wished to consult God, he would say, 'Let us go to the seer.' For what is nowadays called a prophet used to be called a seer.) ¹¹As they were going up the hill to the city they met some girls coming out to draw water and asked, 'Shall we find the seer there?' ¹²'Yes,' they said, 'the seer is ahead of you now; he has just [the seer ... just: *prob. rdg, Heb* he is ahead of you, hurry now, for he has today] arrived in the city because there is a feast at the hill-shrine today. ¹³As you enter the city you will meet him before he goes up to the shrine to eat; the people will not start until he comes, for he has to bless the sacrifice before the company can eat. Go up now, and you will find him at once.' ¹⁴So they went up to the city, and just as they were going in, there was Samuel coming towards them on his way up to the shrine.

¹⁵Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had disclosed his intention to Samuel in these words: ¹⁶'At this same time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him prince over my people Israel, and then he shall deliver my people from the Philistines. I have seen the sufferings of my people and their cry has reached my ears.' ¹⁷The moment Saul appeared the LORD said to Samuel, 'Here is the man of whom I spoke to you. This man shall rule my people.' ¹⁸Saul came up to Samuel in the gateway and said, 'Would you tell me where the seer lives?' ¹⁹Samuel replied, 'I am the seer. Go on ahead of me to the hill-shrine and you shall eat with me today; in the

morning I will set you on your way, after telling you what you have on your mind. ²⁰Trouble yourself no more about the asses lost three days ago, for they have been found. But what is it that all Israel is wanting? It is you and your ancestral house.' ²¹'But I am a Benjamite,' said Saul, 'from the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family is the least important of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin. Why do you say this to me?' ²²Samuel then brought Saul and his servant into the dining-hall and gave them a place at the head of the company, which numbered about thirty. ²³Then he said to the cook, 'Bring the portion that I gave you and told you to put on one side.' ²⁴So the cook took up the whole haunch and leg and put it before Saul; and Samuel said, 'Here is the portion of meat [the portion of meat: *prob. rdg, Heb* what is left over] kept for you. Eat it: it has been reserved for you at this feast to which I have invited the people.' So Saul dined with Samuel that day, ²⁵and when they came down from the hill-shrine to the city a bed was spread on the roof for Saul, and he stayed there that night. ²⁶At dawn Samuel called to Saul on the roof, 'Get up, and I will set you on your way.' When Saul rose, he and Samuel went out together into the street. ²⁷As they came to the end of the town, Samuel said to Saul, 'Tell the boy to go on.' He did so, and then Samuel said, 'Stay here a moment, and I will tell you the word of God.'

10¹Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it over Saul's head, and he kissed him and said, 'The LORD anoints you prince over his people Israel; you shall rule the people of the LORD and deliver them from the enemies round about them. You shall have a sign that the LORD has anointed you prince to govern his inheritance: ²when you leave me today, you will meet two men by the tomb of Rachel at Zelzah in the territory of Benjamin. They will tell you that the asses you are looking for have been found and that your father is concerned for them no longer; he is anxious about you and says again and again, "What shall I do about my son?"' ³From there go across country as far as the terebinth of Tabor, where three men going up to Bethel to worship God will meet you. One of them will be carrying three kids, the second three loaves, and the third a flagon of wine. ⁴They will greet you and will offer you two loaves, which you will accept from them. ⁵Then when you reach the Hill of God, where the Philistine governor [*Or* garrison] resides, you will meet a company of prophets coming down from the hill-shrine, led by lute, harp, fife, and drum, and filled with prophetic rapture. ⁶Then the spirit of the LORD will suddenly take possession of you, and you too will be rapt like a prophet and become another man. ⁷When these signs happen, do whatever the occasion demands; God will be with you. ⁸You shall go down to Gilgal ahead of me, and I will come to you to sacrifice whole-offerings and shared-offerings. Wait seven days until I join you; then I will tell you what to do.' ⁹As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God gave him a new heart. On that same day all these signs happened. ¹⁰When they reached the Hill there was a company of prophets coming to meet him, and the spirit of God suddenly took possession of him, so that he too was filled with prophetic rapture. ¹¹When people who had known him previously saw that he was rapt like the prophets, they said to one another, 'What can have happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?' ¹²One of the men of that place said, 'And whose sons are they?' Hence the proverb, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?' ¹³When the prophetic rapture had passed, he went home [*prob. rdg, Heb* to the hill-shrine]. ¹⁴Saul's uncle said to him and the boy, 'Where have you been?' Saul answered, 'To look for the asses, and when we could not find them, we went to Samuel.' ¹⁵His uncle said, 'Tell me what Samuel said.' ¹⁶He told

us that the asses had been found', said Saul; but he did not repeat what Samuel had said about his being king.

¹⁷Meanwhile Samuel summoned the Israelites to the LORD at Mizpah ¹⁸and said to the people, 'This is the word of the LORD the God of Israel: I brought Israel up from Egypt; I delivered you from the Egyptians and from all the kingdoms that oppressed you; ¹⁹but today you have rejected your God who saved you from all your misery and distress; you have said, "No, set up a king over us." Now therefore take up your positions before the LORD tribe by tribe and clan by clan.' ²⁰Samuel then presented all the tribes of Israel, and Benjamin was picked by lot. ²¹Then he presented the tribe of Benjamin, family by family, and the family of Matri was picked. Then he presented the family of Matri, man by man, and Saul son of Kish was picked; but when they looked for him he could not be found. ²²They went on to ask the LORD, 'Will the man be coming back?' The LORD answered, 'There he is, hiding among the baggage.' ²³So someone ran and fetched him out, and as he took his stand among the people, he was a head taller than anyone else. ²⁴Samuel said to the people, 'Look at the man whom the LORD has chosen; there is no one like him in this whole nation.' They all acclaimed him, shouting, 'Long live the king!' ²⁵Samuel then explained to the people the nature of a king, and made a written record of it on a scroll which he deposited before the LORD; he then dismissed them to their homes. ²⁶Saul too went home to Gibeah, and with him went some fighting men whose hearts God had moved. ²⁷But there were scoundrels who said, 'How can this fellow deliver us?' They thought nothing of him and brought him no gifts.

11¹About a month later Nahash the Ammonite attacked and besieged Jabesh-gilead. The men of Jabesh said to Nahash, 'Come to terms with us and we will be your subjects.' ²Nahash answered them, 'On one condition only will I come to terms with you: that I gouge out your right eyes and bring disgrace on Israel.' ³The elders of Jabesh-gilead then said, 'Give us seven days' respite to send messengers throughout Israel and then, if no one relieves us, we will surrender to you.' ⁴When the messengers came to Gibeah, where Saul lived, and delivered their message, all the people broke into lamentation. ⁵Saul was just coming from the field driving in the oxen, and asked why the people were lamenting; and they repeated what the men of Jabesh had said. ⁶When Saul heard this, the spirit of God suddenly seized him. In his anger ⁷he took a pair of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent messengers with the pieces all through Israel to proclaim that the same would be done to the oxen of any man who did not follow Saul and Samuel into battle. The fear of the LORD fell upon the people and they came out, to a man. ⁸Saul mustered them in Bezek; there were three hundred thousand men from Israel and thirty thousand from Judah. He said to the men who brought the message, ⁹Tell the men of Jabesh-gilead, "Victory will be yours tomorrow by the time the sun is hot." ' The men of Jabesh heard what the messengers reported and took heart; ¹⁰and they said to Nahash, 'Tomorrow we will surrender to you, and then you may deal with us 'as you think fit.' ¹¹Next day Saul drew up his men in three columns; they forced their way right into the enemy camp during the morning watch and massacred the Ammonites while the day grew hot, after which the survivors scattered until no two men were left together.

¹²Then the people said to Samuel, 'Who said that Saul should not reign over us? Hand

the men over to us to be put to death.' ¹³But Saul said, 'No man shall be put to death on a day when the LORD has won such a victory in Israel.' ¹⁴Samuel said to the people, 'Let us now go to Gilgal and there renew our allegiance to the kingdom.' ¹⁵So they all went to Gilgal and invested Saul there as king in the presence of the LORD, sacrificing shared-offerings before the LORD; and Saul and all the Israelites celebrated the occasion with great joy.

12¹THEN SAMUEL THUS ADDRESSED the assembled Israelites: 'I have listened to your request and installed a king to rule over you. ²And the king is now your leader, while I am old and white-haired and my sons are with you; but I have been your leader ever since I was a child. ³Here I am. Lay your complaints against me in the presence of the LORD and of his anointed king. Whose ox have I taken, whose ass have I taken? Whom have I wronged, whom have I oppressed? From whom have I taken a bribe, to turn a blind eye? Tell me, and I will make restitution.' ⁴They answered, 'You have not wronged us, you have not oppressed us, you have not taken anything from any man.' ⁵Samuel then said to them, 'This day the LORD is witness among you, his anointed king is witness, that you have found my hands empty.' They said, 'He is witness.' ⁶Samuel said to the people, 'Yes, the LORD is witness, the LORD who gave you Moses and Aaron and brought your fathers out of Egypt. ⁷Now stand up, and here in the presence of the LORD I will put the case against you and recite all the victories which he has won for you and for your fathers. ⁸After Jacob and his sons had come down to Egypt and the Egyptians had made them suffer, your fathers cried to the LORD for help, and he sent Moses and Aaron, who brought them out of Egypt and settled them in this place. ⁹But they forgot the LORD their God, and he abandoned them to Sisera, commander-in-chief of Jabin king of Hazor, to the Philistines, and to the king of Moab, and they had to fight against them. ¹⁰Then your fathers cried to the LORD for help: "We have sinned, we have forsaken the LORD and we have worshipped the Baalim and the Ashtaroth. But now, if thou wilt deliver us from our enemies, we will worship thee." ¹¹So the LORD sent Jerubbaal and Barak, Jephthah and Samson, and delivered you from your enemies on every side; and you lived in peace and quiet.

¹²Then, when you saw Nahash king of the Ammonites coming against you, although the LORD your God was your king, you said to me, "No, let us have a king to rule over us." ¹³Now, here is the king you asked for; you chose him, and the LORD has set a king over you. ¹⁴If you will revere the LORD and give true and loyal service, if you do not rebel against his commands, and if you and the king who reigns over you are faithful to the LORD your God, well and good; ¹⁵but if you do not obey the LORD, and if you rebel against his commands, then he will set his face against you and against your king.

¹⁶Stand still, and see the great wonder which the LORD will do before your eyes. ¹⁷It is now wheat harvest; when I call upon the LORD and he sends thunder and rain, you will see and know how wicked it was in the LORD's eyes for you to ask for a king.' ¹⁸So Samuel called upon the LORD and he sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people were in great fear of the LORD and of Samuel. ¹⁹They said to Samuel, 'Pray for us your servants to the LORD your God, to save us from death; for we have added to all our other sins the great wickedness of asking for a king.' ²⁰Samuel said to the people, 'Do not be afraid; although you have been so wicked, do not give up the worship of the

LORD, but serve him with all your heart. ²¹Give up the worship of false gods which can neither help nor save, because they are false. ²²For his name's sake the LORD will not cast you off, because he has resolved to make you his own people. ²³As for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD and cease to pray for you. I will show you what is right and good: ²⁴to revere the LORD and worship him faithfully with all your heart. Consider what great things he has done for you; ²⁵but if you persist in wickedness, you shall be swept away, you and your king.'

13¹Saul was fifty years [*fifty years: prob. rdg, Heb a year*] old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel for twenty-two [*prob. rdg, Heb two*] years. ²He picked three thousand men from Israel, two thousand to be with him in Michmash and the hill-country of Bethel and a thousand to be with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin; and he sent the rest of the people home.

³Jonathan killed the Philistine governor [*Or garrison*] in Geba, and the news spread among the Philistines that the Hebrews were in revolt [*that ... revolt: prob. rdg, Heb has saying, Let the Hebrews hear after through the land*]. Saul sounded the trumpet all through the land; ⁴and when the Israelites all heard that Saul had killed a Philistine governor and that the name of Israel stank among the Philistines, they answered the call to arms and came to join Saul at Gilgal [*they answered ... Gilgal: or they were summoned to follow Saul to Gilgal*]. ⁵The Philistines mustered to attack Israel; they had thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horse, with infantry as countless as sand on the sea-shore. They went up and camped at Michmash, to the east of Beth-aven. ⁶The Israelites found themselves in sore straits, for the army was hard pressed, so they hid themselves in caves and holes and among the rocks, in pits and cisterns. ⁷Some of them crossed the Jordan into the district of Gad and Gilead, but Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the people at his back were in alarm [*but Saul ... in alarm: or but Saul was still at Gilgal, and all the army joined him there*]. ⁸He waited seven days for his meeting with Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; so the people began to drift away from Saul. ⁹He said therefore, 'Bring me the whole-offering and the shared-offerings', and he offered up the whole-offering. ¹⁰Saul had just finished the sacrifice, when Samuel arrived, and he went out to greet him. ¹¹Samuel said, 'What have you done?', and Saul answered, 'I saw that the people were drifting away from me, and you yourself had not come as you had promised, and the Philistines were assembling at Michmash; ¹²and I thought, "The Philistines will now move against me at Gilgal, and I have not placated the LORD"; so I felt compelled to make the whole-offering myself.' ¹³Samuel said to Saul, 'You have behaved foolishly. You have not kept the command laid on you by the LORD your God; if you had, he would have established your dynasty over Israel for all time. ¹⁴But now your line will not endure; the LORD will seek a man after his own heart, and will appoint him prince over his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command.'

¹⁵Samuel left Gilgal without more ado and went on his way. The rest of the people followed Saul, as he moved from Gilgal towards the enemy. At Gibeah of Benjamin he mustered the people who were with him; they were about six hundred men. ¹⁶Saul and his son Jonathan and the men they had with them took up their quarters in Gibeah of Benjamin, while the Philistines were encamped in Michmash. ¹⁷Raiding parties went out

from the Philistine camp in three directions. One party turned towards Ophrah in the district of Shual, ¹⁸another towards Beth-horon, and the third towards the range of hills overlooking the valley of Zeboim and the wilderness beyond.

¹⁹No blacksmith was to be found in the whole of Israel, for the Philistines were determined to prevent the Hebrews from making swords and spears. ²⁰The Israelites had to go down to the Philistines for their ploughshares, mattocks, axes, and sickles to be sharpened. ²¹The charge was two-thirds of a shekel for ploughshares and mattocks, and one-third of a shekel for sharpening the axes and setting the goads [*one-third ... the goads: prob. rdg, Heb obscure*]. ²²So when war broke out none of the followers of Saul and Jonathan had either sword or spear; only Saul and Jonathan carried arms.

²³Now the Philistines had posted a force to hold the pass of Michmash; **14**¹and one day Saul's son Jonathan said to his armour-bearer, 'Come, let us go over to the Philistine post beyond that ridge'; but he did not tell his father. ²Saul, at the time, had his tent under the pomegranate-tree at Migron on the outskirts of Gibeah; and he had about six hundred men with him. ³The ephod was carried by Ahijah son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, son of Phinehas son of Eli, the priest of the LORD at Shiloh. Nobody knew that Jonathan had gone. ⁴On either side of the pass through which Jonathan tried to make his way over to the Philistine post stood two sharp columns of rock, called Bozez [*That is Shining*] and Seneh [*That is Bramble-bush*]; ⁵one of them was on the north towards Michmash, and the other on the south towards Geba. ⁶Jonathan said to his armour-bearer, 'Now we will visit the post of those uncircumcised rascals. Perhaps the LORD will take a hand in it, and if he will, nothing can stop him. He can bring us safe through, whether we are few or many.' ⁷The young man answered, 'Do what you will, go forward; I am with you whatever you do.' ⁸'Good!' said Jonathan, 'we will cross over and let them see us. ⁹If they say, "Stay where you are till we come to you", then we will stay where we are and not go up to them. ¹⁰But if they say, "Come up to us", we will go up; this will be the sign that the LORD has put them into our power.' ¹¹So they showed themselves to the Philistines, and the Philistines said, 'Look! Hebrews coming out of the holes where they have been hiding!' ¹²And they called across to Jonathan and the young man, 'Come up to us; we have something to show you.' Jonathan said to the young man, 'Come on, the LORD has put them into the power of Israel.' ¹³Jonathan climbed up on hands and feet, and the young man followed him. The Philistines fell in front of Jonathan, and the young man, coming behind him, dispatched them. ¹⁴In that first attack Jonathan and his armour-bearer killed about twenty of them, like men cutting a furrow across a half-acre field. ¹⁵Terror spread through the army in the field and through the whole people; the men at the post and the raiding parties were terrified; the very earth quaked, and there was panic.

¹⁶Saul's men on the watch in Gibeah of Benjamin saw the mob of Philistines surging to and fro in confusion; ¹⁷so he ordered the people to call the roll and find out who was missing; and they called the roll and found that Jonathan and his armour-bearer were absent. ¹⁸Saul said to Ahijah, 'Bring forward the ephod', for it was he who carried the ephod at that time before Israel. ¹⁹But while Saul was still speaking, the confusion in the Philistine camp was increasing more and more, and he said to the priest, 'Hold your hand.' ²⁰Then Saul and all his men with shouting made for the battlefield, where they

found the enemy fighting one another in complete disorder. ²¹The Hebrews who up to now had been under the Philistines, and had been with them in camp, changed sides and joined the Israelites under Saul and Jonathan. ²²All the Israelites in hiding in the hill-country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines were in flight, and they also joined in and set off in hot pursuit. ²³The LORD delivered Israel that day, and the fighting passed on beyond Beth-aven.

²⁴Now the Israelites on that day had been driven to exhaustion. Saul had adjured the people in these words: 'A curse be on the man who eats any food before nightfall until I have taken vengeance on my enemies.' So no one ate any food. ²⁵Now there was honeycomb [Now ... honeycomb: *prob. rdg, Heb* All the land went into the forest, and there was honey] in the country-side; ²⁶but when his men came upon it, dripping with honey though it was, not one of them put his hand to his mouth for fear of the oath. ²⁷But Jonathan had not heard his father lay this solemn prohibition on the people, and he stretched out the stick that was in his hand, dipped the end of it in the honeycomb, put it to his mouth and was refreshed. ²⁸One of the people said to him, 'Your father solemnly forbade this; he said, "A curse on the man who eats food today!"' Now the men were faint with hunger. ²⁹Jonathan said, 'My father has done the people nothing but harm; see how I am refreshed by this mere taste of honey. ³⁰How much better if the people had eaten today whatever they took from their enemies by way of spoil! Then there would indeed have been a great slaughter of Philistines.'

³¹They defeated the Philistines that day, and pursued them from Michmash to Aijalon. But the people were so faint with hunger ³²that they turned to plunder and seized sheep, cattle, and bullocks; they slaughtered them on the bare ground, and ate the meat with the blood in it. ³³Someone told Saul that the people were sinning against the LORD by eating their meat with the blood in it. 'This is treason!' cried Saul. 'Roll a great stone here at once.' ³⁴He then said, 'Go about among the people and tell them to bring their oxen and sheep, and let each man slaughter his here and eat it; and so they will not sin against the LORD by eating meat with the blood in it.' So as night fell each man came, driving his own ox, and slaughtered it there. ³⁵Thus Saul came to build an altar to the LORD, and this was the first altar to the LORD that Saul built.

³⁶Saul said, 'Let us go down and make a night attack on the Philistines and harry them till daylight; we will not spare a man of them.' The people answered, 'Do what you think best', but the priest said, 'Let us first consult God.' ³⁷So Saul inquired of God, 'Shall I pursue the Philistines? Wilt thou put them into Israel's power?'; but this time he received no answer. ³⁸So he said, 'Let all the leaders of the people come forward and let us find out where the sin lies this day. ³⁹As the LORD lives, the deliverer of Israel, even if it lies in my son Jonathan, he shall die.' Not a soul answered him. ⁴⁰Then he said to the Israelites, 'All of you stand on one side, and I and my son Jonathan will stand on the other.' The people answered, 'Do what you think best.' ⁴¹Saul said to the LORD the God of Israel, 'Why hast thou not answered thy servant today? If this guilt lie in me. or in my son Jonathan, O LORD God of Israel, let the lot be Urim; if it lie in thy people Israel, let it be Thummim.' Jonathan and Saul were taken, and the people were cleared. ⁴²Then Saul said, 'Cast lots between me and my son Jonathan'; and Jonathan was taken. ⁴³Saul said to Jonathan, 'Tell me what you have done.' Jonathan told him, 'True, I did taste a

little honey on the tip of my stick. Here I am; I am ready to die.’⁴⁴ Then Saul swore a great oath that Jonathan should die.⁴⁵ But the people said to Saul, ‘Shall Jonathan die, Jonathan who has won this great victory in Israel? God forbid! As the LORD lives, not a hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has been at work with God today.’ So the people ransomed Jonathan and he did not die.⁴⁶ Saul broke off the pursuit of the Philistines because they had made their way home.

⁴⁷When Saul had made his throne secure in Israel, he fought against his enemies on every side, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, the king of Zobah, and the Philistines; and wherever he turned he was successful [*Or he found ample provision*].⁴⁸ He displayed his strength by defeating the Amalekites and freeing Israel from hostile raids.

⁴⁹Saul’s sons were: Jonathan, Ishyo and Malchishua. These were the names of his two daughters: Merab the elder and Michal the younger.⁵⁰ His wife was Ahinoam daughter of Ahimaaz, and his commander-in-chief was Abner son of his uncle Ner; ⁵¹Kish, Saul’s father, and Ner, Abner’s father, were sons [*prob. rdg, Heb son*] of Abiel.

⁵²There was bitter warfare with the Philistines throughout Saul’s lifetime; any strong man and any brave man that he found he took into his own service.

15¹Samuel said to Saul, ‘The LORD sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel. Now listen to the voice of the LORD.² This is the very word of the LORD of Hosts: “I am resolved to punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel, how they attacked them on their way up from Egypt.”³ Go now and fall upon the Amalekites and destroy them, and put their property under ban. Spare no one; put them all to death, men and women, children and babes in arms, herds and flocks, camels and asses.’⁴ Thereupon Saul called out the levy and mustered them in Telaim. There were two hundred thousand foot-soldiers and another ten thousand from Judah [*prob. rdg, Heb ten thousand with the men of Judah*].⁵ He came to the Amalekite city and halted for a time in the gorge.⁶ Meanwhile he sent word to the Kenites to leave the Amalekites and come down, ‘or’, he said, ‘I shall destroy you as well as them; but you were friendly to Israel when they came up from Egypt.’ So the Kenites left the Amalekites.⁷ Then Saul cut the Amalekites to pieces, all the way from Havilah to Shur on the borders of Egypt.⁸ Agag the king of the Amalekites he took alive, but he destroyed all the people, putting them to the sword.⁹ Saul and his army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat beasts and the lambs and everything worth keeping; they were unwilling to destroy them, but anything that was useless and of no value they destroyed.

¹⁰Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel: ¹¹‘I repent of having made Saul king, for he has turned his back on me and has not obeyed my commands.’ Samuel was angry; all night he cried aloud to the LORD.¹² Early next morning he went to meet Saul, but was told that he had gone to Carmel; Saul had set up a monument for himself there, and had then turned and gone down to Gilgal.¹³ There Samuel found him, and Saul greeted him with the words, ‘The LORD’s blessing upon you! I have obeyed the LORD’s commands.’¹⁴ But Samuel said, ‘What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? Why do I hear the lowing of cattle?’¹⁵ Saul answered, ‘The people have taken them from the

Amalekites. These are what they spared, the best of the sheep and cattle, to sacrifice to the LORD your God. The rest we completely destroyed.' ¹⁶Samuel said to Saul, 'Let be, and I will tell you what the LORD said to me last night.' 'Tell me', said Saul. ¹⁷So Samuel went on, 'Time was when you thought little of yourself, but now you are head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD has anointed you king over Israel. ¹⁸The LORD sent you with strict instructions to destroy that wicked nation, the Amalekites; you were to fight against them until you had wiped them out. ¹⁹Why then did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce upon the spoil and do what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD?' ²⁰Saul answered Samuel, 'But I did obey the LORD; I went where the LORD sent me, and I have brought back Agag king of the Amalekites. The rest of them I destroyed. ²¹Out of the spoil the people took sheep and oxen, the choicest of the animals laid under ban, to sacrifice to the LORD your God at Gilgal.' ²²Samuel then said:

Does the LORD desire offerings and sacrifices
as he desires obedience?

Obedience is better than sacrifice,
and to listen to him than the fat of rams.

²³Defiance of him is sinful as witchcraft,
yielding to men [yielding to men: *or* arrogance *or* obstinacy] as evil as [as
evil as: *prob. rdg, Heb* evil and] idolatry [*Or* household gods; *Heb* teraphim]
Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
the LORD has rejected you as king.

²⁴Saul said to Samuel, 'I have sinned. I have ignored the LORD's command and your orders: I was afraid of the people and deferred to them. ²⁵But now forgive my sin, I implore you, and come back with me, and I will make my submission before the LORD.'

²⁶Samuel answered, 'I will not come back with you; you have rejected the word of the LORD and therefore the LORD has rejected you as king over Israel.' ²⁷He turned to go, but Saul caught the edge of his cloak and it tore. ²⁸And Samuel said to him, 'The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from your hand today and will give it to another, a better man than you. ²⁹God who is the Splendour of Israel does not deceive or change his mind; ³⁰he is not a man that he should change his mind.' Saul said, 'I have sinned; but honour me this once before the elders of my people and before Israel and come back with me, and I will make my submission to the LORD your God.' ³¹So Samuel went back with Saul, and Saul made his submission to the LORD. ³²Then Samuel said, 'Bring Agag king of the Amalekites.' So Agag came to him with faltering step and said, 'Surely the bitterness of death has passed.' ³³Samuel said, 'Your sword has made women childless, and your mother of all women shall be childless too.' Then Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD at Gilgal.

³⁴Saul went to his own home at Gibeah, and Samuel went to Ramah; ³⁵and he never saw Saul again to his dying day, but he mourned for him, because the LORD had repented of having made him king over Israel.

Saul and David

16¹THE LORD SAID TO SAMUEL, 'How long will you mourn for Saul because I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and take it with you; I am

sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem; for I have chosen myself a king among his sons.' ²Samuel answered, 'How can I go? Saul will hear of it and kill me.' 'Take a heifer with you,' said the LORD; 'say you have come to offer a sacrifice to the LORD, ³and invite Jesse to the sacrifice; then I will let you know what you must do. You shall anoint for me the man whom I show you.' ⁴Samuel did as the LORD had told him, and went to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came in haste to meet him, saying, 'Why have you come? Is all well?' ⁵'All is well,' said Samuel; 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Hallow yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.' He himself hallowed Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice also. ⁶They came, and when Samuel saw Eliab he thought, 'Here, before the LORD, is his anointed king.' ⁷But the LORD said to him, 'Take no account of it if he is handsome and tall; I reject him. The LORD does not see as man sees; men judge by appearances but the LORD judges by the heart.' ⁸Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel, but he said, 'No, the LORD has not chosen this one.' ⁹Then he presented Shammah, and Samuel said, 'Nor has the LORD chosen him.' ¹⁰Seven of his sons Jesse presented to Samuel, but he said, 'The LORD has not chosen any of these.' ¹¹Then Samuel asked, 'Are these all?' Jesse answered, 'There is still the youngest, but he is looking after the sheep.' Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and fetch him; we will not sit down until he comes.' ¹²So he sent and fetched him. He was handsome, with ruddy cheeks and bright eyes [and bright eyes: *prob. rdg, Heb obscure*]. The LORD said, 'Rise and anoint him: this is the man.' ¹³Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers. Then the spirit of the LORD came upon David and was with him from that day onwards. And Samuel set out on his way back to Ramah.

¹⁴The spirit of the LORD had forsaken Saul, and at times an evil spirit from the LORD would seize him suddenly. ¹⁵His servants said to him, 'You see, sir, how an evil spirit from God seizes you; ¹⁶why do you not command your servants here to go and find some man who can play the harp? – then, when an evil spirit from God comes on you, he can play and you will recover.' ¹⁷Saul said to his servants, 'Find me a man who can play well and bring him to me.' ¹⁸One of his attendants said, 'I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who can play; he is a brave man and a good fighter, wise in speech and handsome, and the LORD is with him.' ¹⁹Saul therefore sent messengers to Jesse and asked him to send him his son David, who was with the sheep. ²⁰Jesse took a homer of bread, a skin of wine, and a kid, and sent them to Saul by his son David. ²¹David came to Saul and entered his service; and Saul loved him dearly, and he became his armour-bearer. ²²So Saul sent word to Jesse: 'Let David stay in my service, for I am pleased with him.' ²³And whenever a spirit from God came upon Saul, David would take his harp and play on it, so that Saul found relief; he recovered and the evil spirit left him alone.

17¹The Philistines collected their forces for war and massed at Socoh in Judah; they camped between Socoh and Azekah at Ephes-dammim. ²Saul and the Israelites also massed, and camped in the Vale of Elah. They drew up their lines facing the Philistines, ³the Philistines occupying a position on one hill and the Israelites on another, with a valley between them. ⁴A champion came out from the Philistine camp, a man named Goliath, from Gath; he was over nine feet in height. ⁵He had a bronze helmet on his head, and he wore plate-armour of bronze, weighing five thousand shekels. ⁶On his legs

were bronze greaves, and one of his weapons was a dagger of bronze. ⁷The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and its head, which was of iron, weighed six hundred shekels; and his shield-bearer marched ahead of him. ⁸The champion stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, 'Why do you come out to do battle, you slaves of Saul? I am the Philistine champion; choose your man to meet me. ⁹If he can kill me in fair fight, we will become your slaves; but if I prove too strong for him and kill him, you shall be our slaves and serve us. ¹⁰Here and now I defy the ranks of Israel. Give me a man,' said the Philistine, 'and we will fight it out.' ¹¹When Saul and the Israelites heard what the Philistine said, they were shaken and dismayed.

¹²David was the son of an Ephrathite [*prob. rdg, Heb adds Is this the man from Bethlehem in Judah?*] called Jesse, who had eight sons. By Saul's time he had become a feeble old man, ¹³and his three eldest sons had followed Saul to the war. The eldest was called Eliab, the next Abinadab, and the third Shammah; ¹⁴David was the youngest. The three eldest followed Saul, ¹⁵while David used to go to Saul's camp and back to Bethlehem to mind his father's flocks.

¹⁶Morning and evening for forty days the Philistine came forward and took up his position. ¹⁷Then one day Jesse said to his son David, 'Take your brothers an ephah of this parched grain and these ten loaves of bread, and run with them to the camp. ¹⁸These ten cream-cheeses are for you to take to the commanding officer. See if your brothers are well and bring back some token from them.' ¹⁹Saul and the brothers and all the Israelites were in the Vale of Elah, fighting the Philistines. ²⁰Early next morning David left someone in charge of the sheep, set out on his errand and went as Jesse had told him. He reached the lines just as the army was going out to take up position and was raising the war-cry. ²¹The Israelites and the Philistines drew up their ranks opposite each other. ²²David left his things in charge of the quartermaster, ran to the line and went up to his brothers to greet them. ²³While he was talking to them the Philistine champion, Goliath, came out from the Philistine ranks and issued his challenge in the same words as before; and David heard him. ²⁴When the Israelites saw the man they ran from him in fear. ²⁵'Look at this man who comes out day after day to defy Israel', they said. 'The king is to give a rich reward to the man who kills him; he will give him his daughter in marriage too and will exempt his family from service due in Israel.' ²⁶Then David turned to his neighbours and said, 'What is to be done for the man who kills this Philistine and wipes out our disgrace? And who is he, an uncircumcised Philistine, to defy the army of the living God?' ²⁷The people told him how the matter stood and what was to be done for the man who killed him. ²⁸His elder brother Eliab overheard David talking with the men and grew angry. 'What are you doing here?' he asked. 'And who have you left to look after those few sheep in the wilderness? I know you, you impudent young rascal; you have only come to see the fighting.' ²⁹David answered, 'What have I done now? I only asked a question.' ³⁰And he turned away from him to someone else and repeated his question, but everybody gave him the same answer.

³¹What David had said was overheard and reported to Saul, who sent for him. ³²David said to him, 'Do not lose heart, sir. I will go and fight this Philistine.' ³³Saul answered, 'You cannot go and fight with this Philistine; you are only a lad, and he has been a

fighting man all his life.’ ³⁴David said to Saul, ‘Sir, I am my father’s shepherd; when a lion or bear comes and carries off a sheep from the flock, ³⁵I go after it and attack it and rescue the victim from its jaws. Then if it turns on me, I seize it by the beard and batter it to death. ³⁶Lions I have killed and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine will fare no better than they; he has defied the army of the living God. ³⁷ The LORD who saved me from the lion and the bear will save me from this Philistine.’ ‘Go then,’ said Saul; ‘and the LORD will be with you.’ ³⁸He put his own tunic on David, placed a bronze helmet on his head and gave him a coat of mail to wear; ³⁹he then fastened his sword on David over his tunic. But David hesitated, because he had not tried them, and said to Saul, ‘I cannot go with these, because I have not tried them.’ So he took them off. ⁴⁰Then he picked up his stick, chose five smooth stones from the brook and put them in a shepherd’s bag which served as his pouch. He walked out to meet the Philistine with his sling in his hand.

⁴¹The Philistine came on towards David, with his shield-bearer marching ahead; ⁴²and he looked David up and down and had nothing but contempt for this handsome lad with his ruddy cheeks and bright eyes [*handsome ... bright eyes: prob. rdg, Heb obscure*]. ⁴³He said to David, ‘Am I a dog that you come out against me with sticks?’ And he swore at him in the name of his god. ⁴⁴ ‘Come on,’ he said, ‘and I will give your flesh to the birds and the beasts.’ ⁴⁵David answered, ‘You have come against me with sword and spear and dagger, but I have come against you in the name of the LORD of Hosts, the God of the army of Israel which you have defied. ⁴⁶The LORD will put you into my power this day; I will kill you and cut your head off and leave your carcass and the carcasses of the Philistines to the birds and the wild beasts; all the world shall know that there is a God in Israel. ⁴⁷All those who are gathered here shall see that the LORD saves neither by sword nor spear; the battle is the LORD’s, and he will put you all into our power.’

⁴⁸When the Philistine began moving towards him again, David ran quickly to engage him. ⁴⁹He put his hand into his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell flat on his face on the ground. ⁵⁰So David proved the victor with his sling and stone; he struck Goliath down and gave him a mortal wound, though he had no sword. ⁵¹Then he ran to the Philistine and stood over him, and grasping his sword, he drew it out of the scabbard, dispatched him and cut off his head. The Philistines, when they saw that their hero was dead, turned and ran. ⁵²The men of Israel and Judah at once raised the war-cry and hotly pursued them all the way to Gath and even to the gates of Ekron. The road that runs to Shaarim, Gath, and Ekron was strewn with their dead. ⁵³On their return from the pursuit of the Philistines, the Israelites plundered their camp. ⁵⁴David took Goliath’s head and carried it to Jerusalem, leaving his weapons in his tent.

⁵⁵Saul had said to Abner his commander-in-chief, when he saw David going out against the Philistine, ‘That boy there, Abner, whose son is he?’ ‘By your life, your majesty,’ said Abner, ‘I do not know.’ ⁵⁶The king said to Abner, ‘Go and find out whose son the lad is.’ ⁵⁷When David came back after killing the Philistine, Abner took him and presented him to Saul with the Philistine’s head still in his hand. ⁵⁸Saul asked him, ‘Whose son are you, young man?’, and David answered, ‘I am the son of your servant Jesse of Bethlehem.’

18¹⁻²That same day, when Saul had finished talking with David, he kept him and would not let him return any more to his father's house, for he saw that Jonathan had given his heart to David and had grown to love him as himself. ³So Jonathan and David made a solemn compact because each loved the other as dearly as himself. ⁴And Jonathan stripped off the cloak he was wearing and his tunic, and gave them to David, together with his sword, his bow, and his belt. ⁵David succeeded so well in every venture on which Saul sent him that he was given a command in the army, and his promotion pleased the ordinary people, and even pleased Saul's officers.

⁶At the home-coming of the army when David returned from the slaughter of the Philistines, the women came out from all the cities of Israel to look on, and the dancers came out to meet King Saul with tambourines, singing, and dancing. ⁷The women as they made merry sang to one another:

Saul made havoc among thousands
but David among tens of thousands.

⁸Saul was furious, and the words rankled. He said, 'They have given David tens of thousands and me only thousands; what more can they do but make him king?' ⁹From that day forward Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

¹⁰Next day an evil spirit from God seized upon Saul; he fell into a frenzy [*Or fell into prophetic rapture*] in the house, and David played the harp to him as he had before. Saul had his spear in his hand, ¹¹and he hurled it at David, meaning to pin him to the wall; but twice David swerved aside. ¹²After this Saul was afraid of David, because he saw that the LORD had forsaken him and was with David. ¹³He therefore removed David from his household and appointed him to the command of a thousand men. David led his men into action, ¹⁴and succeeded in everything that he undertook, because the LORD was with him. ¹⁵When Saul saw how successful he was, he was more afraid of him than ever; ¹⁶all Israel and Judah loved him because he took the field at their head.

¹⁷Saul said to David, 'Here is my elder daughter Merab; I will give her to you in marriage, but in return you must serve me valiantly and fight the LORD's battles.' For Saul meant David to meet his end at the hands of the Philistines and not himself.

¹⁸David answered Saul, 'Who am I and what are my father's people, my kinsfolk, in Israel, that I should become the king's son-in-law?' ¹⁹However, when the time came for Saul's daughter Merab to be married to David, she had already been given to Adriel of Meholah. ²⁰But Michal, Saul's other daughter, fell in love with David, and when Saul was told of this, he saw that it suited his plans. ²¹He said to himself, 'I will give her to him; let her be the bait that lures him to his death at the hands of the Philistines.' So Saul proposed a second time to make David his son-in-law, ²²and ordered his courtiers to say to David privately, 'The king is well disposed to you and you are dear to us all; now is the time for you to marry into the king's family.' ²³When Saul's people spoke in this way to David, he said to them, 'Do you think that marrying the king's daughter is a matter of so little consequence that a poor man of no consequence, like myself, can do it?' ²⁴Saul's courtiers reported what David had said, ²⁵and he replied, 'Tell David this: all the king wants as the bride-price is the foreskins of a hundred Philistines, by way of vengeance on his enemies.' Saul was counting on David's death at the hands of the Philistines. ²⁶The courtiers told David what Saul had said, and marriage with the king's

daughter on these terms pleased him well. Before the appointed time, ²⁷David went out with his men and slew two hundred Philistines; he brought their foreskins and counted them out to the king in order to be accepted as his son-in-law. So Saul married his daughter Michal to David. ²⁸He saw clearly that the LORD was with David, and knew that Michal his daughter had fallen in love with him; ²⁹and so he grew more and more afraid of David and was his enemy for the rest of his life.

³⁰The Philistine officers used to come out to offer single combat; and whenever they did, David had more success against them than all the rest of Saul's men, and he won a great name for himself.

19¹SAUL SPOKE TO JONATHAN his son and all his household about killing David. But Jonathan was devoted to David ²and told him that his father Saul was looking for an opportunity to kill him. 'Be on your guard tomorrow morning,' he said; 'conceal yourself, and remain in hiding. ³Then I will come out and join my father in the open country where you are and speak to him about you, and if I discover anything I will tell you.' ⁴Jonathan spoke up for David to his father Saul and said to him, 'Sir, do not wrong your servant David; he has not wronged you; his conduct towards you has been beyond reproach. ⁵Did he not take his life in his hands when he killed the Philistine, and the LORD won a great victory for Israel? You saw it, you shared in the rejoicing; why should you wrong an innocent man and put David to death without cause?' ⁶Saul listened to Jonathan and swore solemnly by the LORD that David should not be put to death. ⁷So Jonathan called David and told him all this; then he brought him to Saul, and he was in attendance on the king as before.

⁸War broke out again, and David attacked the Philistines and dealt them such a blow that they ran before him.

⁹An evil spirit from the LORD came upon Saul as he was sitting in the house with his spear in his hand; and David was playing the harp. ¹⁰Saul tried to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he avoided the king's thrust so that Saul drove the spear into the wall. David escaped and got safely away. ¹¹That night Saul sent servants to keep watch on David's house, intending to kill him in the morning, but David's wife Michal warned him to get away that night, 'or tomorrow', she said, 'you will be a dead man.' ¹²She let David down through a window and he slipped away and escaped. ¹³Michal took their household gods and put them on the bed; at its head she laid a goat's-hair rug and covered it all with a cloak. ¹⁴When the men arrived to arrest David she told them he was ill. ¹⁵Saul sent them back to see David for themselves. 'Bring him to me, bed and all,' he said, 'and I will kill him.' ¹⁶When they came, there were the household gods on the bed and the goat's-hair rug at its head. ¹⁷Then Saul said to Michal, 'Why have you played this trick on me and let my enemy get safe away?' And Michal answered, 'He said to me, "Help me to escape or I will kill you."'

¹⁸Meanwhile David made good his escape and came to Samuel at Ramah, and told him how Saul had treated him. Then he and Samuel went to Naioth and stayed there. ¹⁹Saul was told that David was there, ²⁰and he sent a party of men to seize him. When they saw the company of prophets in rapture, with Samuel standing at their head, the spirit

of God came upon them and they fell into prophetic rapture. ²¹When this was reported to Saul he sent another party. These also fell into a rapture, and when he sent more men a third time, they did the same. ²²Saul himself then set out for Ramah and came to the great cistern in Secu. He asked where Samuel and David were and was told that they were at Naioth in Ramah. ²³On his way there the spirit of God came upon him too and he went on, in a rapture as he went, till he came to Naioth in Ramah. ²⁴There he too stripped off his clothes and like the rest fell into a rapture before Samuel and lay down naked all that day and all that night. That is why men say, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?'

20¹Then David made his escape from Naioth in Ramah and came to Jonathan. 'What have I done?' he asked. 'What is my offence? What does your father think I have done wrong, that he seeks my life?' ²Jonathan answered him, 'God forbid! There is no thought of putting you to death. I am sure my father will not do anything whatever without telling me. Why should my father hide such a thing from me? I cannot believe it!' ³David said, 'I am ready to swear to it: your father has said to himself, "Jonathan must not know this or he will resent it", because he knows that you have a high regard for me. As the LORD lives, your life upon it, there is only a step between me and death.' ⁴Jonathan said to David, 'What do you want me to do for you?' ⁵David answered, 'It is new moon tomorrow, and I ought to dine with the king. Let me go and lie hidden in the fields until the third evening. ⁶If your father happens to miss me, then say, "David asked me for leave to pay a rapid visit to his home in Bethlehem, for it is the annual sacrifice there for the whole family." ⁷If he says, "Well and good", that will be a good sign for me; but if he flies into a rage, you will know that he is set on doing me wrong. ⁸My lord, keep faith with me; for you and I have entered into a solemn compact before the LORD. Kill me yourself if I am guilty. Why let me fall into your father's hands?' ⁹'God forbid!' cried Jonathan. 'If I find my father set on doing you wrong I will tell you.' ¹⁰David answered Jonathan, 'How will you let me know if he answers harshly?' ¹¹Jonathan said, 'Come with me into the fields.' So they went together into the fields, ¹²and Jonathan said to David, 'I promise you, David, in the sight of the LORD the God of Israel, this time tomorrow I will sound my father for the third time and, if he is well disposed to you, I will send and let you know. ¹³If my father means mischief, the LORD do the same to me and more, if I do not let you know and get you safely away. The LORD be with you as he has been with my father! ¹⁴I know that as long as I live you will show me faithful friendship, as the LORD requires; and if I should die, ¹⁵you will continue loyal to my family for ever. When the LORD rids the earth of all David's enemies, ¹⁶may the LORD call him to account if he and his house are no longer my friends.' ¹⁷Jonathan pledged himself afresh to David because of his love for him, for he loved him as himself. ¹⁸Then he said to him, 'Tomorrow is the new moon, and you will be missed when your place is empty. ¹⁹So go down at nightfall for the third time to the place where you hid on the evening of the feast and stay by the mound there. ²⁰Then I will shoot three arrows towards it, as though I were aiming at a mark. ²¹Then I will send my boy to find the arrows. If I say to him, "Look, the arrows are on this side of you, pick them up", then you can come out of hiding. You will be quite safe, I swear it; for there will be nothing amiss. ²²But if I say to the lad, "Look, the arrows are on the other side of you, further on", then the LORD has said that you must go; ²³the LORD stand witness between us

for ever to the pledges we have exchanged.'

²⁴So David hid in the fields. The new moon came, the dinner was prepared, and the king sat down to eat. ²⁵Saul took his customary seat by the wall, and Abner sat beside him; Jonathan too was present, but David's place was empty. ²⁶That day Saul said nothing, for he thought that David was absent by some chance, perhaps because he was ritually unclean. ²⁷But on the second day, the day after the new moon, David's place was still empty, and Saul said to his son Jonathan, 'Why has not the son of Jesse come to the feast, either yesterday or today?' ²⁸Jonathan answered Saul, 'David asked permission to go to Bethlehem. He asked my leave ²⁹and said, "Our family is holding a sacrifice in the town and my brother himself has ordered me to be there. Now, if you have any regard for me, let me slip away to see my brothers." That is why he has not come to dine with the king.' ³⁰Saul was angry with Jonathan, 'You son of a crooked and unfaithful mother! You have made friends with the son of Jesse only to bring shame on yourself and dishonour on your mother; I see how it will be. ³¹As long as Jesse's son remains alive on earth, neither you nor your crown will be safe. Send at once and fetch him; he deserves to die.' ³²Jonathan, answered his father, 'Deserves to die! Why? What has he done?' ³³At that, Saul picked up his spear and threatened to kill him; and he knew that his father was bent on David's death. ³⁴Jonathan left the table in a rage and ate nothing on the second day of the festival; for he was indignant on David's behalf because his father had humiliated him.

³⁵Next morning, Jonathan went out into the fields to meet David at the appointed time, taking a young boy with him. ³⁶He said to the boy, 'Run and find the arrows; I am going to shoot.' The boy ran on, and he shot the arrows over his head. ³⁷When the boy reached the place where Jonathan's arrows had fallen, Jonathan called out after him, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you. ³⁸Hurry! No time to lose! Make haste!' The boy gathered up the arrows and brought them to his master; ³⁹but only Jonathan and David knew what this meant; the boy knew nothing. ⁴⁰Jonathan handed his weapons to the boy and told him to take them back to the city. ⁴¹When the boy had gone, David got up from behind the mound and bowed humbly three times. Then they kissed one another and shed tears together, until David's grief was even greater than Jonathan's. ⁴²Jonathan said to David, 'Go in safety; we have pledged each other in the name of the LORD who is witness for ever between you and me and between your descendants and mine.'

David went off at once, while Jonathan returned to the city. **21**¹David made his way to the priest Ahimelech at Nob, who hurried out to meet him and said, 'Why have you come alone and no one with you?' ²David answered Ahimelech, 'I am under orders from the king: I was to let no one know about the mission on which he was sending me or what these orders were. When I took leave of my men I told them to meet me in such and such a place. ³Now, what have you got by you? Let me have five loaves, or as many as you can find.' ⁴The priest answered David, 'I have no ordinary bread available. There is only the sacred bread; but have the young men kept themselves from women?' ⁵David answered the priest, 'Women have been denied us hitherto, when I have been on campaign, even an ordinary campaign, and the young men's bodies have remained holy; and how much more will they be holy today?' ⁶So, as there was no other bread

there, the priest gave him the sacred bread, the Bread of the Presence, which had just been taken from the presence of the LORD to be replaced by freshly baked bread on the day that the old was removed. ⁷One of Saul's servants happened to be there that day, detained before the LORD; his name was Doeg the Edomite, and he was the strongest of all Saul's herdsman. ⁸David said to Ahimelech, 'Have you a spear or sword here at hand? I have no sword or other weapon with me, because the king's business was urgent.' ⁹The priest answered, 'There is the sword of Goliath the Philistine whom you slew in the Vale of Elah; it is wrapped up in a cloak behind the ephod. If you wish to take that, take it; there is no other weapon here.' David said, 'There is no sword like it, give it to me.'

¹⁰That day, David went on his way, eluding Saul, and came to Achish king of Gath.

¹¹The servants of Achish said to him, 'Surely this is David, the king of his country, the man of whom they sang as they danced:

'Saul made havoc among thousands
but David among tens of thousands.'

¹²These words were not lost on David, and he became very much afraid of Achish king of Gath. ¹³So he altered his behaviour in public and acted like a lunatic in front of them all, scrabbling on the double doors of the city gate and dribbling down his beard.

¹⁴Achish said to his servants, 'The man is mad! Why bring him to me? ¹⁵Am I short of madmen that you bring this one to plague me? Must I have this fellow in my house?'

22¹DAVID MADE HIS ESCAPE and went from there to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and all his family heard that he was there, they joined him. ²Men in any kind of distress or in debt or with a grievance gathered round him, about four hundred in number, and he became their chief. ³From there David went to Mizpeh in Moab and said to the king of Moab, 'Let my father and mother come and take shelter with you until I know what God will do for me.' ⁴So he left them at the court of the king of Moab, and they stayed there as long as David was in his stronghold.

⁵The prophet Gad said to David, 'You must not stay in your stronghold; go at once into Judah.' So David went as far as the forest of Hareth. ⁶News that David and his men had been seen reached Saul while he was in Gibeah, sitting under the tamarisk-tree on the hill-top with his spear in his hand and all his retainers standing about him. ⁷He said to them, 'Listen to me, you Benjamites: do you expect the son of Jesse to give you all fields and vineyards, or make you all officers over units of a thousand and a hundred? ⁸Is that why you have all conspired against me? Not one of you told me when my son made a compact with the son of Jesse; none of you spared a thought for me or told me that my son had set my own servant against me, who is lying in wait for me now.'

⁹Then Doeg the Edomite, who was standing with the servants of Saul, spoke: 'I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech son of Ahitub. ¹⁰Ahimelech consulted the LORD on his behalf, then gave him food and handed over to him the sword of Goliath the Philistine.' ¹¹The king sent for Ahimelech the priest and his family, who were priests at Nob, and they all came into his presence. ¹²Saul said, 'Now listen, you son of Ahitub', and the man answered, 'Yes, my lord?' ¹³Then Saul said to him, 'Why have you and the son of Jesse plotted against me? You gave him food and the sword too, and consulted

God on his behalf; and now he has risen against me and is at this moment lying in wait for me.' ¹⁴And who among all your servants', answered Ahimelech, 'is like David, a man to be trusted, the king's son-in-law, appointed to your staff and holding an honourable place in your household? ¹⁵Have I on this occasion done something profane in consulting God on his behalf? God forbid! I trust that my lord the king will not accuse me or my family; for I know nothing whatever about it.' ¹⁶But the king said, 'Ahimelech, you must die, you and all your family.' ¹⁷He then turned to the bodyguard attending him and said, 'Go and kill the priests of the LORD; for they are in league with David, and, though they knew that he was a fugitive, they did not tell me.' The king's men, however, were unwilling to raise a hand against the priests of the LORD. ¹⁸The king therefore said to Doeg the Edomite, 'You, Doeg, go and fall upon the priests'; so Doeg went and fell upon the priests, killing that day with his own hand eighty-five men who could carry the ephod. ¹⁹He put to the sword every living thing in Nob, the city of priests: men and women, children and babes in arms, oxen, asses, and sheep. ²⁰One son of Ahimelech named Abiathar made his escape and joined David. ²¹He told David how Saul had killed the priests of the LORD. ²²Then David said to him, 'When Doeg the Edomite was there that day, I knew that he would inform Saul. I have gambled with the lives of all your father's family. ²³Stay here with me, have no fear; he who seeks your life seeks mine, and you will be safe with me.'

23¹The Philistines were fighting against Keilah and plundering the threshing-floors; and when David heard this, ²he consulted the LORD and asked whether he should go and attack the Philistines. The LORD answered, 'Go, attack them, and relieve Keilah.' ³But David's men said to him, 'As we are now, we have enough to fear from Judah. How much worse if we challenge the Philistine forces at Keilah!' ⁴David consulted the LORD once again and the LORD answered him, 'Go to Keilah; I will give the Philistines into your hands.' ⁵So David and his men went to Keilah and fought the Philistines; they carried off their cattle, inflicted a heavy defeat on them and relieved the inhabitants. ⁶Abiathar son of Ahimelech made good his escape and joined David at Keilah, bringing the ephod with him. ⁷Saul was told that David had entered Keilah, and he said, 'God has put him into my hands; for he has walked into a trap by entering a walled town with gates and bars.' ⁸He called out the levy to march on Keilah and besiege David and his men. ⁹When David learnt how Saul planned his undoing, he told Abiathar the priest to bring the ephod, ¹⁰and then he prayed, 'O LORD God of Israel, I thy servant have heard news that Saul intends to come to Keilah and destroy the city because of me. ¹¹Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me to him? Will Saul come as I have heard? O LORD God of Israel, I pray thee, tell thy servant.' The LORD answered, 'He will come.' ¹²Then David asked, 'Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me and my men to Saul?', and the LORD answered, 'They will.' ¹³Then David left Keilah at once with his men, who numbered about six hundred, and moved about from place to place. When the news reached Saul that David had escaped from Keilah, he made no further move.

¹⁴While David was living in the fastnesses of the wilderness of Ziph, in the hill-country, Saul searched for him day after day, but God did not put him into his power. ¹⁵David well knew that Saul had come out to seek his life; and while he was at Horesh in the wilderness of Ziph, ¹⁶Saul's son Jonathan came to him there and gave him fresh

courage in God's name: ¹⁷'Do not be afraid,' he said; 'my father's hand shall not touch you. You will become king of Israel and I shall hold rank after you; and my father knows it.' ¹⁸The two of them made a solemn compact before the LORD; then David remained in Horesh and Jonathan went home. ¹⁹While Saul was at Gibeah the Ziphites brought him this news: 'David, we hear, is in hiding among us in the fastnesses of Horesh on the hill of Hachilah, south of Jeshimon. ²⁰Come down, your majesty, come whenever you will, and we are able to surrender him to you.' ²¹Saul said, 'The LORD has indeed blessed you; you have saved me a world of trouble. ²²Go now and make further inquiry, and find out exactly where he is and who saw him there. They tell me that he by himself is crafty enough to outwit me. ²³Find out which of his hiding-places he is using; then come back to me at such and such a place, and I will go along with you. So long as he stays in this country, I will hunt him down, if I have to go through all the clans of Judah one by one.' ²⁴They set out for Ziph without delay, ahead of Saul; David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon. ²⁵Saul set off with his men to look for him; but David got wind of it and went down to a refuge in the rocks, and there he stayed in the wilderness of Maon. Hearing of this, ²⁶Saul went into the wilderness after him; he was on one side of the hill, David and his men on the other. While David and his men were trying desperately to get away and Saul and his followers were closing in for the capture, ²⁷a runner brought a message to Saul: 'Come at once! the Philistines are harrying the land.' ²⁸So Saul called off the pursuit and turned back to face the Philistines. This is why that place is called the Dividing Rock. ²⁹David went up from there and lived in the fastnesses of En-gedi.

24¹When Saul returned from the pursuit of the Philistines, he learnt that David was in the wilderness of En-gedi. ²So he took three thousand men picked from the whole of Israel and went in search of David and his men to the east of the Rocks of the Wild Goats. ³There beside the road were some sheepfolds, and near by was a cave, at the far end of which David and his men were sitting concealed. Saul came to the cave and went in to relieve himself. ⁴⁻⁷ [*vv4-7 are re-arranged thus: 4a, 6, 7a, 4b, 5, 7b*] His men said to David, 'The day has come: the LORD has put your enemy into your hands, as he promised he would, and you may do what you please with him.' David said to his men, 'God forbid that I should harm my master, the LORD's anointed, or lift a finger against him; he is the LORD's anointed.' So David reprovved his men severely and would not let them attack Saul. He himself got up stealthily and cut off a piece of Saul's cloak; but when he had cut it off, his conscience smote him. Saul rose, left the cave and went on his way; ⁸whereupon David also came out of the cave and called after Saul, 'My lord the king!' When Saul looked round, David prostrated himself in obeisance ⁹and said to him, 'Why do you listen when they say that David is out to do you harm? ¹⁰Today you can see for yourself that the LORD put you into my power in the cave; I had a mind to kill you, but no, I spared your life and said, "I cannot lift a finger against my master, for he is the LORD's anointed." ¹¹Look, my dear lord, look at this piece of your cloak in my hand. I cut it off, but I did not kill you; this will show you that I have no thought of violence or treachery against you, and that I have done you no wrong; yet you are resolved to take my life. ¹²May the LORD judge between us! but though he may take vengeance on you for my sake, I will never lift my hand against you; ¹³"One wrong begets another", as the old saying goes, yet I will never lift my hand against you. ¹⁴Who has the king of Israel come out against? What are you pursuing? A dead dog, a mere flea. ¹⁵The LORD will be

judge and decide between us; let him look into my cause, he will plead for me and will acquit me.'

¹⁶When David had finished speaking, Saul said, 'Is that you, David my son?', and he wept. ¹⁷Then he said, 'The right is on your side, not mine, you have treated me so well, I have treated you so badly. ¹⁸Your goodness to me this day has passed all bounds: the LORD put me at your mercy but you did not kill me. ¹⁹Not often does a man find his enemy and let him go safely on his way; so may the LORD reward you well for what you have done for me today! ²⁰I know now for certain that you will become king, and that the kingdom of Israel will flourish under your rule. ²¹Swear to me by the LORD then that you will not exterminate my descendants and blot out my name from my father's house.' ²²David swore an oath to Saul; and Saul went back to his home, while David and his men went up to their fastness.

25¹SAMUEL DIED, and all Israel came together to mourn for him, and he was buried in his house in Ramah. Afterwards David went down to the wilderness of Paran.

²There was a man at Carmel in Maon, who had great influence and owned three thousand sheep and a thousand goats; and he was shearing his flocks in Carmel. ³His name was Nabal and his wife's name Abigail; she was a beautiful and intelligent woman, but her husband, a Calebite, was surly and mean. ⁴David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his flocks, ⁵and sent ten of his men, saying to them, 'Go up to Carmel, find Nabal and give him my greetings. ⁶You are to say, "All good wishes for the year ahead! Prosperity to yourself, your household, and all that is yours! ⁷I hear that you are shearing. Your shepherds have been with us lately and we did not molest them; nothing of theirs was missing all the time they were in Carmel. ⁸Ask your own people and they will tell you. Receive my men kindly, for this is an auspicious day with us, and give what you can to David your son and your servant." ' ⁹David's servants came and delivered this message to Nabal in David's name. When they paused, ¹⁰Nabal answered, 'Who is David? Who is this son of Jesse? In these days every slave who breaks away from his master sets himself up as a chief [*Or In these days there are many slaves who break away from their master*]. ¹¹Am I to take my food and my wine and the meat I have provided for my shearers and give it to men who come from I know not where?' ¹²David's men turned and made their way back to him and told him all this. ¹³He said to his men, 'Buckle on your swords, all of you.' So they buckled on their swords and followed David, four hundred of them, while two hundred stayed behind with the baggage.

¹⁴One of the young men said to Abigail, Nabal's wife, 'David sent messengers from the wilderness to ask our master politely for a present, and he flew out [*flew out: or screamed*] at them. ¹⁵The men have been very good to us and have not molested us, nor did we miss anything all the time we were going about with them in the open country. ¹⁶They were as good as a wall round us, night and day, while we were minding the flocks. ¹⁷Think carefully what you had better do, for it is certain ruin for our master and his whole family; he is such a good-for-nothing that it is no good talking to him.' ¹⁸So Abigail hastily collected two hundred loaves and two skins of wine, five sheep ready dressed, five measures of parched grain, a hundred bunches of raisins, and two

hundred cakes of dried figs, and loaded them on asses, ¹⁹but told her husband nothing about it. Then she said to her servants, 'Go on ahead, I will follow you.' ²⁰As she made her way on her ass, hidden by the hill, there were David and his men coming down towards her, and she met them. ²¹David had said, 'It was a waste of time to protect this fellow's property in the wilderness so well that nothing of his was missing. He has repaid me evil for good.' ²²David swore a great oath: 'God do the same to me and more if I leave him a single mother's son alive by morning!'

²³When Abigail saw David she dismounted in haste and prostrated herself before him, ²⁴bowing low to the ground at his feet, and said, 'Let me take the blame, my lord, but allow me, your humble servant, to speak out and let my lord give me a hearing. ²⁵How can you take any notice of this good-for-nothing? He is just what his name Nabal means: "Churl" is his name, and churlish his behaviour. I did not myself, sir, see the men you sent. ²⁶And now, sir, the LORD has restrained you from bloodshed and from giving vent to your anger. As the LORD lives, your life upon it, your enemies and all who want to see you ruined will be like Nabal. ²⁷Here is the present which I, your humble servant, have brought; give it to the young men under your command. ²⁸Forgive me, my lord, if I am presuming; for the LORD will establish your family for ever, because you have fought his wars. No calamity shall overtake you as long as you live. ²⁹If any man sets out to pursue you and take your life, the LORD your God will wrap your life up and put it with his own treasure, but the lives of your enemies he will hurl away like stones from a sling. ³⁰When the LORD has made good all his promises to you, and has made you ruler of Israel, ³¹there will be no reason why you should stumble or your courage falter because you have shed innocent blood or given way to your anger. Then when the LORD makes all you do prosper, you will remember me, your servant.' ³²David said to Abigail, 'Blessed is the LORD the God of Israel who has sent you today to meet me. ³³A blessing on your good sense, a blessing on you because you have saved me today from the guilt of bloodshed and from giving way to my anger. ³⁴For I swear by the life of the LORD the God of Israel who has kept me from doing you wrong: if you had not come at once to meet me, not a man of Nabal's household, not a single mother's son, would have been left alive by morning.' ³⁵Then David took from her what she had brought him and said, 'Go home in peace, I have listened to you and I grant your request.'

³⁶On her return she found Nabal holding a banquet in his house, a banquet fit for a king. He grew merry and became very drunk, so drunk that his wife said nothing to him, trivial or serious, till daybreak. ³⁷In the morning, when the wine had worn off, she told him everything, and he had a seizure and lay there like a stone. ³⁸Ten days later the LORD struck him again and he died. ³⁹When David heard that Nabal was dead he said, 'Blessed be the LORD, who has himself punished Nabal for his insult, and has kept me his servant from doing wrong. The LORD has made Nabal's wrongdoing recoil on his own head.' David then sent to make proposals that Abigail should become his wife. ⁴⁰And his servants came to Abigail at Carmel and said to her, 'David has sent us to fetch you to be his wife.' ⁴¹She rose and prostrated herself with her face to the ground, and said, 'I am his slave to command, I would wash the feet of my lord's servants.' ⁴²So Abigail made her preparations with all speed and, with her five maids in attendance, accompanied by David's messengers, rode away on an ass; and she became David's wife. ⁴³David had

also married Ahinoam of Jezreel; both these women became his wives. ⁴⁴Saul meanwhile had given his daughter Michal, David's wife, to Palti son of Laish from Gallim.

26¹THE ZIPHITES CAME TO SAUL at Gibeah to report that David was in hiding on the hill of Hachilah overlooking Jeshimon. ²Saul went down at once to the wilderness of Ziph, taking with him three thousand picked men, to search for David there. ³He encamped beside the road on the hill of Hachilah overlooking Jeshimon, while David was still in the wilderness. As soon as David knew that Saul had come to the wilderness in pursuit of him, ⁴he sent out scouts and found that Saul had reached such and such a place. ⁵Without delay, he went to the place where Saul had pitched his camp and observed where Saul and Abner son of Ner, the commander-in-chief, were lying. Saul lay within the lines with his troops encamped in a circle round him. ⁶David turned to Ahimelech the Hittite and Abishai son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and said, 'Who will venture with me into the camp, to go to Saul?' Abishai answered, 'I will.' ⁷David and Abishai entered the camp at night and found Saul lying asleep within the lines with his spear thrust into the ground by his head. Abner and the army were lying all round him. ⁸Abishai said to David, 'God has put your enemy into your power today; let me strike him and pin him to the ground with one thrust of the spear; I shall not have to strike twice.' ⁹David said to him, 'Do him no harm; who has ever lifted a finger against the LORD's anointed and gone unpunished? ¹⁰As the LORD lives,' went on David, 'the LORD will strike him down; either his time will come and he will die, or he will go down to battle and meet his end. ¹¹God forbid that I should lift a finger against the LORD's anointed! But now let us take the spear which is by his head, and the water-jar, and go.' ¹²So David took the spear and the water-jar from beside Saul's head and they went. The whole camp was asleep; no one saw him, no one knew anything, no one even woke up. A heavy sleep sent by the LORD had fallen on them.

¹³Then David crossed over to the other side and stood on the top of a hill a long way off; there was no little distance between them. ¹⁴David shouted across to the army and hailed Abner, 'Answer me, Abner!' He answered, 'Who are you to shout to the king?' ¹⁵David said to Abner, 'Do you call yourself a man? Is there anyone like you in Israel? Why, then, did you not keep watch over your lord the king, when someone came to harm your lord the king? ¹⁶This was not well done. As the LORD lives, you deserve to die, all of you, because you have not kept watch over your master the LORD's anointed. Look! Where are the king's spear and the water-jar that were by his head?'

¹⁷Saul recognized David's voice and said, 'Is that you, David my son?' 'Yes, sir, it is', said David. ¹⁸'Why must your majesty pursue me? What have I done? What mischief am I plotting? ¹⁹Listen, my lord, to what I have to say. If it is the LORD who has set you against me, may an offering be acceptable to him; but if it is men, a curse on them in the LORD's name; for they have ousted me today from my share in the LORD's inheritance and have banished me to serve other gods! ²⁰Do not let my blood be shed on foreign soil, far from the presence of the LORD, just because the king of Israel came out to look for a flea, as one might hunt a partridge over the hills.' ²¹Saul answered, 'I have done wrong; come back, David my son. You have held my life precious this day, and I will never harm you again. I have been a fool, I have been sadly in the wrong.' ²²David answered, 'Here is the king's spear; let one of your men come across and fetch

it. ²³The LORD who rewards uprightness and loyalty will reward the man into whose power he put you today, when I refused to lift a finger against the LORD's anointed. ²⁴As I held your life precious today, so may the LORD hold mine precious and deliver me from every distress.' ²⁵Then Saul said to David, 'A blessing is on you, David my son. You will do great things and be victorious.' So David went on his way and Saul returned home.

27¹David thought, 'One of these days I shall be killed by Saul. The best thing for me to do will be to escape into Philistine territory; then Saul will lose all further hope of finding me anywhere in Israel, search as he may, and I shall escape his clutches.' ²So David and his six hundred men crossed the frontier forthwith to Achish son of Maach king of Gath. ³David settled in Gath with Achish, taking with him his men and their families and his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, Nabal's widow. ⁴Saul was told that David had escaped to Gath, and he gave up the search. ⁵David said to Achish, 'If I stand well in your opinion, grant me a place in one of your country towns where I may settle. Why should I remain in the royal city with your majesty?' ⁶Achish granted him Ziklag on that day: that is why Ziklag still belongs to the kings of Judah.

⁷David spent a year and four months in Philistine country. ⁸He and his men would sally out and raid the Geshurites, the Gizzites, and the Amalekites, for it was they who inhabited the country from Telaim [*from Telaim: prob. rdg, Heb from of old*] all the way to Shur and Egypt. ⁹When David raided the country he left no one alive, man or woman; he took flocks and herds, asses and camels, and clothes too, and then came back again to Achish. ¹⁰When Achish asked, 'Where was your raid today?', David would answer, 'The Negeb of Judah' or 'The Negeb of the Jerahmeelites' or 'The Negeb of the Kenites'. ¹¹Neither man nor woman did David bring back alive to Gath, for fear that they should denounce him and his men for what they had done. This was his practice as long as he remained with the Philistines. ¹²Achish trusted David, thinking that he had won such a bad name among his own people the Israelites that he would remain his subject all his life.

Saul and his sons killed

28¹IN THOSE DAYS THE PHILISTINES MUSTERED their army for an attack on Israel. Achish said to David, 'You know that you and your men must take the field with me.' ²David answered Achish, 'Good, you will learn what your servant can do.' And Achish said to David, 'I will make you my bodyguard for life.'

³By this time Samuel was dead, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city; and Saul had banished from the land all who trafficked with ghosts and spirits. ⁴The Philistines mustered and encamped at Shunem, and Saul gathered all the Israelites and encamped on Gilboa; ⁵and when Saul saw the Philistine force, fear struck him to the heart. ⁶He inquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him, whether by dreams or by Urim or by prophets. ⁷So he said to his servants, 'Find me a woman who has a familiar spirit, and I will go and inquire through her.' His servants told him that there was such a woman at En-dor. ⁸Saul put on different clothes and went in

disguise with two of his men. He came to the woman by night and said, 'Tell me my fortunes by consulting the dead, and call up the man I name to you.' ⁹But the woman answered, 'Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has made away with those who call up ghosts and spirits; why do you press me to do what will lead to my death?' ¹⁰Saul swore her an oath: 'As the LORD lives, no harm shall come to you for this.' ¹¹The woman asked whom she should call up, and Saul answered, 'Samuel.' ¹²When the woman saw Samuel appear, she shrieked and said to Saul, 'Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!' ¹³The king said to her, 'Do not be afraid. What do you see?' The woman answered, 'I see a ghostly form coming up from the earth.' ¹⁴'What is it like?' he asked; she answered, 'Like an old man coming up, wrapped in a cloak.' Then Saul knew it was Samuel, and he bowed low with his face to the ground, and prostrated himself. ¹⁵Samuel said to Saul, 'Why have you disturbed me and brought me up?' Saul answered, 'I am in great trouble; the Philistines are pressing me and God has turned away; he no longer answers me through prophets or through dreams, and I have summoned you to tell me what I should do.' ¹⁶Samuel said, 'Why do you ask me, now that the LORD has turned from you and become your adversary?' ¹⁷He has done what he foretold through me. He has torn the kingdom from your hand and given it to another man, to David. ¹⁸You have not obeyed the LORD, or executed the judgement of his fury against the Amalekites; that is why he has done this to you today. ¹⁹For the same reason the LORD will let your people Israel fall into the hands of the Philistines and, what is more, tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me. Yes, indeed, the LORD will give the Israelite army into the hands of the Philistines.' ²⁰Saul was overcome and fell his full length to the ground, terrified by Samuel's words. He had no strength left, for he had eaten nothing all day and all night.

²¹The woman went to Saul and saw that he was much disturbed, and she said to him, 'I listened to what you said and I risked my life to obey you. ²²Now listen to me: let me set before you a little food to give you strength for your journey.' ²³But he refused to eat anything. When his servants joined the woman in pressing him, he yielded, rose from the ground and sat on the couch. ²⁴The woman had a fatted calf at home, which she quickly slaughtered. She took some meal, kneaded it and baked unleavened cakes, ²⁵which she set before Saul and his servants. They ate the food and departed that same night.

29¹The Philistines mustered all their troops at Aphek, while the Israelites encamped at En-harod [*prob. rdg, Heb at the spring*] in Jezreel. ²The Philistine princes were advancing with their troops in units of a hundred and a thousand; David and his men were in the rear of the column with Achish. ³The Philistine commanders asked, 'Why are those Hebrews there?' Achish answered, 'This is David, the servant of Saul king of Israel who has been with me now for a year or more. I have had no fault to find in him ever since he came over to me.' ⁴The Philistine commanders were indignant and said to Achish, 'Send the man back to the town which you allotted to him. He shall not fight side by side with us, or he may turn traitor in the battle. What better way to buy his master's favour, than at the price of our lives?' ⁵This is that David of whom they sang, as they danced:

Saul made havoc among thousands
but David among tens of thousands.'

⁶Achish summoned David and said to him, 'As the LORD lives, you are an upright man and your service with my troops has well satisfied me. I have had no fault to find with you ever since you joined me, but the other princes are not willing to accept you. ⁷Now go home in peace, and you will then be doing nothing that they can regard as wrong.' ⁸David protested, 'What have I done, or what fault have you found in me from the day I first entered your service till now, that I should not come and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?' ⁹Achish answered David, 'I agree that you have been as true to me as an angel of God, but the Philistine commanders insist that you shall not fight alongside them. ¹⁰Now rise early in the morning with those of your lord's subjects who have followed you, and go to the town which I allotted to you; harbour no evil thoughts, for I am well satisfied with you. Rise early and start as soon as it is light.' ¹¹So David and his men rose early to start that morning on their way back to the land of the Philistines, while the Philistines went on to Jezreel.

30¹On the third day David and his men reached Ziklag. Now the Amalekites had made a raid into the Negeb, attacked Ziklag and set fire to it; ²they had carried off all the women, high and low, without putting one of them to death. These they drove with them and continued their march. ³When David and his men approached the town, they found it destroyed by fire, and their wives, their sons, and their daughters carried off. ⁴David and the people with him wept aloud until they could weep no more. ⁵David's two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail widow of Nabal of Carmel, were among the captives. ⁶David was in a desperate position because the people, embittered by the loss of their sons and daughters, threatened to stone him. So David sought strength in the LORD his God. ⁷He told Abiathar the priest, son of Ahimelech, to bring the ephod. When Abiathar had brought the ephod, ⁸David inquired of the LORD, 'Shall I pursue these raiders? and shall I overtake them?' The answer came, 'Pursue them: you will overtake them and rescue everyone.' ⁹So David and his six hundred men set out and reached the ravine of Besor [*prob. rdg, Heb adds those who were left over remained*]. ¹⁰Two hundred of them who were too weary to cross the ravine stayed behind, and David with four hundred pressed on in pursuit.

¹¹In the open country they came across an Egyptian and took him to David. They gave him food to eat and water to drink, ¹²also a lump of dried figs and two bunches of raisins. When he had eaten these he revived; for he had had nothing to eat or drink for three days and nights. ¹³David asked him, 'Whose slave are you? and where have you come from?' 'I am an Egyptian boy,' he answered, 'the slave of an Amalekite, but my master left me behind because I fell ill three days ago. ¹⁴We had raided the Negeb of the Kerethites, part of Judah, and the Negeb of Caleb; we also set fire to Ziklag.' ¹⁵David asked, 'Can you guide me to this band?' 'Swear to me by God', he answered, 'that you will not put me to death or hand me back to my master, and I will guide you to them.' ¹⁶So he led him down, and there they were scattered everywhere, eating and drinking and celebrating the capture of the great mass of spoil taken from Philistine and Judaeen territory.

¹⁷David attacked from dawn till dusk and continued till next day; only four hundred young men mounted on camels made good their escape. ¹⁸David rescued all those

whom the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives. ¹⁹No one was missing, high or low, sons or daughters, and none of the spoil, nor anything they had taken for themselves: David recovered everything. ²⁰They took all the flocks and herds, drove the cattle before him [They took ... before him: *prob. rdg, Heb* David took all the flocks and herds; they drove before that cattle] and said, 'This is David's spoil.' ²¹When David returned to the two hundred men who had been too weak to follow him and whom he had left behind at the ravine of Besor, they came forward to meet him and his men. David greeted them all, inquiring how things were with them. ²²But some of those who had gone with David, worthless men and, scoundrels, broke in and said, 'These men did not go with us; we will not allot them any of the spoil that we have retrieved, except that each of them may take his own wife and children and then go.' ²³'That you shall never do,' said David, 'considering what the LORD has given us, and how he has kept us safe and given the raiding party into our hands. ²⁴Who could agree with what you propose? Those who stayed with the stores shall have the same share as those who went into battle. They shall share and share alike.' ²⁵From that time onwards, this has been the established custom in Israel down to this day.

²⁶When David reached Ziklag, he sent some of the spoil to the elders of Judah and to his friends, with this message: 'This is a present for you out of the spoil taken from the LORD's enemies.' ²⁷He sent to those in Bethuel, in Ramoth-negeb, in Jattir, ²⁸in Ararah [*prob. rdg, Heb* Aroer], in Siphmoth, in Eshtemoa, ²⁹in Rachal, in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, in the cities of the Kenites, ³⁰in Hormah, in Borashan, in Athak, ³¹in Hebron, and in all the places over which he and his men had ranged.

31¹ [*vv1-13: cp 1Chr. 10.1-12*]The Philistines fought a battle against Israel, and the men of Israel were routed, leaving their dead on Mount Gilboa. ²The Philistines hotly pursued Saul and his sons and killed the three sons, Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua. ³The battle went hard for Saul, for some archers came upon him and he was wounded in the belly by the archers. ⁴So he said to his armour-bearer, 'Draw your sword and run me through, so that these uncircumcised brutes may not come and taunt me and make sport of me.' But the armour-bearer refused, he dared not; whereupon Saul took his own sword and fell on it. ⁵When the armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. ⁶Thus they all died together on that day, Saul, his three sons, and his armour-bearer, as well as his men. ⁷And all the Israelites in the district of the Vale and of the Jordan, when they saw that the other Israelites had fled and that Saul and his sons had perished, fled likewise, abandoning their cities, and the Philistines went in and occupied them.

⁸Next day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, they found Saul and his three sons lying dead on Mount Gilboa. ⁹They cut off his head and stripped him of his weapons; then they sent messengers through the length and breadth of their land to take the good news to idols and people alike. ¹⁰They deposited his armour in the temple of Ashtoreth and nailed his body on the wall of Beth-shan. ¹¹When the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, ¹²the bravest of them journeyed together all night long and recovered the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth-shan; they brought them back to Jabesh and anointed them there with spices. ¹³Then they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk-tree in

Jabesh, and fasted for seven days.