

# 1-2 SAMUEL



## 1 SAMUEL

### Read 1 Samuel 1

This story is a fitting opening to this book as it explains Samuel's origins. He is born of humble, faithful Israelite parents. His mother conceives him in answer to her prayer and willingly makes him a gift to God at the temple in Shiloh. Samuel's name in Hebrew means "God hears."

**Reflect:** Hannah's attitude of humble faithfulness puts her in a good position to receive God's favor. Humility can help us when we come before God in prayer because it opens us to receive his goodness.

**Pray:** Ask God to help you be open to his will in your life.

**Act:** You need to assess what you've been seeking lately in prayer. How does this fit with your true goals in your relationship with God?

### Samuel's Birth and Dedication

**1** There was a certain man of Ramathaim, a Zuphite<sup>a</sup> from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham son of Elihu son of Tohu son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. <sup>2</sup> He had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

<sup>3</sup> Now this man used to go up year by year from his town to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD. <sup>4</sup> On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters; <sup>5</sup> but to Hannah he gave a double portion,<sup>b</sup> because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb. <sup>6</sup> Her rival used to provoke her severely, to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. <sup>7</sup> So it went on year by year; as often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. <sup>8</sup> Her husband Elkanah said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?"

<sup>9</sup> After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the LORD.<sup>c</sup> Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. <sup>10</sup> She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD, and wept bitterly. <sup>11</sup> She made this vow: "O LORD of hosts, if only you will look on the mis-

<sup>a</sup> Compare Gk and 1 Chr 6.35-36: Heb *Ramathaim-zophim*

<sup>b</sup> Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>c</sup> Gk: Heb lacks *and presented herself before the LORD*

ery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite<sup>a</sup> until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants,<sup>b</sup> and no razor shall touch his head.”

12 As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. 13 Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. 14 So Eli said to her, “How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine.” 15 But Hannah answered, “No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. 16 Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time.” 17 Then Eli answered, “Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him.” 18 And she said, “Let your servant find favor in your sight.” Then the woman went to her quarters,<sup>c</sup> ate and drank with her husband,<sup>d</sup> and her countenance was sad no longer.<sup>e</sup>

19 They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the LORD re-

membered her. 20 In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, “I have asked him of the LORD.”

21 The man Elkanah and all his household went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and to pay his vow. 22 But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, “As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, that he may appear in the presence of the LORD, and remain there forever; I will offer him as a nazirite<sup>a</sup> for all time.”<sup>f</sup> 23 Her husband Elkanah said to her, “Do what seems best to you, wait until you have weaned him; only—may the LORD establish his word.”<sup>g</sup> So the woman remained and nursed her son, until she weaned him. 24 When she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull,<sup>h</sup> an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine. She brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh; and the child was young. 25 Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. 26 And she said, “Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the LORD. 27 For this child I prayed; and the LORD has granted me the petition that I made to him. 28 Therefore I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD.”

She left him there for<sup>i</sup> the LORD.

### Hannah's Prayer

**2** Hannah prayed and said,  
 “My heart exults in the LORD;  
 my strength is exalted in my God.<sup>j</sup>  
 My mouth derides my enemies,  
 because I rejoice in my<sup>k</sup> victory.

- 2 “There is no Holy One like the LORD,  
 no one besides you;  
 there is no Rock like our God.
- 3 Talk no more so very proudly,  
 let not arrogance come from your  
 mouth;  
 for the LORD is a God of knowledge,  
 and by him actions are weighed.
- 4 The bows of the mighty are broken,  
 but the feeble gird on strength.

<sup>a</sup> That is *one separated or one consecrated*

<sup>b</sup> Cn Compare Gk Q Ms 1.22: MT *then I will*

*give him to the LORD all the days of his life*

<sup>c</sup> Gk: Heb *went her way*

<sup>d</sup> Gk: Heb *lacks and drank with her husband*

<sup>e</sup> Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>f</sup> Cn Compare Q Ms: MT *lacks I will offer him*  
*as a nazirite for all time*

<sup>g</sup> MT: Q Ms Gk Compare Syr *that which goes*  
*out of your mouth*

<sup>h</sup> Q Ms Gk Syr: MT *three bulls*

<sup>i</sup> Gk (Compare Q Ms) and Gk at 2.11: MT  
*And he (that is, Elkanah) worshiped there*  
*before*

<sup>j</sup> Gk: Heb *the LORD*

<sup>k</sup> Q Ms: MT *your*

### Read 1 Samuel 2:1–11

Hannah calls her song a victory song. Although she celebrates her victory by giving thanks to the Lord, the images she uses are not about self-aggrandizement but about God's kindness to the lowly of the land.

**Reflect:** We serve a God who cares for the humble and lowly. Do we sometimes fail to see the humble or lowly in our world?

**Pray:** The prayer of trust in God is not always an easy one. Pray for the ability to trust in God.

**Act:** Identify an instance in your life when trusting in God was not easy. Make an act of trust.

### Read 1 Samuel 2:12–36

There is a contrast here between Eli's sons and young Samuel. Samuel is faithful to the Lord, but Hophni and Phinehas are not. They abuse the privileges granted them as priests. A prophet comes to Eli with a dreadful oracle saying that God sees what is going on. God will punish the unfaithfulness of Eli's sons.

**Reflect:** Eli's sons remind us that serving God is a privilege. How do we regard those who serve God today? What of those who serve God well? Do we honor them? How do we judge our own faithfulness to the Lord?

**Pray:** May all who serve God do so with wholehearted devotion and honesty.

**Act:** Examine how you have served the Lord in your actions today.

- 5 Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,  
but those who were hungry are fat with spoil.  
The barren has borne seven,  
but she who has many children is forlorn.
- 6 The LORD kills and brings to life;  
he brings down to Sheol and raises up.
- 7 The LORD makes poor and makes rich;  
he brings low, he also exalts.
- 8 He raises up the poor from the dust;  
he lifts the needy from the ash heap,  
to make them sit with princes  
and inherit a seat of honor.<sup>a</sup>  
For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's,  
and on them he has set the world.
- 9 "He will guard the feet of his faithful ones,  
but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness;  
for not by might does one prevail.
- 10 The LORD! His adversaries shall be shattered;  
the Most High<sup>b</sup> will thunder in heaven.  
The LORD will judge the ends of the earth;  
he will give strength to his king,  
and exalt the power of his anointed."

### Eli's Wicked Sons

11 Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, while the boy remained to minister to the LORD, in the presence of the priest Eli.

12 Now the sons of Eli were scoundrels; they had no regard for the LORD<sup>13</sup> or for the duties of the priests to the people. When anyone offered sacrifice, the priest's servant would come, while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand,<sup>14</sup> and he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself.<sup>c</sup> This is what they did at Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the one who was sacrificing, "Give meat for the priest to roast; for he will not accept boiled meat from you, but only raw."<sup>16</sup> And if the man said to him, "Let them burn the fat first, and then take whatever you wish," he would say, "No, you must give it now; if not, I will take it by force."<sup>17</sup> Thus the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the LORD; for they treated the offerings of the LORD with contempt.

### The Child Samuel at Shiloh

18 Samuel was ministering before the LORD, a boy wearing a linen ephod.<sup>19</sup> His mother used to make for

<sup>a</sup> Gk (Compare Q Ms) adds *He grants the vow of the one who vows, and blesses the years of the just*

<sup>b</sup> Cn Heb *against him* he

<sup>c</sup> Gk Syr Vg: Heb *with it*

him a little robe and take it to him each year, when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. <sup>20</sup> Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, “May the LORD repay<sup>a</sup> you with children by this woman for the gift that she made to<sup>b</sup> the LORD”; and then they would return to their home.

<sup>21</sup> And<sup>c</sup> the LORD took note of Hannah; she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD.

### Prophecy against Eli’s Household

<sup>22</sup> Now Eli was very old. He heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting. <sup>23</sup> He said to them, “Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all these people. <sup>24</sup> No, my sons; it is not a good report that I hear the people of the LORD spreading abroad. <sup>25</sup> If one person sins against another, someone can intercede for the sinner with the LORD;<sup>d</sup> but if someone sins against the LORD, who can make intercession?” But they would not listen to the voice of their father; for it was the will of the LORD to kill them.

<sup>26</sup> Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and with the people.

<sup>27</sup> A man of God came to Eli and said to him, “Thus the LORD has said, ‘I revealed<sup>e</sup> myself to the family of your ancestor in Egypt when they were slaves<sup>f</sup> to the house of Pharaoh. <sup>28</sup> I chose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to offer incense, to wear an

ephod before me; and I gave to the family of your ancestor all my offerings by fire from the people of Israel. <sup>29</sup> Why then look with greedy eye<sup>g</sup> at my sacrifices and my offerings that I commanded, and honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of my people Israel?’ <sup>30</sup> Therefore the LORD the God of Israel declares: ‘I promised that your family and the family of your ancestor should go in and out before me forever’; but now the LORD declares: “Far be it from me; for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be treated with contempt. <sup>31</sup> See, a time is coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your ancestor’s family, so that no one in your family will live to old age. <sup>32</sup> Then in distress you will look with greedy eye<sup>h</sup> on all the prosperity that shall be bestowed upon Israel; and no one in your family shall ever live to old age. <sup>33</sup> The only one of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar shall be spared to weep out his<sup>i</sup> eyes and grieve his<sup>j</sup> heart; all the members of your household shall die by the sword.<sup>k</sup> <sup>34</sup> The fate of your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, shall be the sign to you—both of them shall die on the same day. <sup>35</sup> I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed one forever. <sup>36</sup> Everyone who is left in your family shall come to implore him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread, and shall say, Please put me in one of the priest’s places, that I may eat a morsel of bread.”

<sup>a</sup> Q Ms Gk: MT *give*

<sup>b</sup> Q Ms Gk: MT *for the petition that she asked of*

<sup>c</sup> Q Ms Gk: MT *When*

<sup>d</sup> Gk Compare Q Ms: MT *another, God will mediate for him*

<sup>e</sup> Gk Tg Syr: Heb *Did I reveal*

<sup>f</sup> Q Ms Gk: MT *lacks slaves*

<sup>g</sup> Q Ms Gk: MT *then kick*

<sup>h</sup> Q Ms Gk: MT *will kick*

<sup>i</sup> Q Ms Gk: MT *your*

<sup>j</sup> Q Ms Gk: Heb *your*

<sup>k</sup> Q Ms See Gk: MT *die like mortals*

<sup>l</sup> Q Ms Gk See 3.10: MT *the LORD called Samuel*

### Samuel’s Calling and Prophetic Activity

**3** Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

<sup>2</sup> At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; <sup>3</sup> the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. <sup>4</sup> Then the LORD called, “Samuel! Samuel!”<sup>1</sup> and he said, “Here I am!”<sup>5</sup> and ran

### Read 1 Samuel 3

This is a wonderful story. Samuel now will come to know the Lord because he calls for the boy. Eli, the elderly priest, must face the difficult truth that in his lack of zeal for the people he has failed to do what he should have done. Now he will guide young Samuel to know the Lord.

**Reflect:** Both Samuel and Eli must open their hearts to God, whatever it will mean for each. How has God called into your life to bring you to a truth you might not have imagined or thought about?

**Pray:** Let the words of Samuel become the words of your prayer: "Speak, for your servant is listening." Repeat the words softly, and slowly focus your prayer in this way.

**Act:** Try to set an early morning prayer-time for yourself and use it to listen to what the Lord has to reveal to you.

to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. <sup>6</sup> The LORD called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." <sup>7</sup> Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. <sup>8</sup> The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. <sup>9</sup> Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

<sup>10</sup> Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." <sup>11</sup> Then the LORD said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. <sup>12</sup> On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. <sup>13</sup> For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God,<sup>a</sup> and he did not restrain them. <sup>14</sup> Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever."

<sup>15</sup> Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. <sup>16</sup> But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I am." <sup>17</sup> Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you." <sup>18</sup> So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, "It is the LORD; let him do what seems good to him."

<sup>19</sup> As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. <sup>20</sup> And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the LORD. <sup>21</sup> The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to **4** Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD. <sup>1</sup> And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.

### The Ark of God Captured

In those days the Philistines mustered for war against Israel,<sup>b</sup> and Israel went out to battle against them;<sup>c</sup> they encamped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines encamped at Aphek. <sup>2</sup> The Philistines drew up in line against Israel, and when the battle was joined,<sup>d</sup> Israel

<sup>a</sup> Another reading is *for themselves*

<sup>b</sup> Gk: Heb lacks *In those days the Philistines mustered for war against Israel*

<sup>c</sup> Gk: Heb *against the Philistines*

<sup>d</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

### Read 1 Samuel 4

This is a heart-wrenching story. The Israelites go to battle their enemies. For help, they turn to the ark of God and lose this precious symbol of God's presence in the battle. God's prophecy works its way out for Hophni, Phinehas, and their father, Eli. Even Eli's daughter-in-law will die in childbirth. Her child's name tells us the story, Ichabod (Past Glory).

**Reflect:** There are dark days for all of us when we become aware of how far we are from God's presence in our lives. The stories of these sad people are meant to help us look into our own hearts to see how we have taken ourselves away from God's love.

**Pray:** Help me through my dark days, O Lord. May I walk through my darkness with the ability to trust in you even when you seem silent and far away.

**Act:** Think about the last dark period you experienced. What caused it and how did you behave as you went through it?

was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men on the field of battle. <sup>3</sup> When the troops came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why has the LORD put us to rout today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD here from Shiloh, so that he may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies." <sup>4</sup> So the people sent to Shiloh, and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

<sup>5</sup> When the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel gave a mighty shout, so that the earth resounded. <sup>6</sup> When the Philistines heard the noise of the shouting, they said, "What does this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews mean?" When they learned that the ark of the LORD had come to the camp, <sup>7</sup> the Philistines were afraid; for they said, "Gods have<sup>a</sup> come into the camp." They also said, "Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before. <sup>8</sup> Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness. <sup>9</sup> Take courage, and be men, O Philistines, in order not to become slaves to the Hebrews as they have been to you; be men and fight."

<sup>10</sup> So the Philistines fought; Israel was defeated, and they fled, everyone to his home. There was a very great slaughter, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. <sup>11</sup> The ark of God was captured; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

### Death of Eli

<sup>12</sup> A man of Benjamin ran from the battle line, and came to Shiloh the same day, with his clothes torn and with earth upon his head. <sup>13</sup> When he arrived, Eli was sitting upon his seat by the road watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God. When the man came into the city and told the news, all the city cried out. <sup>14</sup> When Eli heard the sound of the outcry, he said, "What is this uproar?" Then the man came quickly and told Eli. <sup>15</sup> Now Eli was ninety-eight years old and his eyes were set, so that he could not see. <sup>16</sup> The man said to Eli, "I have just come from the battle; I fled from the battle today." He said, "How did it go, my son?" <sup>17</sup> The messenger replied, "Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has also been a great slaughter among the troops; your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured." <sup>18</sup> When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli<sup>b</sup> fell over backward from his seat by the side of the gate; and his neck was

<sup>a</sup> Or A god has

<sup>b</sup> Heb he



broken and he died, for he was an old man, and heavy. He had judged Israel forty years.

19 Now his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant, about to give birth. When she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed and gave birth; for her labor pains overwhelmed her. <sup>20</sup> As she was about to

die, the women attending her said to her, “Do not be afraid, for you have borne a son.” But she did not answer or give heed. <sup>21</sup> She named the child Ichabod, meaning, “The glory has departed from Israel,” because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband. <sup>22</sup> She said, “The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured.”

### Read 1 Samuel 5

The ark of the Lord has been captured. Since the Lord is a god, the Philistines place his ark in the temple of their god, Dagon. The Lord God will not tolerate the existence of false gods and to demonstrate this, Dagon’s statue is twice desecrated. The plagues that accompany the ark are God’s ways of letting the Philistines know they are powerless against him.

**Reflect:** The Philistines worshiped an idol, a false god. What are some of the idols I may have set up or been tempted to worship in my life?

**Pray:** Lord, may I know your power in my life to expose what is false and reveal the truth.

**Act:** Make a list of your false gods and put it in a place where you can review it occasionally.

### The Philistines and the Ark

**5** When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod; <sup>2</sup> then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and placed it beside Dagon. <sup>3</sup> When the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, there was Dagon, fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place. <sup>4</sup> But when they rose early on the next morning, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off upon the threshold; only the trunk of<sup>a</sup> Dagon was left to him. <sup>5</sup> This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not step on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

<sup>6</sup> The hand of the LORD was heavy upon the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and struck them with tumors, both in Ashdod and in its territory. <sup>7</sup> And when the inhabitants of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, “The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us; for his hand is heavy on us and on our god Dagon.” <sup>8</sup> So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, “What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?” The inhabitants of Gath replied, “Let the ark of God be moved on to us.”<sup>b</sup> So they moved the ark of the God of Israel to Gath.<sup>c</sup> <sup>9</sup> But after they had brought it to Gath,<sup>d</sup> the hand of the LORD was against the city, causing a very great panic; he struck the inhabitants of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them. <sup>10</sup> So they sent the ark of the God of Israel<sup>e</sup> to Ekron. But when the ark of God came to Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, “Why<sup>f</sup> have they brought around to us<sup>g</sup> the ark of the God of Israel to kill us<sup>g</sup> and our<sup>h</sup> people?” <sup>11</sup> They sent therefore and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, “Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people.” For there was a deathly panic<sup>i</sup> throughout the whole

<sup>a</sup> Heb lacks the trunk of

<sup>b</sup> Gk Compare Q Ms: MT They answered, “Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath.”

<sup>c</sup> Gk: Heb lacks to Gath

<sup>d</sup> Q Ms: MT lacks to Gath

<sup>e</sup> Q Ms Gk: MT lacks of Israel

<sup>f</sup> Q Ms Gk: MT lacks Why

<sup>g</sup> Heb me

<sup>h</sup> Heb my

<sup>i</sup> Q Ms reads a panic from the LORD

city. The hand of God was very heavy there; <sup>12</sup> those who did not die were stricken with tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

### Read 1 Samuel 6:1—7:1

The story of the return of the ark of the Lord involves three groups of people who are affected in different ways: guilt on the part of the Philistines leads them to make golden mice and tumors; joy on the part of the people of Beth-shemesh who welcome the return of the ark; and death for Jeconiah's family members who didn't join in the celebration.

**Reflect:** For the Israelites, the ark was the presence of God with his people. What material things remind us daily of God's presence to us?

**Pray:** Pray to know ever more deeply God's presence to you in the word of scripture.

**Act:** Spend some period of time before a material image that reminds you of God's constant presence to you.

### The Ark Returned to Israel

**6** The ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months. <sup>2</sup> Then the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us what we should send with it to its place." <sup>3</sup> They said, "If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty, but by all means return him a guilt offering. Then you will be healed and will be ransomed;<sup>a</sup> will not his hand then turn from you?" <sup>4</sup> And they said, "What is the guilt offering that we shall return to him?" They answered, "Five gold tumors and five gold mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines; for the same plague was upon all of you and upon your lords. <sup>5</sup> So you must make images of your tumors and images of your mice that ravage the land, and give glory to the God of Israel; perhaps he will lighten his hand on you and your gods and your land. <sup>6</sup> Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? After he had made fools of them, did they not let the people go, and they departed? <sup>7</sup> Now then, get ready a new cart and two milch cows that have never borne a yoke, and yoke the cows to the cart, but take their calves home, away from them. <sup>8</sup> Take the ark of the LORD and place it on the cart, and put in a box at its side the figures of gold, which you are returning to him as a guilt offering. Then send it off, and let it go its way. <sup>9</sup> And watch; if it goes up on the way to its own land, to Beth-shemesh, then it is he who has done us this great harm; but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that struck us; it happened to us by chance."

<sup>10</sup> The men did so; they took two milch cows and yoked them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home. <sup>11</sup> They put the ark of the LORD on the cart, and the box with the gold mice and the images of their tumors. <sup>12</sup> The cows went straight in the direction of Beth-shemesh along one highway, lowing as they went; they turned neither to the right nor to the left, and the lords of the Philistines went after them as far as the border of Beth-shemesh.

<sup>13</sup> Now the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley. When they looked up and saw the ark, they went with rejoicing to meet it.<sup>b</sup> <sup>14</sup> The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh, and stopped there. A large stone was there; so they split up the wood of the cart and offered the

<sup>a</sup> Q Ms Gk: MT and it will be known to you

<sup>b</sup> Gk: Heb rejoiced to see it



### Read 1 Samuel 7:2–17

When the Israelites finally make an act of faith in the Lord and Samuel intercedes for them, the Lord frees them from the tyranny of the Philistines and the Amorites. A period of relative peace ensues.

**Reflect:** Is our act of faith in God a divided one? Can we focus our faith more fully on God alone? How?

**Pray:** Lord, help me to focus my faith on you alone and put all distractions aside. Lord, help me to know peace.

**Act:** Review your list of false gods and consider how well you are doing in eliminating them.

cows as a burnt offering to the LORD.<sup>15</sup> The Levites took down the ark of the LORD and the box that was beside it, in which were the gold objects, and set them upon the large stone. Then the people of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and presented sacrifices on that day to the LORD.<sup>16</sup> When the five lords of the Philistines saw it, they returned that day to Ekron.

17 These are the gold tumors, which the Philistines returned as a guilt offering to the LORD: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron;<sup>18</sup> also the gold mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both fortified cities and unwalled villages. The great stone, beside which they set down the ark of the LORD, is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh.

### The Ark at Kiriath-jearim

19 The descendants of Jeconiah did not rejoice with the people of Beth-shemesh when they greeted<sup>a</sup> the ark of the LORD; and he killed seventy men of them.<sup>b</sup> The people mourned because the LORD had made a great slaughter among the people.<sup>20</sup> Then the people of Beth-shemesh said, “Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? To whom shall he go so that we may be rid of him?”<sup>21</sup> So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying, “The Philistines have returned the ark of the LORD. Come down and take **7** it up to you.”<sup>1</sup> And the people of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the ark of the LORD, and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill. They consecrated his son, Eleazar, to have charge of the ark of the LORD.

2 From the day that the ark was lodged at Kiriath-jearim, a long time passed, some twenty years, and all the house of Israel lamented<sup>c</sup> after the LORD.

### Samuel as Judge

3 Then Samuel said to all the house of Israel, “If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Astartes from among you. Direct your heart to the LORD, and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.”<sup>4</sup> So Israel put away the Baals and the Astartes, and they served the LORD only.

5 Then Samuel said, “Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you.”<sup>6</sup> So they gathered at Mizpah, and drew water and poured it out before the LORD. They fasted that day, and said, “We have sinned against the LORD.” And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah.

<sup>a</sup> Gk: Heb *And he killed some of the people of Beth-shemesh, because they looked into*

<sup>b</sup> Heb *killed seventy men, fifty thousand men*

<sup>c</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

7 When the Philistines heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the people of Israel heard of it they were afraid of the Philistines. <sup>8</sup> The people of Israel said to Samuel, “Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, and pray that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines.” <sup>9</sup> So Samuel took a sucking lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD; Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him. <sup>10</sup> As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel; but the LORD thundered with a mighty voice that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion; and they were routed before Israel. <sup>11</sup> And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and struck them down as far as beyond Beth-car.

12 Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Jeshanah,<sup>a</sup> and named it Ebenezer;<sup>b</sup> for he said, “Thus far the LORD has helped us.” <sup>13</sup> So the Philistines were subdued and did not again enter the territory of Israel; the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. <sup>14</sup> The towns that the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath; and Israel recovered their territory from the hand of the Philistines. There was peace also between Israel and the Amorites.

15 Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. <sup>16</sup> He went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah; and he judged Israel in all these places. <sup>17</sup> Then he would come back to Ramah, for his home was there; he administered justice there to Israel, and built there an altar to the LORD.

### Read 1 Samuel 8

In this chapter we hear two positions stated—one in favor of the monarchy and the other against it. The people yearn for a king so that they can be like the other nations around them. Samuel wants the people to realize that the Lord is already their king.

**Reflect:** Can I see areas of my life where I am influenced not by higher values but by what others have or do?

**Pray:** Give me the gift of insight, Lord, so that in the difficult choices I must make I can know your will.

**Act:** Review your important choices over the last week. How have you sought to know God’s will?

### Israel Demands a King

**8** When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. <sup>2</sup> The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beer-sheba. <sup>3</sup> Yet his sons did not follow in his ways, but turned aside after gain; they took bribes and perverted justice.

<sup>4</sup> Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, <sup>5</sup> and said to him, “You are old and your sons do not follow in your ways; appoint for us, then, a king to govern us, like other nations.” <sup>6</sup> But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to govern us.” Samuel prayed to the LORD, <sup>7</sup> and the LORD said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. <sup>8</sup> Just as they have done to me,<sup>c</sup> from the day I brought them up out of Egypt to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so also they are doing to you. <sup>9</sup> Now then, listen to their voice; only—you shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.”

<sup>10</sup> So Samuel reported all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. <sup>11</sup> He said, “These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; <sup>12</sup> and he will appoint for himself commanders

<sup>a</sup> Gk Syr: Heb Shen

<sup>b</sup> That is Stone of Help

<sup>c</sup> Gk: Heb lacks to me

of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. <sup>13</sup> He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. <sup>14</sup> He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers. <sup>15</sup> He will take one-tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and his courtiers. <sup>16</sup> He will take your male and female slaves, and the best of your cattle<sup>a</sup> and donkeys, and put them to his work. <sup>17</sup> He will take one-tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. <sup>18</sup> And in that day you will cry out because of your king,

whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the LORD will not answer you in that day.”

### Israel's Request for a King Granted

<sup>19</sup> But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel; they said, “No! but we are determined to have a king over us, <sup>20</sup> so that we also may be like other nations, and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles.” <sup>21</sup> When Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the LORD. <sup>22</sup> The LORD said to Samuel, “Listen to their voice and set a king over them.” Samuel then said to the people of Israel, “Each of you return home.”

#### Read 1 Samuel 9:1—10:16

This story explains the circumstances surrounding Saul's being anointed king of Israel. There is a great emphasis on the role of divine choice in the appointment of the new king. Saul's humble background is highlighted to show that his greatness, if any, will come from God.

**Reflect:** In what ways can you identify God's action in your life? Do you ever find that your concern over the daily issues might blind you to God calling you to something new?

**Pray:** Pray to be aware of the people in your life who help you to hear God's call. Pray for the openness of heart to follow God's guidance as you encounter it daily.

**Act:** Recall an occasion in your past when you felt “anointed” for something.

### Saul Chosen to Be King

**9** There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish son of Abiel son of Zeror son of Becorath son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of wealth. <sup>2</sup> He had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he; he stood head and shoulders above everyone else.

<sup>3</sup> Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, had strayed. So Kish said to his son Saul, “Take one of the boys with you; go and look for the donkeys.” <sup>4</sup> He passed through the hill country of Ephraim and passed through the land of Shalishah, but they did not find them. And they passed through the land of Shaalim, but they were not there. Then he passed through the land of Benjamin, but they did not find them.

<sup>5</sup> When they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to the boy who was with him, “Let us turn back, or my father will stop worrying about the donkeys and worry about us.” <sup>6</sup> But he said to him, “There is a man of God in this town; he is a man held in honor. Whatever he says always comes true. Let us go there now; perhaps he will tell us about the journey on which we have set out.” <sup>7</sup> Then Saul replied to the boy, “But if we go, what can we bring the man? For the bread in our sacks is gone, and there is no present to bring to the man of God. What have we?” <sup>8</sup> The boy answered Saul again, “Here, I have with me a quarter shekel of silver; I will give it to the man of God, to tell us our way.” <sup>9</sup> (Formerly in Israel, anyone who went to inquire of God would say, “Come, let us go to the seer”; for the one who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer.) <sup>10</sup> Saul said to the boy, “Good; come, let us go.” So they

<sup>a</sup> Gk: Heb *young men*

went to the town where the man of God was.

11 As they went up the hill to the town, they met some girls coming out to draw water, and said to them, "Is the seer here?"

12 They answered, "Yes, there he is just ahead of you. Hurry; he has come just now to the town, because the people have a sacrifice today at the shrine." 13 As soon as you enter the town, you will find him, before he goes up to the shrine to eat. For the people will not eat until he comes, since he must bless the sacrifice; afterward those eat who are invited. Now go up, for you will meet him immediately." 14 So they went up to the town. As they were entering the town, they saw Samuel coming out toward them on his way up to the shrine.

15 Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed to Samuel: 16 "Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be ruler over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines; for I have seen the suffering of<sup>a</sup> my people, because their outcry has come to me." 17 When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD told him, "Here is the man of whom I spoke to you. He it is who shall rule over my people." 18 Then Saul approached Samuel inside the gate, and said, "Tell me, please, where is the house of the seer?" 19 Samuel answered Saul, "I am the seer; go up before me to the shrine, for today you shall eat with me, and in the morning I will let you go and will tell you all that is on your mind." 20 As for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, give no further thought to them, for they have been found. And on whom is all Israel's desire fixed, if not on you and on all your ancestral house?" 21 Saul answered, "I am only a Benjaminite, from the least of the tribes of Israel, and my family is the humblest of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin. Why then have you spoken to me in this way?"

22 Then Samuel took Saul and his servant-boy and brought them into the hall, and gave them a place at the head of those who had been invited, of whom there were about thirty. 23 And Samuel said to the cook, "Bring the portion I gave you, the one I asked you to put aside." 24 The cook took up the thigh and what went with it<sup>b</sup> and set them before Saul. Samuel said, "See, what was kept is set before you. Eat; for it is set<sup>c</sup> before you at the appointed time, so that you might eat with the guests."<sup>d</sup>

So Saul ate with Samuel that day. 25 When they came down from the shrine into the town, a bed was spread for Saul<sup>e</sup> on the roof, and he lay down to sleep.<sup>f</sup> 26 Then at the break of dawn<sup>g</sup> Samuel called to Saul upon the roof, "Get up, so that I may send you on your way." Saul got up, and both he and Samuel went out into the street.

### Samuel Anoints Saul

27 As they were going down to the outskirts of the town, Samuel said to Saul, "Tell the boy to go on before us, and when he has passed on, stop here yourself for a while, that I may make known to you the **10** word of God." 1 Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him; he said, "The LORD has anointed you ruler over his people Israel. You shall reign over the people of the LORD and you will save them from the hand of their enemies all around. Now this shall be the sign to you that the LORD has anointed you ruler<sup>h</sup> over his heritage: 2 When you depart from me today you will meet two men by Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah; they will say to you, 'The donkeys that you went to seek are found, and now your father has stopped worrying about them and is worrying about you, saying: What shall I do about my son?' 3 Then you shall go on from there further and come to the oak of Tabor; three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there,

<sup>a</sup> Gk: Heb lacks *the suffering of*

<sup>b</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>c</sup> Q Ms Gk: MT it was kept

<sup>d</sup> Cn: Heb it was kept for you, saying, I have invited the people

<sup>e</sup> Gk: Heb and he spoke with Saul

<sup>f</sup> Gk: Heb lacks *and he lay down to sleep*

<sup>g</sup> Gk: Heb and they arose early and at break of dawn

<sup>h</sup> Gk: Heb lacks *over his people Israel. You shall...anointed you ruler*

### Read 1 Samuel 10:17–27

This is a second story about Saul being chosen to be king of Israel. Saul seems to be reluctant to be found.

**Reflect:** Like Saul, have you ever found yourself reluctant to accept God's will for you?

**Pray:** Ask God for the courage to accept what he is calling you to, in your relationship with him.

**Act:** Write out a description of what you can do to put God's call into action in your life.

one carrying three kids, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine. <sup>4</sup> They will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you shall accept from them. <sup>5</sup> After that you shall come to Gibeath-elohim,<sup>a</sup> at the place where the Philistine garrison is; there, as you come to the town, you will meet a band of prophets coming down from the shrine with harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre playing in front of them; they will be in a prophetic frenzy. <sup>6</sup> Then the spirit of the LORD will possess you, and you will be in a prophetic frenzy along with them and be turned into a different person. <sup>7</sup> Now when these signs meet you, do whatever you see fit to do, for God is with you. <sup>8</sup> And you shall go down to Gilgal ahead of me; then I will come down to you to present burnt offerings and offer sacrifices of well-being. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do."

### Saul Prophesies

<sup>9</sup> As he turned away to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart; and all these signs were fulfilled that day. <sup>10</sup> When they were going from there<sup>b</sup> to Gibeah,<sup>c</sup> a band of prophets met him; and the spirit of God possessed him, and he fell into a prophetic frenzy along with them. <sup>11</sup> When all who knew him before saw how he prophesied with the prophets, the people said to one another, "What has come over the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" <sup>12</sup> A man of the place answered, "And who is their father?" Therefore it became a proverb, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" <sup>13</sup> When his prophetic frenzy had ended, he went home.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Saul's uncle said to him and to the boy, "Where did you go?" And he replied, "To seek the donkeys; and when we saw they were not to be found, we went to Samuel." <sup>15</sup> Saul's uncle said, "Tell me what Samuel said to you." <sup>16</sup> Saul said to his uncle, "He told us that the donkeys had been found." But about the matter of the kingship, of which Samuel had spoken, he did not tell him anything.

### Saul Proclaimed King

<sup>17</sup> Samuel summoned the people to the LORD at Mizpah <sup>18</sup> and said to them,<sup>e</sup> "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.' <sup>19</sup> But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses; and you have said, 'No! but set a king over us.' Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your clans."

<sup>a</sup> Or the Hill of God

<sup>b</sup> Gk: Heb they came there

<sup>c</sup> Or the hill

<sup>d</sup> Cn: Heb he came to the shrine

<sup>e</sup> Heb to the people of Israel

20 Then Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot. <sup>21</sup> He brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its families, and the family of the Matrites was taken by lot. Finally he brought the family of the Matrites near man by man,<sup>a</sup> and Saul the son of Kish was taken by lot. But when they sought him, he could not be found. <sup>22</sup> So they inquired again of the LORD, “Did the man come here?”<sup>b</sup> and the LORD said, “See, he has hidden himself among the baggage.” <sup>23</sup> Then they ran and brought him from there. When he took his stand among the people, he was head and shoulders taller than any of them. <sup>24</sup> Samuel said to all the people, “Do you see the one whom the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people.” And all the people shouted, “Long live the king!”

25 Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the kingship; and he wrote them in a book and laid it up before the LORD. Then Samuel sent all the people back to their homes. <sup>26</sup> Saul also went to his home at Gibeah, and with him went warriors whose hearts God had touched. <sup>27</sup> But some worthless fellows said, “How can this man save us?” They despised him and brought him no present. But he held his peace.

Now Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had been grievously oppressing the Gadites and the Reubenites. He would gouge out the right eye of each of them and would not grant Israel a deliverer. No one was left of the Israelites across the Jordan whose right eye Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had not gouged out. But there were seven thousand men who had escaped from the Ammonites and had entered Jabesh-gilead.<sup>c</sup>

### Read 1 Samuel 11

This is the third and last story of the making of Saul into a king. In this story, Saul responds to a hostile attack by the Ammonites against an Israelite town by rallying all Israel and Judah to come to their aid. Saul looks like a charismatic leader in this instance. He is even willing to extend mercy to those who oppose his becoming king.

**Reflect:** When faced with injustice done to others, Saul acted to oppose it. How often are we aware of injustice done to others? What is our response?

**Pray:** Pray for the openness of heart to be aware of what others are experiencing.

**Act:** Set up for yourself a course of action to oppose in some way the injustice you see around you.

### Saul Defeats the Ammonites

**11** About a month later,<sup>d</sup> Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh-gilead; and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, “Make a treaty with us, and we will serve you.” <sup>2</sup> But Nahash the Ammonite said to them, “On this condition I will make a treaty with you, namely that I gouge out everyone’s right eye, and thus put disgrace upon all Israel.” <sup>3</sup> The elders of Jabesh said to him, ‘Give us seven days’ respite that we may send messengers through all the territory of Israel. Then, if there is no one to save us, we will give ourselves up to you.’ <sup>4</sup> When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul, they reported the matter in the hearing of the people; and all the people wept aloud.

<sup>5</sup> Now Saul was coming from the field behind the oxen; and Saul said, “What is the matter with the people, that they are weeping?” So they told him the message from the inhabitants of Jabesh. <sup>6</sup> And the spirit of God came upon Saul in power when he heard these words, and his anger was greatly kindled. <sup>7</sup> He took a yoke of oxen, and cut them in pieces and sent them throughout all the territory of Israel by messengers, saying, “Whoever does not come out after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen!” Then the dread of the LORD fell upon the people, and they came out as one. <sup>8</sup> When he mustered them at Bezek, those from Israel were three hundred thousand, and those from Judah seventy<sup>e</sup> thousand. <sup>9</sup> They said to the messengers

<sup>a</sup> Gk: Heb lacks *Finally...man by man*

<sup>b</sup> Gk: Heb *Is there yet a man to come here?*

<sup>c</sup> Q Ms Compare Josephus, *Antiquities* VI.v.1 (68-71): MT lacks *Now Nahash...entered Jabesh-gilead.*

<sup>d</sup> Q Ms Gk: MT lacks *About a month later*

<sup>e</sup> Q Ms Gk: MT *thirty*



who had come, “Thus shall you say to the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead: ‘Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you shall have deliverance.’” When the messengers came and told the inhabitants of Jabesh, they rejoiced. <sup>10</sup> So the inhabitants of Jabesh said, “Tomorrow we will give ourselves up to you, and you may do to us whatever seems good to you.” <sup>11</sup> The next day Saul put the people in three companies. At the morning watch they came into the camp and cut down the Ammonites until the heat of the day; and those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together.

<sup>12</sup> The people said to Samuel, “Who is it that said, ‘Shall Saul reign over us?’ Give them to us so that we may put them to death.” <sup>13</sup> But Saul said, “No one shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has brought deliverance to Israel.”

<sup>14</sup> Samuel said to the people, “Come, let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingship.” <sup>15</sup> So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they sacrificed offerings of well-being before the LORD, and there Saul and all the Israelites rejoiced greatly.

### Read 1 Samuel 12

Samuel represents the time before the monarchy. He exemplifies that faith in the Lord that sees no room for a human king. Still, the people have asked, and God has granted a king. Samuel reviews the history of the people, pointing out instances when they were unfaithful to their covenant with the Lord. He highlights how the Lord continually has forgiven his people. Now both king and people must continue in fidelity to the Lord.

**Reflect:** It seems Israel’s relationship with God is marked by the people’s continual propensity to go astray. How about your own journey of faith? Can you recall times of going astray and returning to the Lord?

**Pray:** Lord fill me with sorrow for my sinfulness, but help me to trust in your unending mercy toward those who seek you with open hearts.

**Act:** Examine your conscience and prepare for the experience of forgiveness in the sacrament of reconciliation.

### Samuel’s Farewell Address

**12** Samuel said to all Israel, “I have listened to you in all that you have said to me, and have set a king over you. <sup>2</sup> See, it is the king who leads you now; I am old and gray, but my sons are with you. I have led you from my youth until this day. <sup>3</sup> Here I am; testify against me before the LORD and before his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Or whose donkey have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? Testify against me<sup>a</sup> and I will restore it to you.” <sup>4</sup> They said, “You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from the hand of anyone.” <sup>5</sup> He said to them, “The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand.” And they said, “He is witness.”

<sup>6</sup> Samuel said to the people, “The LORD is witness, who<sup>b</sup> appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your ancestors up out of the land of Egypt. <sup>7</sup> Now therefore take your stand, so that I may enter into judgment with you before the LORD, and I will declare to you<sup>c</sup> all the saving deeds of the LORD that he performed for you and for your ancestors. <sup>8</sup> When Jacob went into Egypt and the Egyptians oppressed them,<sup>d</sup> then your ancestors cried to the LORD and the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought forth your ancestors out of Egypt, and settled them in this place. <sup>9</sup> But they forgot the LORD their God; and he sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of King Jabin of<sup>e</sup> Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab; and they fought against them. <sup>10</sup> Then they cried to the LORD, and said, ‘We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served the Baals and the Astartes; but now rescue us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve you.’ <sup>11</sup> And the LORD

<sup>a</sup> Gk: Heb lacks *Testify against me*

<sup>b</sup> Gk: Heb lacks *is witness, who*

<sup>c</sup> Gk: Heb lacks *and I will declare to you*

<sup>d</sup> Gk: Heb lacks *and the Egyptians oppressed them*

<sup>e</sup> Gk: Heb lacks *King Jabin of*

sent Jerubbaal and Barak,<sup>a</sup> and Jephthah, and Samson,<sup>b</sup> and rescued you out of the hand of your enemies on every side; and you lived in safety. <sup>12</sup> But when you saw that King Nahash of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' though the LORD your God was your king. <sup>13</sup> See, here is the king whom you have chosen, for whom you have asked; see, the LORD has set a king over you. <sup>14</sup> If you will fear the LORD and serve him and heed his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well; <sup>15</sup> but if you will not heed the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you and your king.<sup>c</sup> <sup>16</sup> Now therefore take your stand and see this great thing that the LORD will do before your eyes. <sup>17</sup> Is it not the wheat harvest today? I will call upon the LORD, that he may send thunder and rain; and you shall know and see that the wickedness that you have done in the sight of the LORD is great in demanding a king for yourselves." <sup>18</sup> So

Samuel called upon the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.

<sup>19</sup> All the people said to Samuel, "Pray to the LORD your God for your servants, so that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins the evil of demanding a king for ourselves." <sup>20</sup> And Samuel said to the people, "Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil, yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart; <sup>21</sup> and do not turn aside after useless things that cannot profit or save, for they are useless. <sup>22</sup> For the LORD will not cast away his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you a people for himself. <sup>23</sup> Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you; and I will instruct you in the good and the right way. <sup>24</sup> Only fear the LORD, and serve him faithfully with all your heart; for consider what great things he has done for you. <sup>25</sup> But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king."

### Saul's Unlawful Sacrifice

**13** Saul was...<sup>d</sup> years old when he began to reign; and he reigned...and two<sup>e</sup> years over Israel.

<sup>2</sup> Saul chose three thousand out of Israel; two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin; the rest of the people he sent home to their tents. <sup>3</sup> Jonathan defeated the garrison of the Philistines that was at Geba; and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear!" <sup>4</sup> When all Israel heard that Saul had defeated the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel had become odious to the Philistines, the people were called out to join Saul at Gilgal.

<sup>5</sup> The Philistines mustered to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and troops like the sand on the seashore in multitude; they came up and encamped at Michmash, to the east of Beth-aven. <sup>6</sup> When the Israelites saw that they were in distress (for the troops were hard pressed), the people hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns. <sup>7</sup> Some Hebrews crossed the

<sup>a</sup> Gk Syr: Heb *Bedan*

<sup>b</sup> Gk: Heb *Samuel*

<sup>c</sup> Gk: Heb and *your ancestors*

<sup>d</sup> The number is lacking in the Heb text (the verse is lacking in the Septuagint).

<sup>e</sup> *Two* is not the entire number; something has dropped out.

### Read 1 Samuel 13

Faced with a real-world decision, Saul disobeys Samuel's instruction and offers up a burnt offering for God's protection. We are led to believe that this is one of the reasons his kingship will not last. The situation for Israel against the Philistines seems to grow worse as the Israelites cannot make the weapons they need.

**Reflect:** In a situation that calls for outstanding faithfulness, Saul's faith wavers. His rejection by Samuel seems cruel and too quick. What do you know of God's mercy in your own life?

**Pray:** Saul's experience of your call to obedience scares me, Lord. Help me to trust in your merciful fairness taught me by your son Jesus.

**Act:** Can you remember or envision experiences where faithfulness was hard for you? How did you respond?

Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul was still at Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

8 He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people began to slip away from Saul.<sup>a</sup> 9 So Saul said, "Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the offerings of well-being." And he offered the burnt offering. 10 As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, Samuel arrived; and Saul went out to meet him and salute him. 11 Samuel said, "What have you done?" Saul replied, "When I saw that the people were slipping away from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines were mustering at Michmash, 12 I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down upon me at Gilgal, and I have not entreated the favor of the LORD'; so I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering." 13 Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which he commanded you. The LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever, 14 but now your kingdom will not continue; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart; and the LORD has appointed him to be ruler over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you." 15 And Samuel left and went on his way from Gilgal.<sup>b</sup> The rest of the people followed Saul to join the army; they went up from Gilgal toward Gibeah of Benjamin.<sup>c</sup>

### Preparations for Battle

Saul counted the people who were present with him, about six hundred men. 16 Saul, his son Jonathan, and the people who were present with them stayed in Geba of Benjamin; but the Philistines encamped at Michmash. 17 And raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies; one company turned toward Ophrah, to the land of Shual, 18 another company turned toward Beth-horon, and another company turned toward the mountain<sup>d</sup> that looks down upon the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.

19 Now there was no smith to be found throughout all the land of Israel; for the Philistines said, "The Hebrews must not make swords or spears for themselves"; 20 so all the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen their plowshares, mattocks, axes, or sickles;<sup>e</sup> 21 The charge was two-thirds of a shekel<sup>f</sup> for the plowshares and for the mattocks, and one-third of a shekel for sharpening the axes and for setting the goads.<sup>g</sup> 22 So on the day of the battle neither sword nor spear was to be found in the possession of any of the people with Saul and Jonathan; but Saul and his son Jonathan had them.

<sup>a</sup> Heb *him*

<sup>b</sup> Gk: Heb *went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin*

<sup>c</sup> Gk: Heb *lacks The rest...of Benjamin*

<sup>d</sup> Cn Compare Gk: Heb *toward the border*

<sup>e</sup> Gk: Heb *plowshare*

<sup>f</sup> Heb *was a pim*

<sup>g</sup> Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

### Read 1 Samuel 14

This is a long and complicated story of two things. The first has to do with the unfaithfulness of Jonathan as he shows his dissatisfaction with his father's way of leading Israel. The second is an amalgamated account of Saul's wars.

**Reflect:** Jonathan does not seem to be obedient to his father. Who are the people to whom you are responsible in your life? How do you meet these responsibilities?

**Pray:** Pray for God's help in the difficult relationships you might have in life. Ask forgiveness for the times you may not have handled those relationships as well as possible.

**Act:** There is much violence in these scripture stories. Try to become aware of how the violence of our own day impacts your life. Perhaps you could become involved with a local peace or anti-violence effort.

### Jonathan Surprises and Routs the Philistines

23 Now a garrison of the Philistines had gone out to the pass of Michmash. <sup>1</sup> One day Jonathan son of Saul said to the young man who carried his armor, "Come, let us go over to the Philistine garrison on the other side." But he did not tell his father. <sup>2</sup> Saul was staying in the outskirts of Gibeah under the pomegranate tree that is at Migron; the troops that were with him were about six hundred men, <sup>3</sup> along with Ahijah son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, son of Phinehas son of Eli, the priest of the LORD in Shiloh, carrying an ephod. Now the people did not know that Jonathan had gone. <sup>4</sup> In the pass,<sup>a</sup> by which Jonathan tried to go over to the Philistine garrison, there was a rocky crag on one side and a rocky crag on the other; the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh. <sup>5</sup> One crag rose on the north in front of Michmash, and the other on the south in front of Geba.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armor, "Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the LORD will act for us; for nothing can hinder the LORD from saving by many or by few." <sup>7</sup> His armor-bearer said to him, "Do all that your mind inclines to.<sup>b</sup> I am with you; as your mind is, so is mine."<sup>c</sup> <sup>8</sup> Then Jonathan said, "Now we will cross over to those men and will show ourselves to them. <sup>9</sup> If they say to us, 'Wait until we come to you,' then we will stand still in our place, and we will not go up to them. <sup>10</sup> But if they say, 'Come up to us,' then we will go up; for the LORD has given them into our hand. That will be the sign for us." <sup>11</sup> So both of them showed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines; and the Philistines said, "Look, Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden themselves." <sup>12</sup> The men of the garrison hailed Jonathan and his armor-bearer, saying, "Come up to us, and we will show you something." Jonathan said to his armor-bearer, "Come up after me; for the LORD has given them into the hand of Israel." <sup>13</sup> Then Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet, with his armor-bearer following after him. The Philistines<sup>d</sup> fell before Jonathan, and his armor-bearer, coming after him, killed them. <sup>14</sup> In that first slaughter Jonathan and his armor-bearer killed about twenty men within an area about half a furrow long in an acre<sup>e</sup> of land. <sup>15</sup> There was a panic in the camp, in the field, and among all the people; the garrison and even the raiders trembled; the earth quaked; and it became a very great panic.

<sup>16</sup> Saul's lookouts in Gibeah of Benjamin were watching as the multitude was surging back and forth.<sup>f</sup> <sup>17</sup> Then Saul said to the troops that were with him,

<sup>a</sup> Heb *Between the passes*

<sup>b</sup> Gk: Heb *Do all that is in your mind. Turn*

<sup>c</sup> Gk: Heb *lacks so is mine*

<sup>d</sup> Heb *They*

<sup>e</sup> Heb *yoke*

<sup>f</sup> Gk: Heb *they went and there*

“Call the roll and see who has gone from us.” When they had called the roll, Jonathan and his armor-bearer were not there. <sup>18</sup> Saul said to Ahijah, “Bring the ark<sup>a</sup> of God here.” For at that time the ark<sup>a</sup> of God went with the Israelites. <sup>19</sup> While Saul was talking to the priest, the tumult in the camp of the Philistines increased more and more; and Saul said to the priest, “Withdraw your hand.” <sup>20</sup> Then Saul and all the people who were with him rallied and went into the battle; and every sword was against the other, so that there was very great confusion. <sup>21</sup> Now the Hebrews who previously had been with the Philistines and had gone up with them into the camp turned and joined the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan. <sup>22</sup> Likewise, when all the Israelites who had gone into hiding in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines were fleeing, they too followed closely after them in the battle. <sup>23</sup> So the LORD gave Israel the victory that day.

The battle passed beyond Beth-aven, and the troops with Saul numbered altogether about ten thousand men. The battle spread out over the hill country of Ephraim.

### Saul's Rash Oath

<sup>24</sup> Now Saul committed a very rash act on that day.<sup>b</sup> He had laid an oath on the troops, saying, “Cursed be anyone who eats food before it is evening and I have been avenged on my enemies.” So none of the troops tasted food. <sup>25</sup> All the troops<sup>c</sup> came upon a honeycomb; and there was honey on the ground. <sup>26</sup> When the troops came upon the honeycomb, the honey was dripping out; but they did not put their hands to their mouths, for they feared the oath. <sup>27</sup> But Jonathan had not heard his father charge the troops with the oath; so he extended the staff that was in his hand, and dipped the tip of it in the honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth;

and his eyes brightened. <sup>28</sup> Then one of the soldiers said, “Your father strictly charged the troops with an oath, saying, ‘Cursed be anyone who eats food this day.’ And so the troops are faint.” <sup>29</sup> Then Jonathan said, “My father has troubled the land; see how my eyes have brightened because I tasted a little of this honey. <sup>30</sup> How much better if today the troops had eaten freely of the spoil taken from their enemies; for now the slaughter among the Philistines has not been great.”

<sup>31</sup> After they had struck down the Philistines that day from Michmash to Ajalon, the troops were very faint; <sup>32</sup> so the troops flew upon the spoil, and took sheep and oxen and calves, and slaughtered them on the ground; and the troops ate them with the blood. <sup>33</sup> Then it was reported to Saul, “Look, the troops are sinning against the LORD by eating with the blood.” And he said, “You have dealt treacherously; roll a large stone before me here.”<sup>d</sup> <sup>34</sup> Saul said, “Disperse yourselves among the troops, and say to them, ‘Let all bring their oxen or their sheep, and slaughter them here, and eat; and do not sin against the LORD by eating with the blood.’” So all of the troops brought their oxen with them that night, and slaughtered them there. <sup>35</sup> And Saul built an altar to the LORD; it was the first altar that he built to the LORD.

### Jonathan in Danger of Death

<sup>36</sup> Then Saul said, “Let us go down after the Philistines by night and despoil them until the morning light; let us not leave one of them.” They said, “Do whatever seems good to you.” But the priest said, “Let us draw near to God here.” <sup>37</sup> So Saul inquired of God, “Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will you give them into the hand of Israel?” But he did not answer him that day. <sup>38</sup> Saul said, “Come here, all you leaders of the people; and let us find out how this sin has arisen today. <sup>39</sup> For as the LORD lives who saves Israel, even if it is in my son

<sup>a</sup> Gk the ephod

<sup>b</sup> Gk: Heb *The Israelites were distressed that day*

<sup>c</sup> Heb *land*

<sup>d</sup> Gk: Heb *me this day*

Jonathan, he shall surely die!" But there was no one among all the people who answered him. <sup>40</sup> He said to all Israel, "You shall be on one side, and I and my son Jonathan will be on the other side." The people said to Saul, "Do what seems good to you." <sup>41</sup> Then Saul said, "O LORD God of Israel, why have you not answered your servant today? If this guilt is in me or in my son Jonathan, O LORD God of Israel, give Urim; but if this guilt is in your people Israel,<sup>a</sup> give Thummim." And Jonathan and Saul were indicated by the lot, but the people were cleared. <sup>42</sup> Then Saul said, "Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan." And Jonathan was taken.

<sup>43</sup> Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done." Jonathan told him, "I tasted a little honey with the tip of the staff that was in my hand; here I am, I will die." <sup>44</sup> Saul said, "God do so to me and more also; you shall surely die, Jonathan!" <sup>45</sup> Then the people said to Saul, "Shall Jonathan die, who has accomplished this great victory in Israel? Far from it! As the LORD lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground; for he has worked with God today." So the people ransomed Jonathan,

and he did not die. <sup>46</sup> Then Saul withdrew from pursuing the Philistines; and the Philistines went to their own place.

### Saul's Continuing Wars

<sup>47</sup> When Saul had taken the kingship over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side—against Moab, against the Ammonites, against Edom, against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines; wherever he turned he routed them. <sup>48</sup> He did valiantly, and struck down the Amalekites, and rescued Israel out of the hands of those who plundered them.

<sup>49</sup> Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malchishua; and the names of his two daughters were these: the name of the firstborn was Merab, and the name of the younger, Michal. <sup>50</sup> The name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam daughter of Ahimaaz. And the name of the commander of his army was Abner son of Ner, Saul's uncle; <sup>51</sup> Kish was the father of Saul, and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel.

<sup>52</sup> There was hard fighting against the Philistines all the days of Saul; and when Saul saw any strong or valiant warrior, he took him into his service.

### Saul Defeats the Amalekites but Spares Their King

**15** Samuel said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel; now therefore listen to the words of the LORD. <sup>2</sup> Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'I will punish the Amalekites for what they did in opposing the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt. <sup>3</sup> Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have; do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.'"

<sup>4</sup> So Saul summoned the people, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand foot soldiers, and ten thousand soldiers of Judah. <sup>5</sup> Saul came to the city of the Amalekites and lay in wait in the valley. <sup>6</sup> Saul said to the Kenites, "Go! Leave! Withdraw from among the Amalekites, or I will destroy you with them; for you showed kindness to all the people of Israel when they came up out of Egypt." So the Kenites withdrew from the Amalekites. <sup>7</sup> Saul defeated the Amalekites, from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt. <sup>8</sup> He took King Agag of the Amalekites alive, but utterly de-

<sup>a</sup> Vg Compare Gk: Heb <sup>41</sup> *Saul said to the LORD, the God of Israel*



### Read 1 Samuel 15

This is yet another story demonstrating Saul's lack of suitability to reign over Israel. The battle against Amalek is a test of Saul's obedience to the Lord's commands and he fails to be obedient. Samuel functions as a prophet in exposing Saul's duplicity. Saul wants to be God's king, but only on his own terms, and Samuel will not let this stand.

**Reflect:** What does obedience to the Lord mean in your life? Has obedience been difficult at times?

**Pray:** Help me, Lord, as I struggle to be obedient to you.

**Act:** Think of the people whose obedience to God you admire. Seek the advice of one of them.

stroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. <sup>9</sup> Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep and of the cattle and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was valuable, and would not utterly destroy them; all that was despised and worthless they utterly destroyed.

### Saul Rejected as King

<sup>10</sup> The word of the LORD came to Samuel: <sup>11</sup> "I regret that I made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me, and has not carried out my commands." Samuel was angry; and he cried out to the LORD all night. <sup>12</sup> Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul, and Samuel was told, "Saul went to Carmel, where he set up a monument for himself, and on returning he passed on down to Gilgal." <sup>13</sup> When Samuel came to Saul, Saul said to him, "May you be blessed by the LORD; I have carried out the command of the LORD." <sup>14</sup> But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears, and the lowing of cattle that I hear?" <sup>15</sup> Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the cattle, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; but the rest we have utterly destroyed." <sup>16</sup> Then Samuel said to Saul, "Stop! I will tell you what the LORD said to me last night." He replied, "Speak."

<sup>17</sup> Samuel said, "Though you are little in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel. <sup>18</sup> And the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go, utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.' <sup>19</sup> Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do what was evil in the sight of the LORD?" <sup>20</sup> Saul said to Samuel, "I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, I have gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. <sup>21</sup> But from the spoil the people took sheep and cattle, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal." <sup>22</sup> And Samuel said,

"Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,

as in obedience to the voice of the LORD?  
Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice,  
and to heed than the fat of rams.

<sup>23</sup> For rebellion is no less a sin than divination,  
and stubbornness is like iniquity and idolatry.  
Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,  
he has also rejected you from being king."

24 Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.<sup>25</sup> Now therefore, I pray, pardon my sin, and return with me, so that I may worship the LORD."<sup>26</sup> Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel."<sup>27</sup> As Samuel turned to go away, Saul caught hold of the hem of his robe, and it tore.<sup>28</sup> And Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this very day, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you.<sup>29</sup> Moreover the Glory of Israel will not recant<sup>a</sup> or change his mind; for he is not a mortal, that he should change his mind."<sup>30</sup> Then Saul<sup>b</sup> said, "I have sinned; yet honor me now before the elders of my people and before Is-

rael, and return with me, so that I may worship the LORD your God."<sup>31</sup> So Samuel turned back after Saul; and Saul worshiped the LORD.

32 Then Samuel said, "Bring Agag king of the Amalekites here to me." And Agag came to him haltingly.<sup>c</sup> Agag said, "Surely this is the bitterness of death."<sup>d</sup> <sup>33</sup> But Samuel said,

"As your sword has made women  
childless,  
so your mother shall be childless  
among women."

And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

34 Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul.<sup>35</sup> Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD was sorry that he had made Saul king over Israel.

### David Anointed as King

**16** The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons."<sup>2</sup> Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me." And the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.'<sup>3</sup> Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you."<sup>4</sup> Samuel did what the LORD commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, "Do you come peaceably?"<sup>5</sup> He said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

6 When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is now before the LORD."<sup>e</sup> <sup>7</sup> But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."<sup>8</sup> Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one."<sup>9</sup> Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD

<sup>a</sup> Q Ms Gk: MT *deceive*

<sup>b</sup> Heb *he*

<sup>c</sup> Cn Compare Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>d</sup> Q Ms Gk: MT *Surely the bitterness of death is past*

<sup>e</sup> Heb *him*

### Read 1 Samuel 16

Here begins the story of David. It begins with God's choice. David is the youngest son of Jesse. There are more obvious candidates than he from among his brothers, but God chooses David after utterly frustrating poor Samuel who has no clue as to whom God will choose. How will God bring David and Saul into the same universe?

**Reflect:** God asks Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel." Do we sometimes grieve over past failures or sins and refuse to see how God is opening yet a new chapter in our lives?

**Pray:** Pray for the grace to be like Samuel, willing to be led by God to something or someone you don't see or know yet. Trust that God will not abandon you in confusion, if you just keep calling out to him.

**Act:** Contemplate one area of your life in which God may be calling you to something new. Make a plan for following the Lord's lead.

chosen this one." <sup>10</sup> Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen any of these." <sup>11</sup> Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here." <sup>12</sup> He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one." <sup>13</sup> Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

### David Plays the Lyre for Saul

<sup>14</sup> Now the spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him. <sup>15</sup> And Saul's servants said to him, "See now, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. <sup>16</sup> Let our lord now command the servants who attend you to look for someone who is skillful in playing the lyre; and when the evil spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will feel better." <sup>17</sup> So Saul said to his servants, "Provide for me someone who can play well, and bring him to me." <sup>18</sup> One of the young men answered, "I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, a warrior, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence; and the LORD is with him." <sup>19</sup> So Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, "Send me your son David who is with the sheep." <sup>20</sup> Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread, a skin of wine, and a kid, and sent them by his son David to Saul. <sup>21</sup> And David came to Saul, and entered his service. Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer. <sup>22</sup> Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Let David remain in my service, for he has found favor in my sight." <sup>23</sup> And whenever the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand, and Saul would be relieved and feel better, and the evil spirit would depart from him.

### David and Goliath

**17** Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle; they were gathered at Socoh, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. <sup>2</sup> Saul and the Israelites gathered and encamped in the valley of Elah, and formed ranks against the Philistines. <sup>3</sup> The Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them. <sup>4</sup> And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a

### Read 1 Samuel 17:1–30

This is the first part of a very colorful story about David's rise to power in Israel. Goliath inspires great fear in Saul and all the experienced warriors of Israel, but not in David who is young and, it seems, somewhat arrogant. Eliab, David's older brother, upbraids him for his arrogance in assuming he can fight Goliath.

**Reflect:** Eliab reacts negatively to David's arrogant stand of faith. Have you ever found yourself ridiculed for having faith in a difficult situation? Have you found yourself slow to make an act of faith in difficult times?

**Pray:** O Lord, as I look on those with great—even heroic—faith, I feel small and insignificant. Help me to see that my act of faith, however small, is what makes all the difference in my relationship with you.

**Act:** Spend a short time in contemplative prayer focusing on the word "faith."

champion named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six<sup>a</sup> cubits and a span. <sup>5</sup> He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. <sup>6</sup> He had greaves of bronze on his legs and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. <sup>7</sup> The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron; and his shield-bearer went before him. <sup>8</sup> He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. <sup>9</sup> If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us." <sup>10</sup> And the Philistine said, "Today I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man, that we may fight together." <sup>11</sup> When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

<sup>12</sup> Now David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight sons. In the days of Saul the man was already old and advanced in years.<sup>b</sup> <sup>13</sup> The three eldest sons of Jesse had followed Saul to the battle; the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. <sup>14</sup> David was the youngest; the three eldest followed Saul, <sup>15</sup> but David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem. <sup>16</sup> For forty days the Philistine came forward and took his stand, morning and evening.

<sup>17</sup> Jesse said to his son David, "Take for your brothers an ephah of this parched grain and these ten loaves, and carry them quickly to the camp to your brothers; <sup>18</sup> also take these ten cheeses to the commander of their thousand. See how your brothers fare, and bring some token from them."

<sup>19</sup> Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. <sup>20</sup> David rose early in the morning, left the sheep with a keeper, took the provisions, and went as Jesse had commanded him. He came to the encampment as the army was going forth to the battle line, shouting the war cry. <sup>21</sup> Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army. <sup>22</sup> David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage, ran to the ranks, and went and greeted his brothers. <sup>23</sup> As he talked with them, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines, and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him.

<sup>24</sup> All the Israelites, when they saw the man, fled from him and were very much afraid. <sup>25</sup> The Israelites

<sup>a</sup> MT: Q Ms Gk four

<sup>b</sup> Gk Syr: Heb among men

### Read 1 Samuel 17:31–58

This is the classic story of David's fight with Goliath. The story is totally concerned with David's extraordinary faith in God. David will even make fun of Goliath by using his own words against him: "This very day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth..."

**Reflect:** David's faith in God helped him overcome what must have seemed impossible odds. Where did David get so great a faith? Where does your faith come from?

**Pray:** Lord, help me not to lose faith when I must face my own Goliaths. Give me the confidence David had in your nearness to him.

**Act:** Write a letter thanking someone in your life for nourishing your faith. Think of a way in which you might defeat a "Goliath" in your world.

said, "Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel. The king will greatly enrich the man who kills him, and will give him his daughter and make his family free in Israel." <sup>26</sup> David said to the men who stood by him, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine, and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" <sup>27</sup> The people answered him in the same way, "So shall it be done for the man who kills him."

<sup>28</sup> His eldest brother Eliab heard him talking to the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David. He said, "Why have you come down? With whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart; for you have come down just to see the battle." <sup>29</sup> David said, "What have I done now? It was only a question." <sup>30</sup> He turned away from him toward another and spoke in the same way; and the people answered him again as before.

<sup>31</sup> When the words that David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul; and he sent for him. <sup>32</sup> David said to Saul, "Let no one's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." <sup>33</sup> Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth." <sup>34</sup> But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father; and whenever a lion or a bear came, and took a lamb from the flock, <sup>35</sup> I went after it and struck it down, rescuing the lamb from its mouth; and if it turned against me, I would catch it by the jaw, strike it down, and kill it. <sup>36</sup> Your servant has killed both lions and bears; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God." <sup>37</sup> David said, "The LORD, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine." So Saul said to David, "Go, and may the LORD be with you!"

<sup>38</sup> Saul clothed David with his armor; he put a bronze helmet on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail. <sup>39</sup> David strapped Saul's sword over the armor, and he tried in vain to walk, for he was not used to them. Then David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these; for I am not used to them." So David removed them. <sup>40</sup> Then he took his staff in his hand, and chose five smooth stones from the wadi, and put them in his shepherd's bag, in the pouch; his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine.

<sup>41</sup> The Philistine came on and drew near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. <sup>42</sup> When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was

only a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. <sup>43</sup> The Philistine said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. <sup>44</sup> The Philistine said to David, “Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the field.” <sup>45</sup> But David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. <sup>46</sup> This very day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, <sup>47</sup> and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD’s and he will give you into our hand.”

<sup>48</sup> When the Philistine drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. <sup>49</sup> David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

<sup>50</sup> So David prevailed over the Philis-

tine with a sling and a stone, striking down the Philistine and killing him; there was no sword in David’s hand. <sup>51</sup> Then David ran and stood over the Philistine; he grasped his sword, drew it out of its sheath, and killed him; then he cut off his head with it.

When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. <sup>52</sup> The troops of Israel and Judah rose up with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath<sup>a</sup> and the gates of Ekron, so that the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron. <sup>53</sup> The Israelites came back from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their camp. <sup>54</sup> David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armor in his tent.

<sup>55</sup> When Saul saw David go out against the Philistine, he said to Abner, the commander of the army, “Abner, whose son is this young man?” Abner said, “As your soul lives, O king, I do not know.” <sup>56</sup> The king said, “Inquire whose son the stripling is.” <sup>57</sup> On David’s return from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with the head of the Philistine in his hand. <sup>58</sup> Saul said to him, “Whose son are you, young man?” And David answered, “I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.”

### Jonathan’s Covenant with David

**18** When David<sup>b</sup> had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. <sup>2</sup> Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father’s house. <sup>3</sup> Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. <sup>4</sup> Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing, and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. <sup>5</sup> David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him; as a result, Saul set him over the army. And all the people, even the servants of Saul, approved.

<sup>6</sup> As they were coming home, when David returned from killing the Philistine, the women came out of all the towns of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments.<sup>c</sup> <sup>7</sup> And the women sang to one another as they made merry,

<sup>a</sup> Gk Syr: Heb Gai

<sup>b</sup> Heb he

<sup>c</sup> Or *triangles*, or *three-stringed instruments*



### Read 1 Samuel 18

There is a contrast here between David and Saul. David is loyal, innocent, strong, brave, and loved by everyone. Saul is scheming, weak, dishonest, and murderous. We are meant to see these differences as part of the reason for God's actions with regard to Saul and David.

**Reflect:** What are the values I most respect in others? What values do others respect in me? Where are good values lacking in me?

**Pray:** Lord, keep me in love with what is good, decent, true, and of lasting worth. May I always find your guidance along my way so that I might become the person you have called me to be.

**Act:** Examine your conscience. What things in yourself are you not proud of? How have you dealt deceitfully with someone you know? How has virtue been part of your life?

“Saul has killed his thousands,  
and David his ten thousands.”

<sup>8</sup> Saul was very angry, for this saying displeased him. He said, “They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands; what more can he have but the kingdom?” <sup>9</sup> So Saul eyed David from that day on.

### Saul Tries to Kill David

<sup>10</sup> The next day an evil spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house, while David was playing the lyre, as he did day by day. Saul had his spear in his hand; <sup>11</sup> and Saul threw the spear, for he thought, “I will pin David to the wall.” But David eluded him twice.

<sup>12</sup> Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul. <sup>13</sup> So Saul removed him from his presence, and made him a commander of a thousand; and David marched out and came in, leading the army. <sup>14</sup> David had success in all his undertakings; for the LORD was with him. <sup>15</sup> When Saul saw that he had great success, he stood in awe of him. <sup>16</sup> But all Israel and Judah loved David; for it was he who marched out and came in leading them.

### David Marries Michal

<sup>17</sup> Then Saul said to David, “Here is my elder daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife; only be valiant for me and fight the LORD’s battles.” For Saul thought, “I will not raise a hand against him; let the Philistines deal with him.” <sup>18</sup> David said to Saul, “Who am I and who are my kinsfolk, my father’s family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?” <sup>19</sup> But at the time when Saul’s daughter Merab should have been given to David, she was given to Adriel the Meholathite as a wife.

<sup>20</sup> Now Saul’s daughter Michal loved David. Saul was told, and the thing pleased him. <sup>21</sup> Saul thought, “Let me give her to him that she may be a snare for him and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him.” Therefore Saul said to David a second time,<sup>a</sup> “You shall now be my son-in-law.” <sup>22</sup> Saul commanded his servants, “Speak to David in private and say, ‘See, the king is delighted with you, and all his servants love you; now then, become the king’s son-in-law.’” <sup>23</sup> So Saul’s servants reported these words to David in private. And David said, “Does it seem to you a little thing to become the king’s son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man and of no repute?” <sup>24</sup> The servants of Saul told him, “This is what David said.” <sup>25</sup> Then Saul said, “Thus

<sup>a</sup> Heb by two

shall you say to David, ‘The king desires no marriage present except a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, that he may be avenged on the king’s enemies.’” Now Saul planned to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. <sup>26</sup> When his servants told David these words, David was well pleased to be the king’s son-in-law. Before the time had expired, <sup>27</sup> David rose and went, along with his men, and killed one hundred<sup>a</sup> of the Philistines; and David brought their foreskins, which were given in full number

to the king, that he might become the king’s son-in-law. Saul gave him his daughter Michal as a wife. <sup>28</sup> But when Saul realized that the LORD was with David, and that Saul’s daughter Michal loved him, <sup>29</sup> Saul was still more afraid of David. So Saul was David’s enemy from that time forward.

<sup>30</sup> Then the commanders of the Philistines came out to battle; and as often as they came out, David had more success than all the servants of Saul, so that his fame became very great.

### Read 1 Samuel 19

This chapter marks the beginning of the hunt for David by Saul. The plot is to arrest David and kill him. Saul now sees that David is a threat to his throne. David has friends, however, among those closest to Saul, including Saul’s son Jonathan and Michal, David’s wife and Saul’s daughter. They both betray their father to help David. Samuel will also come to David’s aid with the power of the prophetic guilds.

**Reflect:** David relies on Jonathan, Michal, and Samuel to flee from Saul. Their friendship for David is lifesaving for him. What relationships in your world are lifesaving?

**Pray:** Offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for the relationships you have that have benefited you most.

**Act:** Write a letter expressing your gratitude to a friend who has been important to you in some way.

### Jonathan Intercedes for David

**19** Saul spoke with his son Jonathan and with all his servants about killing David. But Saul’s son Jonathan took great delight in David. <sup>2</sup> Jonathan told David, “My father Saul is trying to kill you; therefore be on guard tomorrow morning; stay in a secret place and hide yourself. <sup>3</sup> I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak to my father about you; if I learn anything I will tell you.” <sup>4</sup> Jonathan spoke well of David to his father Saul, saying to him, “The king should not sin against his servant David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his deeds have been of good service to you; <sup>5</sup> for he took his life in his hand when he attacked the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great victory for all Israel. You saw it, and rejoiced; why then will you sin against an innocent person by killing David without cause?” <sup>6</sup> Saul heeded the voice of Jonathan; Saul swore, “As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death.” <sup>7</sup> So Jonathan called David and related all these things to him. Jonathan then brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as before.

### Michal Helps David Escape from Saul

<sup>8</sup> Again there was war, and David went out to fight the Philistines. He launched a heavy attack on them, so that they fled before him. <sup>9</sup> Then an evil spirit from the LORD came upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand, while David was playing music. <sup>10</sup> Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear; but he eluded Saul, so that he struck the spear into the wall. David fled and escaped that night.

<sup>11</sup> Saul sent messengers to David’s house to keep watch over him, planning to kill him in the morning. David’s wife Michal told him, “If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed.” <sup>12</sup> So Michal let David down through the window; he fled away and

<sup>a</sup> Gk Compare 2 Sam 3.14: Heb two hundred

escaped. <sup>13</sup> Michal took an idol<sup>a</sup> and laid it on the bed; she put a net<sup>b</sup> of goats' hair on its head, and covered it with the clothes. <sup>14</sup> When Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, "He is sick." <sup>15</sup> Then Saul sent the messengers to see David for themselves. He said, "Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may kill him." <sup>16</sup> When the messengers came in, the idol<sup>c</sup> was in the bed, with the covering<sup>b</sup> of goats' hair on its head. <sup>17</sup> Saul said to Michal, "Why have you deceived me like this, and let my enemy go, so that he has escaped?" Michal answered Saul, "He said to me, 'Let me go; why should I kill you?'"

### David Joins Samuel in Ramah

<sup>18</sup> Now David fled and escaped; he came to Samuel at Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. He and Samuel went and settled at Naioth. <sup>19</sup> Saul was told, "David is at Naioth in Ramah." <sup>20</sup> Then Saul

sent messengers to take David. When they saw the company of the prophets in a frenzy, with Samuel standing in charge of<sup>b</sup> them, the spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also fell into a prophetic frenzy. <sup>21</sup> When Saul was told, he sent other messengers, and they also fell into a frenzy. Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they also fell into a frenzy. <sup>22</sup> Then he himself went to Ramah. He came to the great well that is in Secu;<sup>d</sup> he asked, "Where are Samuel and David?" And someone said, "They are at Naioth in Ramah." <sup>23</sup> He went there, toward Naioth in Ramah; and the spirit of God came upon him. As he was going, he fell into a prophetic frenzy, until he came to Naioth in Ramah. <sup>24</sup> He too stripped off his clothes, and he too fell into a frenzy before Samuel. He lay naked all that day and all that night. Therefore it is said, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

### The Friendship of David and Jonathan

**20** David fled from Naioth in Ramah. He came before Jonathan and said, "What have I done? What is my guilt? And what is my sin against your father that he is trying to take my life?" <sup>2</sup> He said to him, "Far from it! You shall not die. My father does nothing either great or small without disclosing it to me; and why should my father hide this from me? Never!" <sup>3</sup> But David also swore, "Your father knows well that you like me; and he thinks, 'Do not let Jonathan know this, or he will be grieved.' But truly, as the LORD lives and as you yourself live, there is but a step between me and death." <sup>4</sup> Then Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you say, I will do for you." <sup>5</sup> David said to Jonathan, "Tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at the meal; but let me go, so that I may hide in the field until the third evening. <sup>6</sup> If your father misses me at all, then say, 'David earnestly asked leave of me to run to Bethlehem his city; for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.' <sup>7</sup> If he says, 'Good!' it will be well with your servant; but if he is angry, then know that evil has been determined by him. <sup>8</sup> Therefore deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a sacred covenant<sup>e</sup> with you. But if there is guilt in me, kill me yourself; why should you bring me to your father?" <sup>9</sup> Jonathan said, "Far be it from you! If I knew that it was decided by my father that evil should

<sup>a</sup> Heb took the teraphim

<sup>b</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>c</sup> Heb the teraphim

<sup>d</sup> Gk reads to the well of the threshing floor on the bare height

<sup>e</sup> Heb a covenant of the LORD

## Read 1 Samuel 20

The oath between David and Jonathan governs this story. We see David and Jonathan's faithfulness to each other contrasted with Saul's deceitfulness in desiring to kill David, who has been loyal to him.

**Reflect:** Promises are often the building blocks of our most meaningful relationships. What promises have you made that have brought you into important, enriching relationships? How have others' promises affected you?

**Pray:** O God, all my promises are based on the promise of your love for me. Continue your faithful love, that I might be a child of yours and able to mirror your faithfulness in my life.

**Act:** Think about the relationships you may have neglected. How can you improve them?

come upon you, would I not tell you?" <sup>10</sup> Then David said to Jonathan, "Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?" <sup>11</sup> Jonathan replied to David, "Come, let us go out into the field." So they both went out into the field.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan said to David, "By the LORD, the God of Israel! When I have sounded out my father, about this time tomorrow, or on the third day, if he is well disposed toward David, shall I not then send and disclose it to you? <sup>13</sup> But if my father intends to do you harm, the LORD do so to Jonathan, and more also, if I do not disclose it to you, and send you away, so that you may go in safety. May the LORD be with you, as he has been with my father. <sup>14</sup> If I am still alive, show me the faithful love of the LORD; but if I die,<sup>a</sup> <sup>15</sup> never cut off your faithful love from my house, even if the LORD were to cut off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth." <sup>16</sup> Thus Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD seek out the enemies of David." <sup>17</sup> Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him; for he loved him as he loved his own life.

<sup>18</sup> Jonathan said to him, "Tomorrow is the new moon; you will be missed, because your place will be empty. <sup>19</sup> On the day after tomorrow, you shall go a long way down; go to the place where you hid yourself earlier, and remain beside the stone there.<sup>a</sup> <sup>20</sup> I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I shot at a mark. <sup>21</sup> Then I will send the boy, saying, 'Go, find the arrows.' If I say to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you, collect them,' then you are to come, for, as the LORD lives, it is safe for you and there is no danger. <sup>22</sup> But if I say to the young man, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you,' then go; for the LORD has sent you away. <sup>23</sup> As for the matter about which you and I have spoken, the LORD is witness<sup>b</sup> between you and me forever."

<sup>24</sup> So David hid himself in the field. When the new moon came, the king sat at the feast to eat. <sup>25</sup> The king sat upon his seat, as at other times, upon the seat by the wall. Jonathan stood, while Abner sat by Saul's side; but David's place was empty.

<sup>26</sup> Saul did not say anything that day; for he thought, "Something has befallen him; he is not clean, surely he is not clean." <sup>27</sup> But on the second day, the day after the new moon, David's place was empty. And Saul said to his son Jonathan, "Why has the son of Jesse not come to the feast, either yesterday or today?" <sup>28</sup> Jonathan answered Saul, "David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem; <sup>29</sup> he said, 'Let me go; for our family is holding a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has commanded me to be there. So

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Gk: Heb lacks *witness*

now, if I have found favor in your sight, let me get away, and see my brothers.' For this reason he has not come to the king's table."

30 Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan. He said to him, "You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame, and to the shame of your mother's nakedness? 31 For as long as the son of Jesse lives upon the earth, neither you nor your kingdom shall be established. Now send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die." 32 Then Jonathan answered his father Saul, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" 33 But Saul threw his spear at him to strike him; so Jonathan knew that it was the decision of his father to put David to death. 34 Jonathan rose from the table in fierce anger and ate no food on the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David, and because his father had disgraced him.

35 In the morning Jonathan went out into the field to the appointment with

David, and with him was a little boy. 36 He said to the boy, "Run and find the arrows that I shoot." As the boy ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. 37 When the boy came to the place where Jonathan's arrow had fallen, Jonathan called after the boy and said, "Is the arrow not beyond you?" 38 Jonathan called after the boy, "Hurry, be quick, do not linger." So Jonathan's boy gathered up the arrows and came to his master. 39 But the boy knew nothing; only Jonathan and David knew the arrangement. 40 Jonathan gave his weapons to the boy and said to him, "Go and carry them to the city." 41 As soon as the boy had gone, David rose from beside the stone heap<sup>a</sup> and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. He bowed three times, and they kissed each other, and wept with each other; David wept the more.<sup>b</sup> 42 Then Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, since both of us have sworn in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD shall be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants, forever.'" He got up and left; and Jonathan went into the city.<sup>c</sup>

### David and the Holy Bread

**21**<sup>d</sup> David came to Nob to the priest Ahimelech. Ahimelech came trembling to meet David, and said to him, "Why are you alone, and no one with you?" 2 David said to the priest Ahimelech, "The king has charged me with a matter, and said to me, 'No one must know anything of the matter about which I send you, and with which I have charged you.' I have made an appointment<sup>e</sup> with the young men for such and such a place. 3 Now then, what have you at hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever is here." 4 The priest answered David, "I have no ordinary bread at hand, only holy bread—provided that the young men have kept themselves from women." 5 David answered the priest, "Indeed women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition; the vessels of the young men are holy even when it is a common journey; how much more today will their vessels be holy?" 6 So the priest gave him the holy bread; for there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence, which is removed from before the LORD, to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away.

7 Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was

<sup>a</sup> Gk: Heb from beside the south

<sup>b</sup> Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>c</sup> This sentence is 21.1 in Heb

<sup>d</sup> Ch 21.2 in Heb

<sup>e</sup> Q Ms Vg Compare Gk: Meaning of MT uncertain

## Read 1 Samuel 21

This chapter shows David involved in two instances where deception seems to him to be necessary. When he visits Ahimelech, priest at Nob, he tells him he is on a mission for Saul so that he can get food and a weapon without trouble. When he goes to Achish, king of Gath, a Philistine, he fakes madness to avoid the wrath of someone who might have reason to harm him.

**Reflect:** We find David's dishonesty unsettling. Can you think of times when faithfulness to God's way has led you in directions you might not have chosen freely?

**Pray:** Think about the experiences in your life when you were being led in mysterious paths by God. Give thanks to the Lord for bringing you through those times.

**Act:** If any of your relationships has been affected by dishonesty, seek within reason to rectify it.

there that day, detained before the LORD; his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's shepherds.

8 David said to Ahimelech, "Is there no spear or sword here with you? I did not bring my sword or my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste." 9 The priest said, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah, is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod; if you will take that, take it, for there is none here except that one." David said, "There is none like it; give it to me."

## David Flees to Gath

10 David rose and fled that day from Saul; he went to King Achish of Gath. 11 The servants of Achish said to him, "Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing to one another of him in dances,

'Saul has killed his thousands,  
and David his ten thousands?'"

12 David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of King Achish of Gath. 13 So he changed his behavior before them; he pretended to be mad when in their presence.<sup>a</sup> He scratched marks on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle run down his beard. 14 Achish said to his servants, "Look, you see the man is mad; why then have you brought him to me? 15 Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?"

## David and His Followers at Adullam

**22** David left there and escaped to the cave of Adullam; when his brothers and all his father's house heard of it, they went down there to him. 2 Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him; and he became captain over them. Those who were with him numbered about four hundred.

3 David went from there to Mizpeh of Moab. He said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and mother come<sup>b</sup> to you, until I know what God will do for me." 4 He left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold. 5 Then the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not remain in the stronghold; leave, and go into the land of Judah." So David left, and went into the forest of Hereth.

## Saul Slaughters the Priests at Nob

6 Saul heard that David and those who were with him had been located. Saul was sitting at Gibeah, under the tamarisk tree on the height, with his spear in his

<sup>a</sup> Heb in their hands

<sup>b</sup> Syr Vg: Heb come out



## Read 1 Samuel 22

This passage shows the depth of Saul's desperation in dealing with David. Saul openly puts to death unarmed priests from one of his nation's holy cities, Nob. Doeg the Edomite shows his willingness to do whatever will advance him in Saul's sight as he murders eighty-five people in cold blood. David, in contrast, shows extraordinary kindness to Abiathar, one of Ahimelech's sons.

**Reflect:** Saul's hatred drives him to commit an act of unspeakable cruelty. He does not turn to the Lord for shelter but to his own violent hand. Ahimelech, Abiathar, and David seek their refuge in God's hands. While it might not look good for David and the priests immediately, God's power will win out over Saul's cruelty.

**Pray:** O God, oftentimes when I am experiencing difficulties I have sought to save myself by my hand. Only when I trust in you does my life receive the fullness of your blessing.

**Act:** Make a small sacrifice, such as fasting from a meal or a dessert, as an expression of your solidarity with victims of senseless violence in our world.

hand, and all his servants were standing around him. <sup>7</sup> Saul said to his servants who stood around him, "Hear now, you Benjaminites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds?" <sup>8</sup> Is that why all of you have conspired against me? No one discloses to me when my son makes a league with the son of Jesse, none of you is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as he is doing today." <sup>9</sup> Doeg the Edomite, who was in charge of Saul's servants, answered, "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech son of Ahitub; <sup>10</sup> he inquired of the LORD for him, gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

<sup>11</sup> The king sent for the priest Ahimelech son of Ahitub and for all his father's house, the priests who were at Nob; and all of them came to the king. <sup>12</sup> Saul said, "Listen now, son of Ahitub." He answered, "Here I am, my lord." <sup>13</sup> Saul said to him, "Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, by giving him bread and a sword, and by inquiring of God for him, so that he has risen against me, to lie in wait, as he is doing today?"

<sup>14</sup> Then Ahimelech answered the king, "Who among all your servants is so faithful as David? He is the king's son-in-law, and is quick<sup>a</sup> to do your bidding, and is honored in your house. <sup>15</sup> Is today the first time that I have inquired of God for him? By no means! Do not let the king impute anything to his servant or to any member of my father's house; for your servant has known nothing of all this, much or little." <sup>16</sup> The king said, "You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's house." <sup>17</sup> The king said to the guard who stood around him, "Turn and kill the priests of the LORD, because their hand also is with David; they knew that he fled, and did not disclose it to me." But the servants of the king would not raise their hand to attack the priests of the LORD. <sup>18</sup> Then the king said to Doeg, "You, Doeg, turn and attack the priests." Doeg the Edomite turned and attacked the priests; on that day he killed eighty-five who wore the linen ephod. <sup>19</sup> Nob, the city of the priests, he put to the sword; men and women, children and infants, oxen, donkeys, and sheep, he put to the sword.

<sup>20</sup> But one of the sons of Ahimelech son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David. <sup>21</sup> Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD. <sup>22</sup> David said to Abiathar, "I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I am responsible<sup>b</sup> for the lives of all

<sup>a</sup> Heb and turns aside

<sup>b</sup> Gk Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

your father's house. <sup>23</sup> Stay with me, and my life seeks your life; you will be safe do not be afraid; for the one who seeks with me."

### Read 1 Samuel 23

While in hiding because he is being pursued by Saul, David takes the opportunity to aid the people of Keilah against the Philistines who are attacking them. David is kind to the citizens of Keilah, who respond by trying to hand him over to Saul. Because he moves in hatred and distrust, however, Saul will be unsuccessful in capturing David.

**Reflect:** David's kindness in Keilah is returned with an act of ingratitude, as the people attempt to give him over to Saul. The Lord calls us to do good even when this seems to entail no benefit for us. Generous love is its own reward.

**Pray:** O God, you constantly challenge me to the task of generous love, a task I often find hard or unrewarding. You show me the perfection of generous love in Jesus who has loved me.

**Act:** Make a list of the generous love shown to you by God through other people in your life.

### David Saves the City of Keilah

**23** Now they told David, "The Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and are robbing the threshing floors." <sup>2</sup> David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" The LORD said to David, "Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah." <sup>3</sup> But David's men said to him, "Look, we are afraid here in Judah; how much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?" <sup>4</sup> Then David inquired of the LORD again. The LORD answered him, "Yes, go down to Keilah; for I will give the Philistines into your hand." <sup>5</sup> So David and his men went to Keilah, fought with the Philistines, brought away their livestock, and dealt them a heavy defeat. Thus David rescued the inhabitants of Keilah.

<sup>6</sup> When Abiathar son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, he came down with an ephod in his hand. <sup>7</sup> Now it was told Saul that David had come to Keilah. And Saul said, "God has given<sup>a</sup> him into my hand; for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars." <sup>8</sup> Saul summoned all the people to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men. <sup>9</sup> When David learned that Saul was plotting evil against him, he said to the priest Abiathar, "Bring the ephod here." <sup>10</sup> David said, "O LORD, the God of Israel, your servant has heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah, to destroy the city on my account. <sup>11</sup> And now, will<sup>b</sup> Saul come down as your servant has heard? O LORD, the God of Israel, I beseech you, tell your servant." The LORD said, "He will come down." <sup>12</sup> Then David said, "Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?" The LORD said, "They will surrender you." <sup>13</sup> Then David and his men, who were about six hundred, set out and left Keilah; they wandered wherever they could go. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the expedition. <sup>14</sup> David remained in the strongholds in the wilderness, in the hill country of the Wilderness of Ziph. Saul sought him every day, but the LORD<sup>c</sup> did not give him into his hand.

### David Eludes Saul in the Wilderness

<sup>15</sup> David was in the Wilderness of Ziph at Horesh when he learned that<sup>d</sup> Saul had come out to seek his life. <sup>16</sup> Saul's son Jonathan set out and came to David at Horesh; there he strengthened his hand through the LORD.<sup>e</sup> <sup>17</sup> He said to him, "Do not be afraid; for the hand of my father Saul shall not find you; you shall be king

<sup>a</sup> Gk Tg; Heb *made a stranger of*

<sup>b</sup> Q Ms Compare Gk: MT *Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will*

<sup>c</sup> Q Ms Gk: MT *God*

<sup>d</sup> Or *saw that*

<sup>e</sup> Compare Q Ms Gk: MT *God*

over Israel, and I shall be second to you; my father Saul also knows that this is so.”

<sup>18</sup> Then the two of them made a covenant before the LORD; David remained at Horesh, and Jonathan went home.

<sup>19</sup> Then some Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah and said, “David is hiding among us in the strongholds of Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is south of Jeshimon. <sup>20</sup> Now, O king, whenever you wish to come down, do so; and our part will be to surrender him into the king’s hand.” <sup>21</sup> Saul said, “May you be blessed by the LORD for showing me compassion! <sup>22</sup> Go and make sure once more; find out exactly where he is, and who has seen him there; for I am told that he is very cunning. <sup>23</sup> Look around and learn all the hiding places where he lurks, and come back to me with sure information. Then I will go with you; and if he is in the land, I will search him out among all the thousands of Judah.”

<sup>24</sup> So they set out and went to Ziph ahead of Saul.

David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon. <sup>25</sup> Saul and his men went to search for him. When David was told, he went down to the rock and stayed in the wilderness of Maon. When Saul heard that, he pursued David into the wilderness of Maon. <sup>26</sup> Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain. David was hurrying to get away from Saul, while Saul and his men were closing in on David and his men to capture them. <sup>27</sup> Then a messenger came to Saul, saying, “Hurry and come; for the Philistines have made a raid on the land.” <sup>28</sup> So Saul stopped pursuing David, and went against the Philistines; therefore that place was called the Rock of Escape.<sup>a</sup> <sup>29b</sup> David then went up from there, and lived in the strongholds of En-gedi.

### David Spares Saul’s Life

**24** When Saul returned from following the Philistines, he was told, “David is in the wilderness of En-gedi.” <sup>2</sup> Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to look for David and his men in the direction of the Rocks of the Wild Goats. <sup>3</sup> He came to the sheepfolds beside the road, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to relieve himself.<sup>c</sup> Now David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave. <sup>4</sup> The men of David said to him, “Here is the day of which the LORD said to you, ‘I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you.’” Then David went and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul’s cloak. <sup>5</sup> Afterward David was stricken to the heart because he had cut off a corner of Saul’s cloak. <sup>6</sup> He said to his men, “The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD’s anointed, to raise my hand against him; for he is the LORD’s anointed.” <sup>7</sup> So David scolded his men severely and did not permit them to attack Saul. Then Saul got up and left the cave, and went on his way.

<sup>8</sup> Afterwards David also rose up and went out of the cave and called after Saul, “My lord the king!” When Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance. <sup>9</sup> David said to Saul, “Why do you listen to the words of those who say, ‘David seeks to do you harm?’” <sup>10</sup> This very day your

<sup>a</sup> Or *Rock of Division*; meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Ch 24.1 in Heb

<sup>c</sup> Heb *to cover his feet*

## Read 1 Samuel 24

In this little story from the series of stories of David's flight from Saul, David shows kindness to Saul. The story's conclusion makes Saul testify to David's future, something that cannot please Saul at all.

**Reflect:** David will not force the hand of God. If God wants to give the kingdom to David, he will receive it, but he will not reach out to take it by force. David exercises patience as he waits on God's movement to receive God's gift.

**Pray:** O God, there have been times in my life when I needed to have patience as I waited for your will to be revealed to me. Help me to incorporate this kind of patient attendance on your will into my spiritual life.

**Act:** Write out a prayer you might be able to use to remind yourself in difficult times of the reward of patient attendance on God's will and goodness.

eyes have seen how the LORD gave you into my hand in the cave; and some urged me to kill you, but I spared<sup>a</sup> you. I said, 'I will not raise my hand against my lord; for he is the LORD's anointed.' <sup>11</sup> See, my father, see the corner of your cloak in my hand; for by the fact that I cut off the corner of your cloak, and did not kill you, you may know for certain that there is no wrong or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you, though you are hunting me to take my life. <sup>12</sup> May the LORD judge between me and you! May the LORD avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you. <sup>13</sup> As the ancient proverb says, 'Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness'; but my hand shall not be against you. <sup>14</sup> Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A single flea? <sup>15</sup> May the LORD therefore be judge, and give sentence between me and you. May he see to it, and plead my cause, and vindicate me against you."

<sup>16</sup> When David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" Saul lifted up his voice and wept. <sup>17</sup> He said to David, "You are more righteous than I; for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil. <sup>18</sup> Today you have explained how you have dealt well with me, in that you did not kill me when the LORD put me into your hands. <sup>19</sup> For who has ever found an enemy, and sent the enemy safely away? So may the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. <sup>20</sup> Now I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. <sup>21</sup> Swear to me therefore by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not wipe out my name from my father's house." <sup>22</sup> So David swore this to Saul. Then Saul went home; but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

## Death of Samuel

**25** Now Samuel died; and all Israel assembled and mourned for him. They buried him at his home in Ramah.

Then David got up and went down to the wilderness of Paran.

## David and the Wife of Nabal

**2** There was a man in Maon, whose property was in Carmel. The man was very rich; he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. He was shearing his sheep in Carmel. <sup>3</sup> Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. The woman was clever and beautiful, but the man was surly and mean; he was a Calebite. <sup>4</sup> David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was

<sup>a</sup> Gk Syr Tg Vg: Heb *it* (my eye) spared

### Read 1 Samuel 25

While he was in hiding from Saul, it appears that David and his men were working for hire. In this story they successfully guard the flocks of Nabal of Carmel during the process of shearing so that nothing was stolen from him. Nabal responds to David's faithfulness with a lack of gratitude. David is angry at this and sets out with his men to kill Nabal. Only the intercession of Abigail, Nabal's wife, keeps David from exacting judgment on Nabal. God has another plan for Nabal and Abigail.

**Reflect:** David is tempted to do evil, but because he responds with patience to God's power at work in his life he avoids doing evil and is blessed by God.

**Pray:** Pray that you might become ever more trusting in God's will for your good.

**Act:** Think of a time in your life when your own impatience caused you not to trust in God's ability to bring about good and you acted wrongly.

shearing his sheep. <sup>5</sup> So David sent ten young men; and David said to the young men, "Go up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name. <sup>6</sup> Thus you shall salute him: 'Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. <sup>7</sup> I hear that you have shearers; now your shepherds have been with us, and we did them no harm, and they missed nothing, all the time they were in Carmel. <sup>8</sup> Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your sight; for we have come on a feast day. Please give whatever you have at hand to your servants and to your son David.'"

<sup>9</sup> When David's young men came, they said all this to Nabal in the name of David; and then they waited. <sup>10</sup> But Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants today who are breaking away from their masters. <sup>11</sup> Shall I take my bread and my water and the meat that I have butchered for my shearers, and give it to men who come from I do not know where?" <sup>12</sup> So David's young men turned away, and came back and told him all this. <sup>13</sup> David said to his men, "Every man strap on his sword!" And every one of them strapped on his sword; David also strapped on his sword; and about four hundred men went up after David, while two hundred remained with the baggage.

<sup>14</sup> But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he shouted insults at them. <sup>15</sup> Yet the men were very good to us, and we suffered no harm, and we never missed anything when we were in the fields, as long as we were with them; <sup>16</sup> they were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. <sup>17</sup> Now therefore know this and consider what you should do; for evil has been decided against our master and against all his house; he is so ill-natured that no one can speak to him."

<sup>18</sup> Then Abigail hurried and took two hundred loaves, two skins of wine, five sheep ready dressed, five measures of parched grain, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs. She loaded them on donkeys <sup>19</sup> and said to her young men, "Go on ahead of me; I am coming after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal. <sup>20</sup> As she rode on the donkey and came down under cover of the mountain, David and his men came down toward her; and she met them. <sup>21</sup> Now David had said, "Surely it was in vain that I protected all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him; but he has returned me evil for good. <sup>22</sup> God do so to David<sup>a</sup> and more also,

<sup>a</sup> Gk Compare Syr: Heb *the enemies of David*

if by morning I leave so much as one male of all who belong to him.”

23 When Abigail saw David, she hurried and alighted from the donkey, and fell before David on her face, bowing to the ground. 24 She fell at his feet and said, “Upon me alone, my lord, be the guilt; please let your servant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your servant. 25 My lord, do not take seriously this ill-natured fellow, Nabal; for as his name is, so is he; Nabal<sup>a</sup> is his name, and folly is with him; but I, your servant, did not see the young men of my lord, whom you sent.

26 “Now then, my lord, as the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, since the LORD has restrained you from bloodguilt and from taking vengeance with your own hand, now let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my lord be like Nabal. 27 And now let this present that your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord. 28 Please forgive the trespass of your servant; for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the LORD; and evil shall not be found in you so long as you live. 29 If anyone should rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living under the care of the LORD your God; but the lives of your enemies he shall sling out as from the hollow of a sling. 30 When the LORD has done to my lord according to all the good that he has spoken concerning you, and has appointed you prince over Israel, 31 my lord shall have no cause of grief, or pangs of conscience, for having shed blood without cause or for having saved himself. And when the LORD has dealt well with my lord, then remember your servant.”

32 David said to Abigail, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who sent you to

meet me today! 33 Blessed be your good sense, and blessed be you, who have kept me today from bloodguilt and from avenging myself by my own hand! 34 For as surely as the LORD the God of Israel lives, who has restrained me from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, truly by morning there would not have been left to Nabal so much as one male.” 35 Then David received from her hand what she had brought him; he said to her, “Go up to your house in peace; see, I have heeded your voice, and I have granted your petition.”

36 Abigail came to Nabal; he was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. Nabal’s heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; so she told him nothing at all until the morning light. 37 In the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him; he became like a stone. 38 About ten days later the LORD struck Nabal, and he died.

39 When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, “Blessed be the LORD who has judged the case of Nabal’s insult to me, and has kept back his servant from evil; the LORD has returned the evildoing of Nabal upon his own head.” Then David sent and wooed Abigail, to make her his wife. 40 When David’s servants came to Abigail at Carmel, they said to her, “David has sent us to you to take you to him as his wife.” 41 She rose and bowed down, with her face to the ground, and said, “Your servant is a slave to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.” 42 Abigail got up hurriedly and rode away on a donkey; her five maids attended her. She went after the messengers of David and became his wife.

43 David also married Ahinoam of Jezreel; both of them became his wives. 44 Saul had given his daughter Michal, David’s wife, to Palti son of Laish, who was from Gallim.

### David Spares Saul’s Life a Second Time

**26** Then the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, “David is in hiding on the hill of Hachilah, which is opposite Jeshimon.”<sup>b</sup> 2 So Saul rose and went down to the Wilderness of Ziph, with three thousand

<sup>a</sup> That is Fool

<sup>b</sup> Or opposite the wasteland



### Read 1 Samuel 26

This is the second story of the Lord putting Saul into David's hands and David responding with patience. The concluding speeches by Saul and David make clear the position of each of the main characters.

**Reflect:** David's words, "Do not destroy him, for who can raise his hand against the LORD's anointed and be guiltless?" tell us of David's willingness to wait on the Lord's action in his life.

**Pray:** Let David's words be your prayer: "The LORD rewards everyone for his righteousness and his faithfulness." Do you believe that?

**Act:** Remember a time in your life when God rewarded your justice and faithfulness.

chosen men of Israel, to seek David in the Wilderness of Ziph. <sup>3</sup> Saul encamped on the hill of Hachilah, which is opposite Jeshimon<sup>a</sup> beside the road. But David remained in the wilderness. When he learned that Saul had come after him into the wilderness, <sup>4</sup> David sent out spies, and learned that Saul had indeed arrived. <sup>5</sup> Then David set out and came to the place where Saul had encamped; and David saw the place where Saul lay, with Abner son of Ner, the commander of his army. Saul was lying within the encampment, while the army was encamped around him.

<sup>6</sup> Then David said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Joab's brother Abishai son of Zeruiah, "Who will go down with me into the camp to Saul?" Abishai said, "I will go down with you." <sup>7</sup> So David and Abishai went to the army by night; there Saul lay sleeping within the encampment, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head; and Abner and the army lay around him. <sup>8</sup> Abishai said to David, "God has given your enemy into your hand today; now therefore let me pin him to the ground with one stroke of the spear; I will not strike him twice." <sup>9</sup> But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him; for who can raise his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless?" <sup>10</sup> David said, "As the LORD lives, the LORD will strike him down; or his day will come to die; or he will go down into battle and perish. <sup>11</sup> The LORD forbid that I should raise my hand against the LORD's anointed; but now take the spear that is at his head, and the water jar, and let us go." <sup>12</sup> So David took the spear that was at Saul's head and the water jar, and they went away. No one saw it, or knew it, nor did anyone awake; for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen upon them.

<sup>13</sup> Then David went over to the other side, and stood on top of a hill far away, with a great distance between them. <sup>14</sup> David called to the army and to Abner son of Ner, saying, "Abner! Will you not answer?" Then Abner replied, "Who are you that calls to the king?" <sup>15</sup> David said to Abner, "Are you not a man? Who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not kept watch over your lord the king? For one of the people came in to destroy your lord the king. <sup>16</sup> This thing that you have done is not good. As the LORD lives, you deserve to die, because you have not kept watch over your lord, the LORD's anointed. See now, where is the king's spear, or the water jar that was at his head?"

<sup>17</sup> Saul recognized David's voice, and said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" David said, "It is my voice, my lord, O king." <sup>18</sup> And he added, "Why does my lord pursue his servant? For what have I done? What guilt is on my hands? <sup>19</sup> Now therefore let my lord the king hear

<sup>a</sup> Or opposite the wasteland

the words of his servant. If it is the LORD who has stirred you up against me, may he accept an offering; but if it is mortals, may they be cursed before the LORD, for they have driven me out today from my share in the heritage of the LORD, saying, ‘Go, serve other gods.’<sup>20</sup> Now therefore, do not let my blood fall to the ground, away from the presence of the LORD; for the king of Israel has come out to seek a single flea, like one who hunts a partridge in the mountains.”

21 Then Saul said, “I have done wrong; come back, my son David, for I will never harm you again, because my life was precious in your sight today; I have been a

fool, and have made a great mistake.”

<sup>22</sup> David replied, “Here is the spear, O king! Let one of the young men come over and get it.”<sup>23</sup> The LORD rewards everyone for his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the LORD gave you into my hand today, but I would not raise my hand against the LORD’s anointed.<sup>24</sup> As your life was precious today in my sight, so may my life be precious in the sight of the LORD, and may he rescue me from all tribulation.”<sup>25</sup> Then Saul said to David, “Blessed be you, my son David! You will do many things and will succeed in them.” So David went his way, and Saul returned to his place.

### Read 1 Samuel 27

This little passage tells the story of a difficult time for David and his men. The continued search by Saul has forced David to leave Israel and Judah. David finds shelter with his enemies, the Philistines. He is using them, yet Achish, the king who shelters him, thinks he is using David.

**Reflect:** David does not tell Achish the truth about his activities. Living in strange surroundings, David must become someone he is not proud of, a pirate. Sometimes difficult demands in life put us into situations that are clearly not comfortable for us. How do we face these situations?

**Pray:** Ask God for the grace needed to handle the difficult times and people in your life.

**Act:** In thought, place yourself in David’s position. How do you explain your behavior to the Lord?

### David Serves King Achish of Gath

**27** David said in his heart, “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul; there is nothing better for me than to escape to the land of the Philistines; then Saul will despair of seeking me any longer within the borders of Israel, and I shall escape out of his hand.”

<sup>2</sup> So David set out and went over, he and the six hundred men who were with him, to King Achish son of Maoch of Gath. <sup>3</sup> David stayed with Achish at Gath, he and his troops, every man with his household, and David with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel, and Abigail of Carmel, Nabal’s widow. <sup>4</sup> When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer sought for him.

<sup>5</sup> Then David said to Achish, “If I have found favor in your sight, let a place be given me in one of the country towns, so that I may live there; for why should your servant live in the royal city with you?” <sup>6</sup> So that day Achish gave him Ziklag; therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day. <sup>7</sup> The length of time that David lived in the country of the Philistines was one year and four months.

<sup>8</sup> Now David and his men went up and made raids on the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites; for these were the landed settlements from Telam<sup>a</sup> on the way to Shur and on to the land of Egypt. <sup>9</sup> David struck the land, leaving neither man nor woman alive, but took away the sheep, the oxen, the donkeys, the camels, and the clothing, and came back to Achish. <sup>10</sup> When Achish asked, “Against whom<sup>b</sup> have you made a raid today?” David would say, “Against the Negeb of Judah,” or “Against the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites,” or, “Against the Negeb of the Kenites.” <sup>11</sup> David left neither man nor woman alive to be brought back to Gath, thinking, “They might tell about us, and say, ‘David has done so

<sup>a</sup> Compare Gk 15.4: Heb *from of old*

<sup>b</sup> Q Ms Gk Vg: MT lacks *whom*

and so.” Such was his practice all the time he lived in the country of the Philistines. <sup>12</sup> Achish trusted David, thinking, “He has

made himself utterly abhorrent to his people Israel; therefore he shall always be my servant.”

### Read 1 Samuel 28

Saul is faced with serious difficulties. The Philistines are ready to attack and the Lord gives him no answer to his entreaties. In desperation, Saul breaks his own law to consult Samuel through a medium. When he succeeds in consulting Samuel, he receives no comfort.

**Reflect:** Saul seeks divine guidance, but he does so too late. Saul values only the word of comfort God might speak, but has ignored the demands God has been making on him all along. Like us, sometimes, Saul hears only what he wants to hear.

**Pray:** O Lord, open my ears that I might hear your word in hard times as well as in good times. Help me to be unafraid to hear your challenge to me, that I might also hear your comfort.

**Act:** Who are the people who speak a challenging word in your life? Think about how much of what they say might be the Lord’s word to you.

**28** In those days the Philistines gathered their forces for war, to fight against Israel. Achish said to David, “You know, of course, that you and your men are to go out with me in the army.” <sup>2</sup> David said to Achish, “Very well, then you shall know what your servant can do.” Achish said to David, “Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life.”

### Saul Consults a Medium

<sup>3</sup> Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. Saul had expelled the mediums and the wizards from the land. <sup>4</sup> The Philistines assembled, and came and encamped at Shunem. Saul gathered all Israel, and they encamped at Gilboa. <sup>5</sup> When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. <sup>6</sup> When Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, not by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets. <sup>7</sup> Then Saul said to his servants, “Seek out for me a woman who is a medium, so that I may go to her and inquire of her.” His servants said to him, “There is a medium at Endor.”

<sup>8</sup> So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes and went there, he and two men with him. They came to the woman by night. And he said, “Consult a spirit for me, and bring up for me the one whom I name to you.” <sup>9</sup> The woman said to him, “Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the wizards from the land. Why then are you laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?” <sup>10</sup> But Saul swore to her by the LORD, “As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing.” <sup>11</sup> Then the woman said, “Whom shall I bring up for you?” He answered, “Bring up Samuel for me.” <sup>12</sup> When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice; and the woman said to Saul, “Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!” <sup>13</sup> The king said to her, “Have no fear; what do you see?” The woman said to Saul, “I see a divine being<sup>a</sup> coming up out of the ground.” <sup>14</sup> He said to her, “What is his appearance?” She said, “An old man is coming up; he is wrapped in a robe.” So Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance.

<sup>15</sup> Then Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?” Saul answered, “I am in great distress, for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no

<sup>a</sup> Or a god; or gods

more, either by prophets or by dreams; so I have summoned you to tell me what I should do.”<sup>16</sup> Samuel said, “Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has turned from you and become your enemy?<sup>17</sup> The LORD has done to you just as he spoke by me; for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand, and given it to your neighbor, David.<sup>18</sup> Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD, and did not carry out his fierce wrath against Amalek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you today.<sup>19</sup> Moreover the LORD will give Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines; and tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me; the LORD will also give the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines.”

<sup>20</sup> Immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, filled with fear because of the words of Samuel; and there was no

strength in him, for he had eaten nothing all day and all night.<sup>21</sup> The woman came to Saul, and when she saw that he was terrified, she said to him, “Your servant has listened to you; I have taken my life in my hand, and have listened to what you have said to me.<sup>22</sup> Now therefore, you also listen to your servant; let me set a morsel of bread before you. Eat, that you may have strength when you go on your way.”<sup>23</sup> He refused, and said, “I will not eat.” But his servants, together with the woman, urged him; and he listened to their words. So he got up from the ground and sat on the bed.<sup>24</sup> Now the woman had a fatted calf in the house. She quickly slaughtered it, and she took flour, kneaded it, and baked unleavened cakes.<sup>25</sup> She put them before Saul and his servants, and they ate. Then they rose and went away that night.

### Read 1 Samuel 29

David is faced with a choice in which he may have to battle against Israel to be faithful to Achish, the Philistine king who has sheltered him. David is prepared to demonstrate his faithfulness to Achish for his loyalty, but is rejected by the other Philistines who do not like David's reputation.

**Reflect:** The journey of faithfulness is sometimes going to bring us into difficult situations in which we must make hard choices.

**Pray:** Ask God in prayer to help you in the midst of the hard decisions you must make.

**Act:** Remember a difficult time in your past when a decision had to be made. How did God guide you?

### The Philistines Reject David

**29** Now the Philistines gathered all their forces at Aphek, while the Israelites were encamped by the fountain that is in Jezreel.<sup>2</sup> As the lords of the Philistines were passing on by hundreds and by thousands, and David and his men were passing on in the rear with Achish,<sup>3</sup> the commanders of the Philistines said, “What are these Hebrews doing here?” Achish said to the commanders of the Philistines, “Is this not David, the servant of King Saul of Israel, who has been with me now for days and years? Since he deserted to me I have found no fault in him to this day.”<sup>4</sup> But the commanders of the Philistines were angry with him; and the commanders of the Philistines said to him, “Send the man back, so that he may return to the place that you have assigned to him; he shall not go down with us to battle, or else he may become an adversary to us in the battle. For how could this fellow reconcile himself to his lord? Would it not be with the heads of the men here?<sup>5</sup> Is this not David, of whom they sing to one another in dances, ‘Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands’?”

<sup>6</sup> Then Achish called David and said to him, “As the LORD lives, you have been honest, and to me it seems right that you should march out and in with me in the campaign; for I have found nothing wrong in you from the day of your coming to me until today. Nevertheless the lords do not approve of you.<sup>7</sup> So go back now; and go peaceably; do nothing to displease the lords of the

Philistines.”<sup>8</sup> David said to Achish, “But what have I done? What have you found in your servant from the day I entered your service until now, that I should not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?”<sup>9</sup> Achish replied to David, “I know that you are as blameless in my sight as an angel of God; nevertheless, the commanders of the Philistines have said, ‘He shall not go up with us to the battle.’<sup>10</sup> Now then rise

early in the morning, you and the servants of your lord who came with you, and go to the place that I appointed for you. As for the evil report, do not take it to heart, for you have done well before me.<sup>a</sup> Start early in the morning, and leave as soon as you have light.”<sup>11</sup> So David set out with his men early in the morning, to return to the land of the Philistines. But the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

### Read 1 Samuel 30

While David and his men are with Achish, their town of Ziklag is attacked and looted by the Amalekites. David and his men weep for the suffering inflicted on their loved ones. David consults the Lord, who calls him to rescue the people and loot taken by the Amalekites. When they are successful, David insists on generosity as a sign of thankfulness to the Lord.

**Reflect:** In the midst of sadness David will seek the Lord’s guidance. In a time of joy he will be thankful to the Lord for the gift of success. What can this teach us?

**Pray:** O Lord, help me to pray at those times when I am angry or saddened. Help me to be thankful for your gifts when they come my way.

**Act:** Compose a prayer of thanksgiving for the most precious gifts God has given you.

### David Avenges the Destruction of Ziklag

**30** Now when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, the Amalekites had made a raid on the Negeb and on Ziklag. They had attacked Ziklag, burned it down,<sup>2</sup> and taken captive the women and all<sup>b</sup> who were in it, both small and great; they killed none of them, but carried them off, and went their way.<sup>3</sup> When David and his men came to the city, they found it burned down, and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive.<sup>4</sup> Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept, until they had no more strength to weep.<sup>5</sup> David’s two wives also had been taken captive, Ahinoam of Jezreel, and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel.<sup>6</sup> David was in great danger; for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in spirit for their sons and daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.

<sup>7</sup> David said to the priest Abiathar son of Ahimelech, “Bring me the ephod.” So Abiathar brought the ephod to David.<sup>8</sup> David inquired of the LORD, “Shall I pursue this band? Shall I overtake them?” He answered him, “Pursue; for you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue.”<sup>9</sup> So David set out, he and the six hundred men who were with him. They came to the Wadi Besor, where those stayed who were left behind.<sup>10</sup> But David went on with the pursuit, he and four hundred men; two hundred stayed behind, too exhausted to cross the Wadi Besor.

<sup>11</sup> In the open country they found an Egyptian, and brought him to David. They gave him bread and he ate; they gave him water to drink;<sup>12</sup> they also gave him a piece of fig cake and two clusters of raisins. When he had eaten, his spirit revived; for he had not eaten bread or drunk water for three days and three nights.<sup>13</sup> Then David said to him, “To whom do you belong? Where are you from?” He said, “I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite. My master left me behind because I fell sick three days ago.<sup>14</sup> We had made a raid on the Negeb of the Cherethites and on that which be-

<sup>a</sup> Gk: Heb lacks *and go to the place...done well before me*

<sup>b</sup> Gk: Heb lacks *and all*

longs to Judah and on the Negeb of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag down.”<sup>15</sup> David said to him, “Will you take me down to this raiding party?” He said, “Swear to me by God that you will not kill me, or hand me over to my master, and I will take you down to them.”

<sup>16</sup> When he had taken him down, they were spread out all over the ground, eating and drinking and dancing, because of the great amount of spoil they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah. <sup>17</sup> David attacked them from twilight until the evening of the next day. Not one of them escaped, except four hundred young men, who mounted camels and fled. <sup>18</sup> David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken; and David rescued his two wives. <sup>19</sup> Nothing was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that had been taken; David brought back everything. <sup>20</sup> David also captured all the flocks and herds, which were driven ahead of the other cattle; people said, “This is David’s spoil.”

<sup>21</sup> Then David came to the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to follow David, and who had been left at the Wadi Besor. They went out to meet David and to meet the people who were with him. When

David drew near to the people he saluted them. <sup>22</sup> Then all the corrupt and worthless fellows among the men who had gone with David said, “Because they did not go with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, except that each man may take his wife and children, and leave.” <sup>23</sup> But David said, “You shall not do so, my brothers, with what the LORD has given us; he has preserved us and handed over to us the raiding party that attacked us. <sup>24</sup> Who would listen to you in this matter? For the share of the one who goes down into the battle shall be the same as the share of the one who stays by the baggage; they shall share alike.” <sup>25</sup> From that day forward he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel; it continues to the present day.

<sup>26</sup> When David came to Ziklag, he sent part of the spoil to his friends, the elders of Judah, saying, “Here is a present for you from the spoil of the enemies of the LORD”; <sup>27</sup> it was for those in Bethel, in Ramoth of the Negeb, in Jattir, <sup>28</sup> in Aroer, in Siphmoth, in Eshtemoa, <sup>29</sup> in Racal, in the towns of the Jerahmeelites, in the towns of the Kenites, <sup>30</sup> in Hormah, in Bor-ashan, in Athach, <sup>31</sup> in Hebron, all the places where David and his men had roamed.

### The Death of Saul and His Sons

**31** Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled before the Philistines, and many fell<sup>a</sup> on Mount Gilboa. <sup>2</sup> The Philistines overtook Saul and his sons; and the Philistines killed Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchishua, the sons of Saul. <sup>3</sup> The battle pressed hard upon Saul; the archers found him, and he was badly wounded by them. <sup>4</sup> Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, “Draw your sword and thrust me through with it, so that these uncircumcised may not come and thrust me through, and make sport of me.” But his armor-bearer was unwilling; for he was terrified. So Saul took his own sword and fell upon it. <sup>5</sup> When his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell upon his sword and died with him. <sup>6</sup> So Saul and his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men died together on the same day. <sup>7</sup> When the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley and those beyond the Jordan saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul

<sup>a</sup> Heb and they fell slain



### Read 1 Samuel 31

The first book of Samuel concludes with the story of Saul's death in battle on Mt. Gilboa. It is not a heroic death: Samuel falls on his own sword rather than be captured, and the bodies of Saul and his sons are mistreated by the Philistines. The men of Saul's hometown of Jabesh-gilead rescue the bodies and properly cremate them.

**Reflect:** The way things ended for Saul and his sons challenges us to see the hand of God in painful events. How could God bring good out of evil?

**Pray:** Pray about the painful moments in your life. How did God enter into your pain and bring healing? Where do you still need healing?

**Act:** Call a friend who is having a painful time in his or her life. Offer the comfort God enables you to offer.

and his sons were dead, they forsook their towns and fled; and the Philistines came and occupied them.

8 The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. <sup>9</sup>They cut off his head, stripped off his armor, and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to carry the good news to the houses of their idols and to the people. <sup>10</sup>They put his armor in the temple of Astarte;<sup>a</sup> and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan. <sup>11</sup>But when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, <sup>12</sup>all the valiant men set out, traveled all night long, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan. They came to Jabesh and burned them there. <sup>13</sup>Then they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

<sup>a</sup> Heb plural

# 2 SAMUEL

## David Mourns for Saul and Jonathan

### Read 2 Samuel 1

There are two parts to this passage. The first part is a story of how David receives the news of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. The man who delivers the message is also the one who killed the mortally injured Saul. This man is an Amalekite, not one of David's favorite tribes of people. He is executed by David for his murderous act. The second part of the reading is David's funeral song for Saul and Jonathan.

**Reflect:** David's reaction to the deaths of Saul and Jonathan reveals his extraordinary faithfulness to his past relationships. What relationships in your life have called for a faithful response in you?

**Pray:** Pray for the important and challenging relationships in your life.

**Act:** Identify the acts of faithfulness between people that have inspired you.

**1** After the death of Saul, when David had returned from defeating the Amalekites, David remained two days in Ziklag. **2** On the third day, a man came from Saul's camp, with his clothes torn and dirt on his head. When he came to David, he fell to the ground and did obeisance. **3** David said to him, "Where have you come from?" He said to him, "I have escaped from the camp of Israel." **4** David said to him, "How did things go? Tell me!" He answered, "The army fled from the battle, but also many of the army fell and died; and Saul and his son Jonathan also died." **5** Then David asked the young man who was reporting to him, "How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan died?" **6** The young man reporting to him said, "I happened to be on Mount Gilboa; and there was Saul leaning on his spear, while the chariots and the horsemen drew close to him. **7** When he looked behind him, he saw me, and called to me. I answered, 'Here sir.' **8** And he said to me, 'Who are you?' I answered him, 'I am an Amalekite.' **9** He said to me, 'Come, stand over me and kill me; for convulsions have seized me, and yet my life still lingers.' **10** So I stood over him, and killed him, for I knew that he could not live after he had fallen. I took the crown that was on his head and the armlet that was on his arm, and I have brought them here to my lord."

**11** Then David took hold of his clothes and tore them; and all the men who were with him did the same. **12** They mourned and wept, and fasted until evening for Saul and for his son Jonathan, and for the army of the LORD and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword. **13** David said to the young man who had reported to him, "Where do you come from?" He answered, "I am the son of a resident alien, an Amalekite." **14** David said to him, "Were you not afraid to lift your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?" **15** Then David called one of the young men and said, "Come here and strike him down." So he struck him down and he died. **16** David said to him, "Your blood be on your head; for your own mouth has testified against you, saying, 'I have killed the LORD's anointed.'"

**17** David intoned this lamentation over Saul and his son Jonathan. **18** (He ordered that The Song of the Bow<sup>a</sup> be taught to the people of Judah; it is written in the Book of Jashar.) He said:

<sup>a</sup> Heb that *The Bow*

### Read 2 Samuel 2

This story has two chief protagonists, Joab and Abner. These two men have been important for the futures of their respective leaders. Abner kills Joab's brother, Asahel, and this sets up the antagonism between the two men.

**Reflect:** Hatred and violence can have terrible effects over time. Where do you see the effects of hatred and violence in your life and relationships?

**Pray:** Pray a prayer for peace in our world so affected by hatred and violence.

**Act:** Seek to reconcile with someone with whom you are not at peace. Make a sacrifice for those who are victims of hatred and violence.

- 19 Your glory, O Israel, lies slain upon your high places!  
How the mighty have fallen!
- 20 Tell it not in Gath,  
proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon;  
or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice,  
the daughters of the uncircumcised will exult.
- 21 You mountains of Gilboa,  
let there be no dew or rain upon you,  
nor bounteous fields!<sup>a</sup>  
For there the shield of the mighty was defiled,  
the shield of Saul, anointed with oil no more.
- 22 From the blood of the slain,  
from the fat of the mighty,  
the bow of Jonathan did not turn back,  
nor the sword of Saul return empty.
- 23 Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely!  
In life and in death they were not divided;  
they were swifter than eagles,  
they were stronger than lions.
- 24 O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,  
who clothed you with crimson, in luxury,  
who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.
- 25 How the mighty have fallen  
in the midst of the battle!  
Jonathan lies slain upon your high places.
- 26 I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;  
greatly beloved were you to me;  
your love to me was wonderful,  
passing the love of women.
- 27 How the mighty have fallen,  
and the weapons of war perished!

### David Anointed King of Judah

**2** After this David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?" The LORD said to him, "Go up." David said, "To which shall I go up?" He said, "To Hebron."<sup>2</sup> So David went up there, along with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel, and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel.<sup>3</sup> David brought up the men who were with him, every one with his household; and they settled in the towns of Hebron.<sup>4</sup> Then the people of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.

When they told David, "It was the people of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul,"<sup>5</sup> David sent messengers to the people of Jabesh-gilead, and said to them, "May you be blessed by the LORD, because you showed this loyalty to

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

Saul your lord, and buried him! <sup>6</sup> Now may the LORD show steadfast love and faithfulness to you! And I too will reward you because you have done this thing. <sup>7</sup> Therefore let your hands be strong, and be valiant; for Saul your lord is dead, and the house of Judah has anointed me king over them.”

### Ishbaal King of Israel

<sup>8</sup> But Abner son of Ner, commander of Saul’s army, had taken Ishbaal<sup>a</sup> son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim. <sup>9</sup> He made him king over Gilead, the Ashurites, Jezreel, Ephraim, Benjamin, and over all Israel. <sup>10</sup> Ishbaal,<sup>a</sup> Saul’s son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David. <sup>11</sup> The time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

### The Battle of Gibeon

<sup>12</sup> Abner son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbaal<sup>a</sup> son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon. <sup>13</sup> Joab son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out and met them at the pool of Gibeon. One group sat on one side of the pool, while the other sat on the other side of the pool. <sup>14</sup> Abner said to Joab, “Let the young men come forward and have a contest before us.” Joab said, “Let them come forward.” <sup>15</sup> So they came forward and were counted as they passed by, twelve for Benjamin and Ishbaal<sup>a</sup> son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David. <sup>16</sup> Each grasped his opponent by the head, and thrust his sword in his opponent’s side; so they fell down together. Therefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim,<sup>b</sup> which is at Gibeon. <sup>17</sup> The battle was very fierce that day; and Abner and the men of Israel were beaten by the servants of David.

<sup>18</sup> The three sons of Zeruiah were there, Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Now Asahel was as swift of foot as a wild gazelle. <sup>19</sup>

Asahel pursued Abner, turning neither to the right nor to the left as he followed him. <sup>20</sup> Then Abner looked back and said, “Is it you, Asahel?” He answered, “Yes, it is.” <sup>21</sup> Abner said to him, “Turn to your right or to your left, and seize one of the young men, and take his spoil.” But Asahel would not turn away from following him. <sup>22</sup> Abner said again to Asahel, “Turn away from following me; why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I show my face to your brother Joab?” <sup>23</sup> But he refused to turn away. So Abner struck him in the stomach with the butt of his spear, so that the spear came out at his back. He fell there, and died where he lay. And all those who came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died, stood still.

<sup>24</sup> But Joab and Abishai pursued Abner. As the sun was going down they came to the hill of Ammah, which lies before Giah on the way to the wilderness of Gibeon. <sup>25</sup> The Benjaminites rallied around Abner and formed a single band; they took their stand on the top of a hill. <sup>26</sup> Then Abner called to Joab, “Is the sword to keep devouring forever? Do you not know that the end will be bitter? How long will it be before you order your people to turn from the pursuit of their kinsmen?” <sup>27</sup> Joab said, “As God lives, if you had not spoken, the people would have continued to pursue their kinsmen, not stopping until morning.” <sup>28</sup> Joab sounded the trumpet and all the people stopped; they no longer pursued Israel or engaged in battle any further.

<sup>29</sup> Abner and his men traveled all that night through the Arabah; they crossed the Jordan, and, marching the whole forenoon,<sup>c</sup> they came to Mahanaim. <sup>30</sup> Joab returned from the pursuit of Abner; and when he had gathered all the people together, there were missing of David’s servants nineteen men besides Asahel. <sup>31</sup> But the servants of David had killed of Benjamin three hundred sixty of Abner’s men. <sup>32</sup> They took up Asahel and buried him in

<sup>a</sup> Gk Compare 1 Chr 8.33; 9.39: Heb *Ish-bosheth*, “man of shame”

<sup>b</sup> That is *Field of Sword-edges*

<sup>c</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

the tomb of his father, which was at Beth-lehem. Joab and his men marched all night, and the day broke upon them at Hebron.

### Read 2 Samuel 3

This is a two-part story. One part concerns the dissatisfaction of Abner with Saul's son, Ishbaal; the animosity causes Abner to betray Ishbaal by shifting his loyalty to David. The second part of the story tells the story of Abner's death at the hands of Joab, David's general.

**Reflect:** These all-too-human stories cause us to wonder where the hand of God is in all that happens. God is acting behind the human actors. These actors reveal God's will in their responses to the challenges in their world. David will call for peace in the midst of the troubled times in which he lives.

**Pray:** Sometimes, Lord, it is hard to see your hand at work in my life. I know that by prayer I can hear your call. Help me when the events of my world seem to be far from your loving hand.

**Act:** In the evening, make an examination of the events of the day. Try to point out all the ways in which God was active in your life.

### Abner Defects to David

**3** There was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul became weaker and weaker.

2 Sons were born to David at Hebron: his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam of Jezreel; <sup>3</sup> his second, Chileab, of Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel; the third, Absalom son of Maacah, daughter of King Talmai of Geshur; <sup>4</sup> the fourth, Adonijah son of Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah son of Abital; <sup>5</sup> and the sixth, Ithream, of David's wife Eglah. These were born to David in Hebron.

6 While there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner was making himself strong in the house of Saul. <sup>7</sup> Now Saul had a concubine whose name was Rizpah daughter of Aiah. And Ishbaal<sup>a</sup> said to Abner, "Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?" <sup>8</sup> The words of Ishbaal<sup>b</sup> made Abner very angry; he said, "Am I a dog's head for Judah? Today I keep showing loyalty to the house of your father Saul, to his brothers, and to his friends, and have not given you into the hand of David; and yet you charge me now with a crime concerning this woman. <sup>9</sup> So may God do to Abner and so may he add to it! For just what the LORD has sworn to David, that will I accomplish for him, <sup>10</sup> to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beer-sheba." <sup>11</sup> And Ishbaal<sup>a</sup> could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him.

12 Abner sent messengers to David at Hebron,<sup>c</sup> saying, "To whom does the land belong? Make your covenant with me, and I will give you my support to bring all Israel over to you." <sup>13</sup> He said, "Good; I will make a covenant with you. But one thing I require of you: you shall never appear in my presence unless you bring Saul's daughter Michal when you come to see me." <sup>14</sup> Then David sent messengers to Saul's son Ishbaal,<sup>d</sup> saying, "Give me my wife Michal, to whom I became engaged at the price of one hundred foreskins of the Philistines." <sup>15</sup> Ishbaal<sup>d</sup> sent and took her from her husband Paltiel the son of Laish. <sup>16</sup> But her husband went with her, weeping as he walked behind her all the way to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, "Go back home!" So he went back.

17 Abner sent word to the elders of Israel, saying, "For some time past you have been seeking David as king over you. <sup>18</sup> Now then bring it about; for the LORD

<sup>a</sup> Heb *And he*

<sup>b</sup> Gk Compare 1 Chr 8:33; 9:39: Heb *Ish-bosheth*, "man of shame"

<sup>c</sup> Gk: Heb *where he was*

<sup>d</sup> Heb *Ish-bosheth*

has promised David: Through my servant David I will save my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines, and from all their enemies.”<sup>19</sup> Abner also spoke directly to the Benjaminites; then Abner went to tell David at Hebron all that Israel and the whole house of Benjamin were ready to do.

20 When Abner came with twenty men to David at Hebron, David made a feast for Abner and the men who were with him.<sup>21</sup> Abner said to David, “Let me go and rally all Israel to my lord the king, in order that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may reign over all that your heart desires.” So David dismissed Abner, and he went away in peace.

### Abner Is Killed by Joab

22 Just then the servants of David arrived with Joab from a raid, bringing much spoil with them. But Abner was not with David at Hebron, for David<sup>a</sup> had dismissed him, and he had gone away in peace.<sup>23</sup> When Joab and all the army that was with him came, it was told Joab, “Abner son of Ner came to the king, and he has dismissed him, and he has gone away in peace.”<sup>24</sup> Then Joab went to the king and said, “What have you done? Abner came to you; why did you dismiss him, so that he got away?”<sup>25</sup> You know that Abner son of Ner came to deceive you, and to learn your comings and goings and to learn all that you are doing.”

26 When Joab came out from David’s presence, he sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the cistern of Sirah; but David did not know about it.<sup>27</sup> When Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gateway to speak with him privately, and there he stabbed him in the stomach. So he died for shedding<sup>b</sup> the blood of Asahel, Joab’s<sup>c</sup> brother.<sup>28</sup> Afterward, when David heard of it, he

said, “I and my kingdom are forever guiltless before the LORD for the blood of Abner son of Ner.<sup>29</sup> May the guilt<sup>d</sup> fall on the head of Joab, and on all his father’s house; and may the house of Joab never be without one who has a discharge, or who is leprous,<sup>e</sup> or who holds a spindle, or who falls by the sword, or who lacks food!”<sup>30</sup> So Joab and his brother Abishai murdered Abner because he had killed their brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon.

31 Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, “Tear your clothes, and put on sackcloth, and mourn over Abner.” And King David followed the bier.<sup>32</sup> They buried Abner at Hebron. The king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept.<sup>33</sup> The king lamented for Abner, saying,

“Should Abner die as a fool dies?<sup>?</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Your hands were not bound,  
your feet were not fettered;  
as one falls before the wicked  
you have fallen.”

And all the people wept over him again.<sup>35</sup> Then all the people came to persuade David to eat something while it was still day; but David swore, saying, “So may God do to me, and more, if I taste bread or anything else before the sun goes down!”<sup>36</sup> All the people took notice of it, and it pleased them; just as everything the king did pleased all the people.<sup>37</sup> So all the people and all Israel understood that day that the king had no part in the killing of Abner son of Ner.<sup>38</sup> And the king said to his servants, “Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel?<sup>39</sup> Today I am powerless, even though anointed king; these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too violent for me. The LORD pay back the one who does wickedly in accordance with his wickedness!”

<sup>a</sup> Heb *he*

<sup>b</sup> Heb lacks *shedding*

<sup>c</sup> Heb *his*

<sup>d</sup> Heb *May it*

<sup>e</sup> A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

<sup>f</sup> Heb lacks *Ishbaal*

### Ishbaal Assassinated

**4** When Saul’s son Ishbaal<sup>f</sup> heard that Abner had died at Hebron, his courage failed, and all Israel was dismayed.<sup>2</sup> Saul’s son had two captains of raiding bands; the name of the one was Baanah, and the name of the



### Read 2 Samuel 4

Ishbaal, Saul's son and David's chief rival for the throne of all Israel, is murdered by two unsavory men from his father's tribe of Benjamin. David avenges the evil act by punishing the evildoers.

**Reflect:** David could have rejoiced in the elimination of his rival; instead, he holds back from rejoicing in evil. How do you handle such situations in your life? Is it sometimes easier to rejoice in evil?

**Pray:** Pray slowly three times the Lord's Prayer. Meditate carefully on the words: "deliver us from evil."

**Act:** Prepare for the sacrament of reconciliation by recalling and rejecting any instance of your cooperation with evil.

### Read 2 Samuel 5

The people of Israel approach David and place their trust in him by making him their king. David responds to their faith in him by trusting in God as he leads the Israelites to conquer Jerusalem and fight off the Philistines who are a threat to the safety of the people.

**Reflect:** Faith is a gift to be highly cherished when others extend it to us. How do you see the gift of faith extended and received in your life?

**Pray:** Lord, help me to value highly the faith others put in me. Help me to be strong as I put my faith in you.

**Act:** Make a list of what others expect because of their faith in you.

other Rechab. They were sons of Rimmon a Benjaminite from Beeroth—for Beeroth is considered to belong to Benjamin.<sup>3</sup> (Now the people of Beeroth had fled to Gittaim and are there as resident aliens to this day).

4 Saul's son Jonathan had a son who was crippled in his feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. His nurse picked him up and fled; and, in her haste to flee, it happened that he fell and became lame. His name was Mephibosheth.<sup>a</sup>

5 Now the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, set out, and about the heat of the day they came to the house of Ishbaal,<sup>b</sup> while he was taking his noonday rest. <sup>6</sup> They came inside the house as though to take wheat, and they struck him in the stomach; then Rechab and his brother Baanah escaped.<sup>c</sup> <sup>7</sup> Now they had come into the house while he was lying on his couch in his bedchamber; they attacked him, killed him, and beheaded him. Then they took his head and traveled by way of the Arabah all night long. <sup>8</sup> They brought the head of Ishbaal<sup>b</sup> to David at Hebron and said to the king, "Here is the head of Ishbaal,<sup>b</sup> son of Saul, your enemy, who sought your life; the LORD has avenged my lord the king this day on Saul and on his offspring."

9 David answered Rechab and his brother Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, "As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life out of every adversity, <sup>10</sup> when the one who told me, 'See, Saul is dead,' thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and killed him at Ziklag—this was the reward I gave him for his news. <sup>11</sup> How much more then, when wicked men have killed a righteous man on his bed in his own house! And now shall I not require his blood at your hand, and destroy you from the earth?" <sup>12</sup> So David commanded the young men, and they killed them; they cut off their hands and feet, and hung their bodies beside the pool at Hebron. But the head of Ishbaal<sup>b</sup> they took and buried in the tomb of Abner at Hebron.

### David Anointed King of All Israel

**5** Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron, and said, "Look, we are your bone and flesh. <sup>2</sup> For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in. The LORD said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel." <sup>3</sup> So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron; and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel. <sup>4</sup> David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned

<sup>a</sup> In 1 Chr 8:34 and 9:40, *Merib-baal*

<sup>b</sup> Heb *Ish-bosheth*

<sup>c</sup> Meaning of Heb of verse 6 uncertain

forty years. <sup>5</sup> At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.

### Jerusalem Made Capital of the United Kingdom

<sup>6</sup> The king and his men marched to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, “You will not come in here, even the blind and the lame will turn you back”—thinking, “David cannot come in here.” <sup>7</sup> Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion, which is now the city of David. <sup>8</sup> David had said on that day, “Whoever would strike down the Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to attack the lame and the blind, those whom David hates.”<sup>a</sup> Therefore it is said, “The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.” <sup>9</sup> David occupied the stronghold, and named it the city of David. David built the city all around from the Millo inward. <sup>10</sup> And David became greater and greater, for the LORD, the God of hosts, was with him.

<sup>11</sup> King Hiram of Tyre sent messengers to David, along with cedar trees, and carpenters and masons who built David a house. <sup>12</sup> David then perceived that the LORD had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.

<sup>13</sup> In Jerusalem, after he came from Hebron, David took more concubines and wives; and more sons and daughters were born to David. <sup>14</sup> These are the names of

those who were born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, <sup>15</sup> Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia, <sup>16</sup> Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

### Philistine Attack Repulsed

<sup>17</sup> When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, all the Philistines went up in search of David; but David heard about it and went down to the stronghold. <sup>18</sup> Now the Philistines had come and spread out in the valley of Rephaim. <sup>19</sup> David inquired of the LORD, “Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will you give them into my hand?” The LORD said to David, “Go up; for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand.” <sup>20</sup> So David came to Baal-perazim, and David defeated them there. He said, “The LORD has burst forth against<sup>b</sup> my enemies before me, like a bursting flood.” Therefore that place is called Baal-perazim.<sup>c</sup> <sup>21</sup> The Philistines abandoned their idols there, and David and his men carried them away.

<sup>22</sup> Once again the Philistines came up, and were spread out in the valley of Rephaim. <sup>23</sup> When David inquired of the LORD, he said, “You shall not go up; go around to their rear, and come upon them opposite the balsam trees. <sup>24</sup> When you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then be on the alert; for then the LORD has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines.” <sup>25</sup> David did just as the LORD had commanded him; and he struck down the Philistines from Geba all the way to Gezer.

### David Brings the Ark to Jerusalem

**6** David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. <sup>2</sup> David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the LORD of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim. <sup>3</sup> They carried the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio,<sup>d</sup> the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart <sup>4</sup> with the ark of God;<sup>e</sup> and Ahio<sup>d</sup> went in front of the ark. <sup>5</sup> David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the LORD with all their might, with songs<sup>f</sup> and

<sup>a</sup> Another reading is *those who hate David*

<sup>b</sup> Heb *paraz*

<sup>c</sup> That is *Lord of Bursting Forth*

<sup>d</sup> Or *and his brother*

<sup>e</sup> Compare Gk: Heb *and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill with the ark of God*

<sup>f</sup> Q Ms Gk 1 Chr 13.8: Heb *fir trees*

## Read 2 Samuel 6

David attempts to bring the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem. The incident at the threshing floor of Nacon makes David change his plans and have the ark taken to another place. When he does bring the ark to Jerusalem it is amidst great festivities. David goes so far as to dance mostly naked before the Lord as a commoner might do.

**Reflect:** In the journey of the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem we get to see David grow in his faith. The incident at Nacon shakes David's faith. He will have to make a yet greater act of faith before trusting enough to bring the ark close to him in Jerusalem. How has your faith in God grown through adversity?

**Pray:** Ask God in prayer to give you the courage and trust to continue your faith journey.

**Act:** Make a list of the times when your faith seemed too little for the challenges you faced.

lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

6 When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it. <sup>7</sup> The anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God struck him there because he reached out his hand to the ark;<sup>a</sup> and he died there beside the ark of God. <sup>8</sup> David was angry because the LORD had burst forth with an outburst upon Uzzah; so that place is called Perez-uzzah,<sup>b</sup> to this day. <sup>9</sup> David was afraid of the LORD that day; he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come into my care?" <sup>10</sup> So David was unwilling to take the ark of the LORD into his care in the city of David; instead David took it to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. <sup>11</sup> The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months; and the LORD blessed Obed-edom and all his household.

12 It was told King David, "The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God." So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing; <sup>13</sup> and when those who bore the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. <sup>14</sup> David danced before the LORD with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod. <sup>15</sup> So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

16 As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.

17 They brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being before the LORD. <sup>18</sup> When David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts, <sup>19</sup> and distributed food among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, to each a cake of bread, a portion of meat,<sup>c</sup> and a cake of raisins. Then all the people went back to their homes.

20 David returned to bless his household. But Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, "How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants' maids, as any vulgar fellow might shamelessly uncover himself!" <sup>21</sup> David said to Michal, "It was before the LORD, who chose me in place of your father and all his household, to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the LORD, that I have danced before the LORD. <sup>22</sup> I

<sup>a</sup> 1 Chr 13.10 Compare Q Ms: Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>b</sup> That is *Bursting Out Against Uzzah*

<sup>c</sup> Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased in my own eyes; but by the maids of whom you have

spoken, by them I shall be held in honor.”  
<sup>23</sup> And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.

### Read 2 Samuel 7

This passage has two parts. David receives a message through Nathan, the prophet, that the Lord intends to establish his throne forever. David responds to the message with a prayer in which he tells the Lord that he will continue to trust in the vision he has heard from the Lord.

**Reflect:** The task of faith involves two steps. The first is to hear and understand God’s call in our life. The second is to place our will at the service of God’s call.

**Pray:** Use David’s words: “May it please you to bless the house of your servant, so that it may continue forever before you; for you, O Lord GOD, have spoken, and with your blessing shall the house of your servant be blessed forever.”

**Act:** Write a letter to God. Thank him for his revelation to you in your faith journey.

### God’s Covenant with David

**7** Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, <sup>2</sup> the king said to the prophet Nathan, “See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.” <sup>3</sup> Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you.”

<sup>4</sup> But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: <sup>5</sup> Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? <sup>6</sup> I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. <sup>7</sup> Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders<sup>a</sup> of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?” <sup>8</sup> Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; <sup>9</sup> and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. <sup>10</sup> And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, <sup>11</sup> from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. <sup>12</sup> When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup> He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. <sup>14</sup> I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings. <sup>15</sup> But I will not take<sup>b</sup> my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. <sup>16</sup> Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me;<sup>c</sup> your throne shall be established forever. <sup>17</sup> In accordance with all these words and with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

<sup>a</sup> Or any of the tribes

<sup>b</sup> Gk Syr Vg 1 Chr 17.13: Heb shall not depart

<sup>c</sup> Gk Heb Mss: MT before you; Compare 2 Sam 7.26, 29

### David's Prayer

18 Then King David went in and sat before the LORD, and said, "Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? 19 And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord GOD; you have spoken also of your servant's house for a great while to come. May this be instruction for the people,<sup>a</sup> O Lord GOD! 20 And what more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Lord GOD! 21 Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have wrought all this greatness, so that your servant may know it. 22 Therefore you are great, O Lord GOD; for there is no one like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 23 Who is like your people, like Israel? Is there another<sup>b</sup> nation on earth whose God went to redeem it as a people, and to make a name for himself, doing great and awesome things for them,<sup>c</sup> by driving out<sup>d</sup> before his people nations and their gods?<sup>e</sup> 24 And you estab-

lished your people Israel for yourself to be your people forever; and you, O LORD, became their God. 25 And now, O LORD God, as for the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house, confirm it forever; do as you have promised. 26 Thus your name will be magnified forever in the saying, 'The LORD of hosts is God over Israel'; and the house of your servant David will be established before you. 27 For you, O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, have made this revelation to your servant, saying, 'I will build you a house'; therefore your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you. 28 And now, O Lord GOD, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant; 29 now therefore may it please you to bless the house of your servant, so that it may continue forever before you; for you, O Lord GOD, have spoken, and with your blessing shall the house of your servant be blessed forever."

### David's Wars

**8** Some time afterward, David attacked the Philistines and subdued them; David took Metheg-ammah out of the hand of the Philistines.

2 He also defeated the Moabites and, making them lie down on the ground, measured them off with a cord; he measured two lengths of cord for those who were to be put to death, and one length<sup>f</sup> for those who were to be spared. And the Moabites became servants to David and brought tribute.

3 David also struck down King Hadadezer son of Rehob of Zobah, as he went to restore his monument<sup>g</sup> at the river Euphrates. 4 David took from him one thousand seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand foot soldiers. David hamstringed all the chariot horses, but left enough for a hundred chariots. 5 When the Arameans of Damascus came to help King Hadadezer of Zobah, David killed twenty-two thousand men of the Arameans. 6 Then David put garrisons among the Arameans of Damascus; and the Arameans became servants to David and brought tribute. The LORD gave victory to David wherever he went. 7 David took the gold shields that were carried by the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. 8 From Betah and from Berothai, towns of Hadadezer, King David took a great amount of bronze.

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Gk: Heb *one*

<sup>c</sup> Heb *you*

<sup>d</sup> Gk 1 Chr 17:21: Heb *for your land*

<sup>e</sup> Cn: Heb *before your people, whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, nations and its gods*

<sup>f</sup> Heb *one full length*

<sup>g</sup> Compare 1 Sam 15:12 and 2 Sam 18:18

## Read 2 Samuel 8

This chapter serves to summarize neatly David's early warfare for the nation. In short, as verses 6 and 14 say: "The LORD gave victory to David wherever he went." The victories seem too great for almost any ruler. The point here is not to provide precise historical accuracy but to demonstrate David's divinely engineered success.

**Reflect:** David was picked by God to succeed, and that is what he did. Yet, in order to succeed, David had to trust God enough to do some pretty awful things. Just as wonderful as his divinely decreed success is David's constant faith.

**Pray:** Pray for divine guidance in all your undertakings, as did David.

**Act:** Remember in detail a time in your life when, but for God's guidance, you would have failed. Give thanks to God!

9 When King Toi of Hamath heard that David had defeated the whole army of Hadadezer, <sup>10</sup> Toi sent his son Joram to King David, to greet him and to congratulate him because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him. Now Hadadezer had often been at war with Toi. Joram brought with him articles of silver, gold, and bronze; <sup>11</sup> these also King David dedicated to the LORD, together with the silver and gold that he dedicated from all the nations he subdued, <sup>12</sup> from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, Amalek, and from the spoil of King Hadadezer son of Rehob of Zobah.

13 David won a name for himself. When he returned, he killed eighteen thousand Edomites<sup>a</sup> in the Valley of Salt. <sup>14</sup> He put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David's servants. And the LORD gave victory to David wherever he went.

### David's Officers

15 So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered justice and equity to all his people. <sup>16</sup> Joab son of Zeruiah was over the army; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder; <sup>17</sup> Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were priests; Seraiah was secretary; <sup>18</sup> Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over<sup>b</sup> the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were priests.

### David's Kindness to Mephibosheth

**9** David asked, "Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul to whom I may show kindness for Jonathan's sake?" <sup>2</sup> Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, and he was summoned to David. The king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" And he said, "At your service!" <sup>3</sup> The king said, "Is there anyone remaining of the house of Saul to whom I may show the kindness of God?" Ziba said to the king, "There remains a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in his feet." <sup>4</sup> The king said to him, "Where is he?" Ziba said to the king, "He is in the house of Machir son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar." <sup>5</sup> Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar. <sup>6</sup> Mephibosheth<sup>c</sup> son of Jonathan son of Saul came to David, and fell on his face and did obeisance. David said, "Mephibosheth!"<sup>c</sup> He answered, "I am your servant." <sup>7</sup> David said to him, "Do not be afraid, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan; I will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul, and you yourself shall eat at my table always." <sup>8</sup> He did obeisance and said, "What is your servant, that you should look upon a dead dog such as I?"

9 Then the king summoned Saul's servant Ziba, and

<sup>a</sup> Gk: Heb returned from striking down eighteen thousand Arameans

<sup>b</sup> Syr Tg Vg 20.23; 1 Chr 18.17: Heb lacks was over

<sup>c</sup> Or Merib-baal : See 4.4 note



## Read 2 Samuel 9

David remains faithful to his promise to his friend Jonathan that he will extend kindness to his family when he begins to rule all Israel. Mephibosheth is lame; this makes David's kindness seem even more gracious, because Mephibosheth is in no condition to combat David's aspirations for the throne.

**Reflect:** The theme of David's faithful nature is a major one in this part of his story. Can you see a "faithful nature" in yourself? What does such a nature involve?

**Pray:** O Lord, help me to realize how often your kindness has come into my life, and to show my gratitude by imitating you in my love of others.

**Act:** Review your kindnesses for the last week. What has it cost you to show kindness to others?

## Read 2 Samuel 10

There are three parts to this short story: first, the Ammonite insult to David's representatives; second, David's response to the mistreatment; third, the final disgrace of the Ammonites before Israel's army.

**Reflect:** David's kindness is met with a disgraceful rejection by the Ammonites and Hanun, their king. David responds strongly to the injustice. How in your life have you responded justly to injuries or injustices in your world?

**Pray:** Pray for people who are powerless, victims of oppression or mistreatment who have no one to stand up for them.

**Act:** Speak out against an injustice you are aware of in our world.

said to him, "All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master's grandson. <sup>10</sup> You and your sons and your servants shall till the land for him, and shall bring in the produce, so that your master's grandson may have food to eat; but your master's grandson Mephibosheth<sup>a</sup> shall always eat at my table." Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. <sup>11</sup> Then Ziba said to the king, "According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so your servant will do." Mephibosheth<sup>a</sup> ate at David's<sup>b</sup> table, like one of the king's sons. <sup>12</sup> Mephibosheth<sup>a</sup> had a young son whose name was Mica. And all who lived in Ziba's house became Mephibosheth's<sup>b</sup> servants. <sup>13</sup> Mephibosheth<sup>a</sup> lived in Jerusalem, for he always ate at the king's table. Now he was lame in both his feet.

## The Ammonites and Arameans Are Defeated

**10** Some time afterward, the king of the Ammonites died, and his son Hanun succeeded him. <sup>2</sup> David said, "I will deal loyally with Hanun son of Nahash, just as his father dealt loyally with me." So David sent envoys to console him concerning his father. When David's envoys came into the land of the Ammonites, <sup>3</sup> the princes of the Ammonites said to their lord Hanun, "Do you really think that David is honoring your father just because he has sent messengers with condolences to you? Has not David sent his envoys to you to search the city, to spy it out, and to overthrow it?" <sup>4</sup> So Hanun seized David's envoys, shaved off half the beard of each, cut off their garments in the middle at their hips, and sent them away. <sup>5</sup> When David was told, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly ashamed. The king said, "Remain at Jericho until your beards have grown, and then return."

<sup>6</sup> When the Ammonites saw that they had become odious to David, the Ammonites sent and hired the Arameans of Beth-rehob and the Arameans of Zobah, twenty thousand foot soldiers, as well as the king of Maacah, one thousand men, and the men of Tob, twelve thousand men. <sup>7</sup> When David heard of it, he sent Joab and all the army with the warriors. <sup>8</sup> The Ammonites came out and drew up in battle array at the entrance of the gate; but the Arameans of Zobah and of Rehob, and the men of Tob and Maacah, were by themselves in the open country.

<sup>9</sup> When Joab saw that the battle was set against him both in front and in the rear, he chose some of the picked men of Israel, and arrayed them against the Arameans; <sup>10</sup> the rest of his men he put in the charge of his brother Abishai, and he arrayed them against the Ammonites. <sup>11</sup> He said, "If the Arameans are too strong

<sup>a</sup> Or Merib-baal : See 4.4 note

<sup>b</sup> Gk: Heb my

<sup>c</sup> Or Merib-baal's : See 4.4 note

for me, then you shall help me; but if the Ammonites are too strong for you, then I will come and help you. <sup>12</sup> Be strong, and let us be courageous for the sake of our people, and for the cities of our God; and may the LORD do what seems good to him.”

<sup>13</sup> So Joab and the people who were with him moved forward into battle against the Arameans; and they fled before him. <sup>14</sup> When the Ammonites saw that the Arameans fled, they likewise fled before Abishai, and entered the city. Then Joab returned from fighting against the Ammonites, and came to Jerusalem.

<sup>15</sup> But when the Arameans saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they gathered themselves together. <sup>16</sup> Hadadazer sent and brought out the Arameans who

were beyond the Euphrates; and they came to Helam, with Shobach the commander of the army of Hadadazer at their head. <sup>17</sup> When it was told David, he gathered all Israel together, and crossed the Jordan, and came to Helam. The Arameans arrayed themselves against David and fought with him. <sup>18</sup> The Arameans fled before Israel; and David killed of the Arameans seven hundred chariot teams, and forty thousand horsemen,<sup>a</sup> and wounded Shobach the commander of their army, so that he died there. <sup>19</sup> When all the kings who were servants of Hadadazer saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel, and became subject to them. So the Arameans were afraid to help the Ammonites any more.

### David Commits Adultery with Bathsheba

**1** In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. <sup>3</sup> David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, “This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.” <sup>4</sup> So David sent messengers to get her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. <sup>5</sup> The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, “I am pregnant.”

<sup>6</sup> So David sent word to Joab, “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” And Joab sent Uriah to David. <sup>7</sup> When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared, and how the war was going. <sup>8</sup> Then David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house, and wash your feet.” Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. <sup>9</sup> But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. <sup>10</sup> When they told David, “Uriah did not go down to his house,” David said to Uriah, “You have just come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?” <sup>11</sup> Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths;<sup>b</sup> and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord

<sup>a</sup> 1 Chr 19.18 and some Gk Mss read *foot soldiers*

<sup>b</sup> Or at *Succoth*

## Read 2 Samuel 11

This story is pivotal in the larger story of King David. Until now we have seen David as the recipient of God's generous blessings; in this story, however, David reaches out to take what God did not give him—Bathsheba, another man's wife. David complicates his sin by also arranging rather delicately the murder of Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, an innocent and loyal soldier of David.

**Reflect:** In spite of God's generosity to David, the king could still want more than God gives. David sins, and there are consequences. The closing words read: "But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD."

**Pray:** Using the words of Psalm 51:12, "Restore to me joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit." ask God's forgiveness for the times you have sinned.

**Act:** Recall an experience of sin and forgiveness in your life. If it seems appropriate, seek the sacrament of reconciliation.

are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing." <sup>12</sup> Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. On the next day, <sup>13</sup> David invited him to eat and drink in his presence and made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

## David Has Uriah Killed

<sup>14</sup> In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. <sup>15</sup> In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die." <sup>16</sup> As Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant warriors. <sup>17</sup> The men of the city came out and fought with Joab; and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite was killed as well. <sup>18</sup> Then Joab sent and told David all the news about the fighting; <sup>19</sup> and he instructed the messenger, "When you have finished telling the king all the news about the fighting, <sup>20</sup> then, if the king's anger rises, and if he says to you, 'Why did you go so near the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall?' <sup>21</sup> Who killed Abimelech son of Jerubbaal?<sup>a</sup> Did not a woman throw an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?' then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead too.'"

<sup>22</sup> So the messenger went, and came and told David all that Joab had sent him to tell. <sup>23</sup> The messenger said to David, "The men gained an advantage over us, and came out against us in the field; but we drove them back to the entrance of the gate. <sup>24</sup> Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall; some of the king's servants are dead; and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also." <sup>25</sup> David said to the messenger, "Thus you shall say to Joab, 'Do not let this matter trouble you, for the sword devours now one and now another; press your attack on the city, and overthrow it.' And encourage him."

<sup>26</sup> When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. <sup>27</sup> When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son.

<sup>a</sup> Gk Syr Judg 7.1: Heb *Jerubbesheth*

## Read 2 Samuel 12

Nathan, a prophet who advises David, must perform the difficult task of speaking truth to power. Nathan need not fear, because everyone is ultimately answerable to the Lord, who is all-powerful. Nathan delivers the condemnation of David's sin as well as God's acceptance of David's repentance. David's victory over the Ammonites is an outward sign of God's forgiveness. Sin, however, has consequences. David's child dies.

**Reflect:** Sin has consequences in David's life. The king is moved to repentance, but he must endure the sorrow that is one of the consequences of sin. How have you experienced the consequences of sin in your life?

**Pray:** Pray with the psalmist: "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me."

**Act:** Remember and give thanks for those who spoke words of correction at various times in your life.

## Nathan Condemns David

**12** But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD, <sup>1</sup> and the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. <sup>2</sup> The rich man had very many flocks and herds; <sup>3</sup> but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. <sup>4</sup> Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him." <sup>5</sup> Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; <sup>6</sup> he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

<sup>7</sup> Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; <sup>8</sup> I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. <sup>9</sup> Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. <sup>10</sup> Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. <sup>11</sup> Thus says the LORD: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. <sup>12</sup> For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun." <sup>13</sup> David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan said to David, "Now the LORD has put away your sin; you shall not die. <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD,<sup>a</sup> the child that is born to you shall die." <sup>15</sup> Then Nathan went to his house.

## Bathsheba's Child Dies

The LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it became very ill. <sup>16</sup> David therefore pleaded with God for the child; David fasted, and went in and lay all night on the ground. <sup>17</sup> The elders of his house stood beside him, urging him to rise from the ground; but he would not, nor did he eat food with them. <sup>18</sup> On

<sup>a</sup> Ancient scribal tradition: Compare 1 Sam 25.22 note: Heb *scorned the enemies of the LORD*

the seventh day the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead; for they said, "While the child was still alive, we spoke to him, and he did not listen to us; how then can we tell him the child is dead? He may do himself some harm." <sup>19</sup> But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, he perceived that the child was dead; and David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" They said, "He is dead."

<sup>20</sup> Then David rose from the ground, washed, anointed himself, and changed his clothes. He went into the house of the LORD, and worshiped; he then went to his own house; and when he asked, they set food before him and he ate. <sup>21</sup> Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while it was alive; but when the child died, you rose and ate food." <sup>22</sup> He said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me, and the child may live.' <sup>23</sup> But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."

### Solomon Is Born

<sup>12</sup> Then David consoled his wife Bath-

sheba, and went to her, and lay with her; and she bore a son, and he named him Solomon. The LORD loved him, <sup>25</sup> and sent a message by the prophet Nathan; so he named him Jedidiah,<sup>a</sup> because of the LORD.

### The Ammonites Crushed

<sup>26</sup> Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the Ammonites, and took the royal city. <sup>27</sup> Joab sent messengers to David, and said, "I have fought against Rabbah; moreover, I have taken the water city. <sup>28</sup> Now, then, gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city, and take it; or I myself will take the city, and it will be called by my name." <sup>29</sup> So David gathered all the people together and went to Rabbah, and fought against it and took it. <sup>30</sup> He took the crown of Milcom<sup>b</sup> from his head; the weight of it was a talent of gold, and in it was a precious stone; and it was placed on David's head. He also brought forth the spoil of the city, a very great amount. <sup>31</sup> He brought out the people who were in it, and set them to work with saws and iron picks and iron axes, or sent them to the brick-works. Thus he did to all the cities of the Ammonites. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

### Amnon and Tamar

**13** Some time passed. David's son Absalom had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar; and David's son Amnon fell in love with her. <sup>2</sup> Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her. <sup>3</sup> But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shimeah; and Jonadab was a very crafty man. <sup>4</sup> He said to him, "O son of the king, why are you so haggard morning after morning? Will you not tell me?" Amnon said to him, "I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister." <sup>5</sup> Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed, and pretend to be ill; and when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Let my sister Tamar come and give me something to eat, and prepare the food in my sight, so that I may see it and eat it from her hand.'" <sup>6</sup> So Amnon lay down, and pretended to be ill; and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let my sister Tamar come and make a

<sup>a</sup> That is *Beloved of the LORD*

<sup>b</sup> Gk See 1 Kings 11.5, 33; Heb *their kings*

### Read 2 Samuel 13:1–22

This story continues the working out of Nathan's prophetic words about the sword never departing from David's house. His oldest son, Amnon, will commit a base sin with Tamar, his half-sister. Her brother Absalom must bide his time for revenge.

**Reflect:** David must endure seeing his sin affect the lives of those he loves. How has sin affected the lives of those you love?

**Pray:** Ask God in prayer for forgiveness for the effects of your sinfulness in the lives of others.

**Act:** Recall those whom you have affected by sin in your life.

### Read 2 Samuel 13:23–39

Absalom must wait for two years to carry out his revenge on Amnon. Very cleverly he plans the event, and with the cooperation of others he is able to carry out his revenge. David will suffer the sinfulness of those he loves yet again.

**Reflect:** Absalom is consumed by hatred for his half-brother, Amnon. Hatred is a powerful force when we surrender to it. Hatred alienates Absalom from all whom he has loved up to this time in his life.

**Pray:** Lord, preserve me from the power of hatred in my life. Show me the path to righteousness.

**Act:** Recall any moments in your life when hatred seemed a temptation for you. How did you respond?

couple of cakes in my sight, so that I may eat from her hand.”

7 Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, “Go to your brother Amnon’s house, and prepare food for him.”<sup>8</sup> So Tamar went to her brother Amnon’s house, where he was lying down. She took dough, kneaded it, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes.<sup>9</sup> Then she took the pan and set them<sup>a</sup> out before him, but he refused to eat. Amnon said, “Send out everyone from me.” So everyone went out from him.<sup>10</sup> Then Amnon said to Tamar, “Bring the food into the chamber, so that I may eat from your hand.” So Tamar took the cakes she had made, and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother.<sup>11</sup> But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her, and said to her, “Come, lie with me, my sister.”<sup>12</sup> She answered him, “No, my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do anything so vile!”<sup>13</sup> As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the scoundrels in Israel. Now therefore, I beg you, speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you.”<sup>14</sup> But he would not listen to her; and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her.

15 Then Amnon was seized with a very great loathing for her; indeed, his loathing was even greater than the lust he had felt for her. Amnon said to her, “Get out!”<sup>16</sup> But she said to him, “No, my brother;<sup>b</sup> for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you did to me.” But he would not listen to her.<sup>17</sup> He called the young man who served him and said, “Put this woman out of my presence, and bolt the door after her.”<sup>18</sup> (Now she was wearing a long robe with sleeves; for this is how the virgin daughters of the king were clothed in earlier times.<sup>c</sup>) So his servant put her out, and bolted the door after her.<sup>19</sup> But Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore the long robe that she was wearing; she put her hand on her head, and went away, crying aloud as she went.

20 Her brother Absalom said to her, “Has Amnon your brother been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother; do not take this to heart.” So Tamar remained, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom’s house.<sup>21</sup> When King David heard of all these things, he became very angry, but he would not punish his son Amnon, because he loved him, for he was his firstborn.<sup>d</sup><sup>22</sup> But Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor bad; for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had raped his sister Tamar.

### Absalom Avenges the Violation of His Sister

23 After two full years Absalom had sheepshearers

<sup>a</sup> Heb and poured

<sup>b</sup> Cn Compare Gk Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>c</sup> Cn: Heb were clothed in robes

<sup>d</sup> Q Ms Gk: MT lacks but he would not punish...firstborn



at Baal-hazor, which is near Ephraim, and Absalom invited all the king's sons. <sup>24</sup> Absalom came to the king, and said, "Your servant has sheepshearers; will the king and his servants please go with your servant?" <sup>25</sup> But the king said to Absalom, "No, my son, let us not all go, or else we will be burdensome to you." He pressed him, but he would not go but gave him his blessing. <sup>26</sup> Then Absalom said, "If not, please let my brother Amnon go with us." The king said to him, "Why should he go with you?" <sup>27</sup> But Absalom pressed him until he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him. Absalom made a feast like a king's feast.<sup>a</sup> <sup>28</sup> Then Absalom commanded his servants, "Watch when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, 'Strike Amnon,' then kill him. Do not be afraid; have I not myself commanded you? Be courageous and valiant." <sup>29</sup> So the servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons rose, and each mounted his mule and fled.

<sup>30</sup> While they were on the way, the report came to David that Absalom had killed all the king's sons, and not one of them was left. <sup>31</sup> The king rose, tore his

garments, and lay on the ground; and all his servants who were standing by tore their garments. <sup>32</sup> But Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shimeah, said, "Let not my lord suppose that they have killed all the young men the king's sons; Amnon alone is dead. This has been determined by Absalom from the day Amnon<sup>b</sup> raped his sister Tamar. <sup>33</sup> Now therefore, do not let my lord the king take it to heart, as if all the king's sons were dead; for Amnon alone is dead."

<sup>34</sup> But Absalom fled. When the young man who kept watch looked up, he saw many people coming from the Horonaim road<sup>c</sup> by the side of the mountain. <sup>35</sup> Jonadab said to the king, "See, the king's sons have come; as your servant said, so it has come about." <sup>36</sup> As soon as he had finished speaking, the king's sons arrived, and raised their voices and wept; and the king and all his servants also wept very bitterly.

<sup>37</sup> But Absalom fled, and went to Talmi son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. David mourned for his son day after day. <sup>38</sup> Absalom, having fled to Geshur, stayed there three years. <sup>39</sup> And the heart of<sup>d</sup> the king went out, yearning for Absalom; for he was now consoled over the death of Amnon.

### Absalom Returns to Jerusalem

**14** Now Joab son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's mind was on Absalom. <sup>2</sup> Joab sent to Tekoa and brought from there a wise woman. He said to her, "Pretend to be a mourner; put on mourning garments, do not anoint yourself with oil, but behave like a woman who has been mourning many days for the dead. <sup>3</sup> Go to the king and speak to him as follows." And Joab put the words into her mouth.

<sup>4</sup> When the woman of Tekoa came to the king, she fell on her face to the ground and did obeisance, and said, "Help, O king!" <sup>5</sup> The king asked her, "What is your trouble?" She answered, "Alas, I am a widow; my husband is dead. <sup>6</sup> Your servant had two sons, and they fought with one another in the field; there was no one to part them, and one struck the other and killed him. <sup>7</sup> Now the whole family has risen against your servant. They say, 'Give up the man who struck his brother, so that we may kill him for the life of his brother whom he murdered, even if we destroy the heir as well.' Thus

<sup>a</sup> Gk Compare Q Ms: MT lacks *Absalom made a feast like a king's feast*

<sup>b</sup> Heb *he*

<sup>c</sup> Cn Compare Gk: Heb *the road behind him*

<sup>d</sup> Q Ms Gk: MT *And David*

## Read 2 Samuel 14

David learns the painful lesson of forgiveness. The woman of Tekoa, like Nathan, will speak truth to power. Her story causes David to see how he has been treating Absalom wrongly. Absalom longs for forgiveness for his own reasons and David tortures himself and Absalom by withholding that forgiveness. Finally both parties will come to an uneasy peace.

**Reflect:** David learns that forgiveness is a costly enterprise. He must surrender his anger and only then can there be any hope for peace. How has God shown this truth to you in your experience?

**Pray:** Slowly repeat the words: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

**Act:** Think about someone whom you had or are having trouble forgiving. What does forgiveness cost?

they would quench my one remaining ember, and leave to my husband neither name nor remnant on the face of the earth."

8 Then the king said to the woman, "Go to your house, and I will give orders concerning you." 9 The woman of Tekoa said to the king, "On me be the guilt, my lord the king, and on my father's house; let the king and his throne be guiltless." 10 The king said, "If anyone says anything to you, bring him to me, and he shall never touch you again." 11 Then she said, "Please, may the king keep the LORD your God in mind, so that the avenger of blood may kill no more, and my son not be destroyed." He said, "As the LORD lives, not one hair of your son shall fall to the ground."

12 Then the woman said, "Please let your servant speak a word to my lord the king." He said, "Speak." 13 The woman said, "Why then have you planned such a thing against the people of God? For in giving this decision the king convicts himself, inasmuch as the king does not bring his banished one home again. 14 We must all die; we are like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up. But God will not take away a life; he will devise plans so as not to keep an outcast banished forever from his presence.<sup>a</sup> 15 Now I have come to say this to my lord the king because the people have made me afraid; your servant thought, 'I will speak to the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his servant. 16 For the king will hear, and deliver his servant from the hand of the man who would cut both me and my son off from the heritage of God.' 17 Your servant thought, 'The word of my lord the king will set me at rest'; for my lord the king is like the angel of God, discerning good and evil. The LORD your God be with you!"

18 Then the king answered the woman, "Do not withhold from me anything I ask you." The woman said, "Let my lord the king speak." 19 The king said, "Is the hand of Joab with you in all this?" The woman answered and said, "As surely as you live, my lord the king, one cannot turn right or left from anything that my lord the king has said. For it was your servant Joab who commanded me; it was he who put all these words into the mouth of your servant. 20 In order to change the course of affairs your servant Joab did this. But my lord has wisdom like the wisdom of the angel of God to know all things that are on the earth."

21 Then the king said to Joab, "Very well, I grant this; go, bring back the young man Absalom." 22 Joab prostrated himself with his face to the ground and did obeisance, and blessed the king; and Joab said, "Today your servant knows that I have found favor in your

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

sight, my lord the king, in that the king has granted the request of his servant.”<sup>23</sup> So Joab set off, went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem.<sup>24</sup> The king said, “Let him go to his own house; he is not to come into my presence.” So Absalom went to his own house, and did not come into the king’s presence.

### David Forgives Absalom

25 Now in all Israel there was no one to be praised so much for his beauty as Absalom; from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.<sup>26</sup> When he cut the hair of his head (for at the end of every year he used to cut it; when it was heavy on him, he cut it), he weighed the hair of his head, two hundred shekels by the king’s weight.<sup>27</sup> There were born to Absalom three sons, and one daughter whose name was Tamar; she was a beautiful woman.

28 So Absalom lived two full years in

Jerusalem, without coming into the king’s presence.<sup>29</sup> Then Absalom sent for Joab to send him to the king; but Joab would not come to him. He sent a second time, but Joab would not come.<sup>30</sup> Then he said to his servants, “Look, Joab’s field is next to mine, and he has barley there; go and set it on fire.” So Absalom’s servants set the field on fire.<sup>31</sup> Then Joab rose and went to Absalom at his house, and said to him, “Why have your servants set my field on fire?”<sup>32</sup> Absalom answered Joab, “Look, I sent word to you: Come here, that I may send you to the king with the question, ‘Why have I come from Geshur? It would be better for me to be there still.’ Now let me go into the king’s presence; if there is guilt in me, let him kill me!”<sup>33</sup> Then Joab went to the king and told him; and he summoned Absalom. So he came to the king and prostrated himself with his face to the ground before the king; and the king kissed Absalom.

### Absalom Usurps the Throne

**15** After this Absalom got himself a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run ahead of him.<sup>2</sup> Absalom used to rise early and stand beside the road into the gate; and when anyone brought a suit before the king for judgment, Absalom would call out and say, “From what city are you?” When the person said, “Your servant is of such and such a tribe in Israel,”<sup>3</sup> Absalom would say, “See, your claims are good and right; but there is no one deputed by the king to hear you.”<sup>4</sup> Absalom said moreover, “If only I were judge in the land! Then all who had a suit or cause might come to me, and I would give them justice.”<sup>5</sup> Whenever people came near to do obeisance to him, he would put out his hand and take hold of them, and kiss them.<sup>6</sup> Thus Absalom did to every Israelite who came to the king for judgment; so Absalom stole the hearts of the people of Israel.

7 At the end of four<sup>a</sup> years Absalom said to the king, “Please let me go to Hebron and pay the vow that I have made to the LORD.<sup>8</sup> For your servant made a vow while I lived at Geshur in Aram: If the LORD will indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will worship the LORD in Hebron.”<sup>9</sup> The king said to him, “Go in peace.” So he got up, and went to Hebron.<sup>10</sup> But Absalom sent secret messengers throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, “As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then

<sup>a</sup> Gk Syr: Heb forty

<sup>b</sup> Gk Mss: Heb lacks in Hebron

## Read 2 Samuel 15

This chapter has two stories in it. The first story tells of Absalom's plot to take his father's crown. The second story tells of David's narrow escape from his son. The size of the procession seems very large, yet through it we get a glimpse of David's loving-care for each person who gives him their loyalty.

**Reflect:** The contrast between Absalom's stilted concern for the people and David's genuine care for his people puts a question before us. How genuinely do we pursue our relationships with others? Are our motives in loving others always what we would be happy to acknowledge?

**Pray:** Ask the Lord in prayer to help you to purify your motives in the important relationships in your life.

**Act:** Take time to consider deeply one important relationship in your life. How do you express your genuine love for that person?

shout: Absalom has become king at Hebron!" <sup>11</sup> Two hundred men from Jerusalem went with Absalom; they were invited guests, and they went in their innocence, knowing nothing of the matter. <sup>12</sup> While Absalom was offering the sacrifices, he sent for<sup>a</sup> Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city Giloh. The conspiracy grew in strength, and the people with Absalom kept increasing.

### David Flees from Jerusalem

13 A messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the Israelites have gone after Absalom." <sup>14</sup> Then David said to all his officials who were with him at Jerusalem, "Get up! Let us flee, or there will be no escape for us from Absalom. Hurry, or he will soon overtake us, and bring disaster down upon us, and attack the city with the edge of the sword." <sup>15</sup> The king's officials said to the king, "Your servants are ready to do whatever our lord the king decides." <sup>16</sup> So the king left, followed by all his household, except ten concubines whom he left behind to look after the house. <sup>17</sup> The king left, followed by all the people; and they stopped at the last house. <sup>18</sup> All his officials passed by him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the six hundred Gittites who had followed him from Gath, passed on before the king.

19 Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why are you also coming with us? Go back, and stay with the king; for you are a foreigner, and also an exile from your home. <sup>20</sup> You came only yesterday, and shall I today make you wander about with us, while I go wherever I can? Go back, and take your kinsfolk with you; and may the LORD show<sup>b</sup> steadfast love and faithfulness to you." <sup>21</sup> But Ittai answered the king, "As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether for death or for life, there also your servant will be." <sup>22</sup> David said to Ittai, "Go then, march on." So Ittai the Gittite marched on, with all his men and all the little ones who were with him. <sup>23</sup> The whole country wept aloud as all the people passed by; the king crossed the Wadi Kidron, and all the people moved on toward the wilderness.

24 Abiathar came up, and Zadok also, with all the Levites, carrying the ark of the covenant of God. They set down the ark of God, until the people had all passed out of the city. <sup>25</sup> Then the king said to Zadok, "Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me back and let me see both it and the place where it stays. <sup>26</sup> But if he says, 'I take no pleasure in you,' here I am, let him do to me what seems good to him." <sup>27</sup> The king also said to the priest Zadok, "Look,<sup>c</sup> go back to the city in peace, you

<sup>a</sup> Or *he sent*

<sup>b</sup> Gk Compare 2.6: Heb lacks *may the LORD show*

<sup>c</sup> Gk: Heb [Are you a seer] or *Do you see?*

and Abiathar,<sup>a</sup> with your two sons, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan son of Abiathar. <sup>28</sup> See, I will wait at the fords of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me.” <sup>29</sup> So Zadok and Abiathar carried the ark of God back to Jerusalem, and they remained there.

<sup>30</sup> But David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, with his head covered and walking barefoot; and all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went. <sup>31</sup> David was told that Ahithophel was among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, “O LORD, I pray you, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.”

### Hushai Becomes David's Spy

<sup>32</sup> When David came to the summit,

where God was worshiped, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat torn and earth on his head. <sup>33</sup> David said to him, “If you go on with me, you will be a burden to me. <sup>34</sup> But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, ‘I will be your servant, O king; as I have been your father’s servant in time past, so now I will be your servant,’ then you will defeat for me the counsel of Ahithophel. <sup>35</sup> The priests Zadok and Abiathar will be with you there. So whatever you hear from the king’s house, tell it to the priests Zadok and Abiathar. <sup>36</sup> Their two sons are with them there, Zadok’s son Ahimaaz and Abiathar’s son Jonathan; and by them you shall report to me everything you hear.” <sup>37</sup> So Hushai, David’s friend, came into the city, just as Absalom was entering Jerusalem.

### Read 2 Samuel 16

As David flees Jerusalem he meets two people, both of whom are related to Saul’s reign. Ziba, who cares for Saul’s crippled son, befriends David with supplies for his journey. Shimei, a relative of Saul, curses David as he walks his somber path. Absalom arrives at Jerusalem and demonstrates his poor judgment.

**Reflect:** David must judge wisely who his friends are and who his enemies are. He is wise and listens. Absalom rashly will follow poor counsel to behave immorally with his father’s women. The contrast is between one who listens for God’s guidance and one who doesn’t.

**Pray:** Lord, often enough in my life I need to listen for your guidance. Help me to pray with all that is in me that I may surrender to your will in my life.

**Act:** In your prayer journal write down a remembrance of a time when you wish you had listened for God’s guidance more carefully.

### David's Adversaries

**16** When David had passed a little beyond the summit, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth<sup>b</sup> met him, with a couple of donkeys saddled, carrying two hundred loaves of bread, one hundred bunches of raisins, one hundred of summer fruits, and one skin of wine. <sup>2</sup> The king said to Ziba, “Why have you brought these?” Ziba answered, “The donkeys are for the king’s household to ride, the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine is for those to drink who faint in the wilderness.” <sup>3</sup> The king said, “And where is your master’s son?” Ziba said to the king, “He remains in Jerusalem; for he said, ‘Today the house of Israel will give me back my grandfather’s kingdom.’” <sup>4</sup> Then the king said to Ziba, “All that belonged to Mephibosheth<sup>b</sup> is now yours.” Ziba said, “I do obeisance; let me find favor in your sight, my lord the king.”

### Shimei Curses David

<sup>5</sup> When King David came to Bahurim, a man of the family of the house of Saul came out whose name was Shimei son of Gera; he came out cursing. <sup>6</sup> He threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David; now all the people and all the warriors were on his right and on his left. <sup>7</sup> Shimei shouted while he cursed, “Out! Out! Murderer! Scoundrel!” <sup>8</sup> The LORD has avenged on all of you the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the LORD has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. See, disaster has overtaken you; for you are a man of blood.”

<sup>a</sup> Cn: Heb lacks *and Abiathar*

<sup>b</sup> Or *Merib-baal*: See 4.4 note

9 Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head.”<sup>10</sup> But the king said, “What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the LORD has said to him, ‘Curse David,’ who then shall say, ‘Why have you done so?’”<sup>11</sup> David said to Abishai and to all his servants, “My own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjaminite! Let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD has bidden him.<sup>12</sup> It may be that the LORD will look on my distress,<sup>a</sup> and the LORD will repay me with good for this cursing of me today.”<sup>13</sup> So David and his men went on the road, while Shimei went along on the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went, throwing stones and flinging dust at him.<sup>14</sup> The king and all the people who were with him arrived weary at the Jordan;<sup>b</sup> and there he refreshed himself.

### The Counsel of Ahithophel

15 Now Absalom and all the Israelites<sup>c</sup> came to Jerusalem; Ahithophel was with him.<sup>16</sup> When Hushai the Archite, David’s

friend, came to Absalom, Hushai said to Absalom, “Long live the king! Long live the king!”<sup>17</sup> Absalom said to Hushai, “Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?”<sup>18</sup> Hushai said to Absalom, “No; but the one whom the LORD and this people and all the Israelites have chosen, his I will be, and with him I will remain.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, whom should I serve? Should it not be his son? Just as I have served your father, so I will serve you.”

20 Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, “Give us your counsel; what shall we do?”<sup>21</sup> Ahithophel said to Absalom, “Go in to your father’s concubines, the ones he has left to look after the house; and all Israel will hear that you have made yourself odious to your father, and the hands of all who are with you will be strengthened.”<sup>22</sup> So they pitched a tent for Absalom upon the roof; and Absalom went in to his father’s concubines in the sight of all Israel.<sup>23</sup> Now in those days the counsel that Ahithophel gave was as if one consulted the oracle<sup>d</sup> of God; so all the counsel of Ahithophel was esteemed, both by David and by Absalom.

**17** Moreover Ahithophel said to Absalom, “Let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will set out and pursue David tonight.<sup>2</sup> I will come upon him while he is weary and discouraged, and throw him into a panic; and all the people who are with him will flee. I will strike down only the king,<sup>3</sup> and I will bring all the people back to you as a bride comes home to her husband. You seek the life of only one man,<sup>e</sup> and all the people will be at peace.”<sup>4</sup> The advice pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

### The Counsel of Hushai

5 Then Absalom said, “Call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear too what he has to say.”<sup>6</sup> When Hushai came to Absalom, Absalom said to him, “This is what Ahithophel has said; shall we do as he advises? If not, you tell us.”<sup>7</sup> Then Hushai said to Absalom, “This time the counsel that Ahithophel has given is not good.”<sup>8</sup> Hushai continued, “You know that your father and his men are warriors, and that they are enraged, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field. Besides, your father is expert in war; he will not spend the night with the troops.<sup>9</sup> Even now he has hidden himself in one of the

<sup>a</sup> Gk Vg: Heb *iniquity*

<sup>b</sup> Gk: Heb lacks *at the Jordan*

<sup>c</sup> Gk: Heb *all the people, the men of Israel*

<sup>d</sup> Heb *word*

<sup>e</sup> Gk: Heb *like the return of the whole (is) the man whom you seek*



## Read 2 Samuel 17

Absalom must now act like a king. He is presented with conflicting advice from two counselors. He is oblivious of the fact that God is plotting against him by providing him with poor counsel. David meanwhile enjoys the fruits of his friendships as he and those with him are aided while hiding out from Absalom.

**Reflect:** When has the guidance provided by others been helpful to me? How have I discerned God's will through my relationships with others?

**Pray:** Pray for the relationships in your life that have helped you most. Thank God for bringing good people into your life.

**Act:** Consider what issues, if any, you would like to seek advice about now. To whom would you want to go?

pits, or in some other place. And when some of our troops<sup>a</sup> fall at the first attack, whoever hears it will say, 'There has been a slaughter among the troops who follow Absalom.'<sup>10</sup> Then even the valiant warrior, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will utterly melt with fear; for all Israel knows that your father is a warrior, and that those who are with him are valiant warriors.<sup>11</sup> But my counsel is that all Israel be gathered to you, from Dan to Beer-sheba, like the sand by the sea for multitude, and that you go to battle in person.<sup>12</sup> So we shall come upon him in whatever place he may be found, and we shall light on him as the dew falls on the ground; and he will not survive, nor will any of those with him.<sup>13</sup> If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we shall drag it into the valley, until not even a pebble is to be found there."<sup>14</sup> Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel." For the LORD had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring ruin on Absalom.

## Hushai Warns David to Escape

15 Then Hushai said to the priests Zadok and Abiathar, "Thus and so did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel; and thus and so I have counseled.<sup>16</sup> Therefore send quickly and tell David, 'Do not lodge tonight at the fords of the wilderness, but by all means cross over; otherwise the king and all the people who are with him will be swallowed up.'"<sup>17</sup> Jonathan and Ahimaaz were waiting at En-rogel; a servant-girl used to go and tell them, and they would go and tell King David; for they could not risk being seen entering the city.<sup>18</sup> But a boy saw them, and told Absalom; so both of them went away quickly, and came to the house of a man at Bahurim, who had a well in his courtyard; and they went down into it.<sup>19</sup> The man's wife took a covering, stretched it over the well's mouth, and spread out grain on it; and nothing was known of it.<sup>20</sup> When Absalom's servants came to the woman at the house, they said, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" The woman said to them, "They have crossed over the brook<sup>b</sup> of water." And when they had searched and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem.

21 After they had gone, the men came up out of the well, and went and told King David. They said to David, "Go and cross the water quickly; for thus and so has Ahithophel counseled against you."<sup>22</sup> So David and all the people who were with him set out and crossed the Jordan; by daybreak not one was left who had not crossed the Jordan.

<sup>a</sup> Gk Mss: Heb *some of them*

<sup>b</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

23 When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey and went off home to his own city. He set his house in order, and hanged himself; he died and was buried in the tomb of his father.

24 Then David came to Mahanaim, while Absalom crossed the Jordan with all the men of Israel. <sup>25</sup> Now Absalom had set Amasa over the army in the place of Joab. Amasa was the son of a man named Ithra the Ishmaelite,<sup>a</sup> who had married Abigail daughter of Nahash, sister of Zeruiah,

Joab's mother. <sup>26</sup> The Israelites and Absalom encamped in the land of Gilead.

27 When David came to Mahanaim, Shobi son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Ammonites, and Machir son of Ammiel from Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim, <sup>28</sup> brought beds, basins, and earthen vessels, wheat, barley, meal, parched grain, beans and lentils,<sup>b</sup> <sup>29</sup> honey and curds, sheep, and cheese from the herd, for David and the people with him to eat; for they said, "The troops are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness."

### Read 2 Samuel 18

As in a long film, we now come to the climactic scenes of this heartbreaking story. David's army and Absalom's fighters finally meet in battle. Absalom finds himself in a defenseless position and is murdered brutally by Joab, David's general, who has been ordered not to harm Absalom. Joab is treacherous enough to try to hide from Absalom's father the bad news of what he has done.

**Reflect:** Even as David tries to bring healing to this situation, he is undone by disloyalty from those he trusts. David has seen his sin bring forth pain for him. Our sinfulness can and does bring pain into our lives.

**Pray:** Lord, give me the grace to acknowledge that my sins fill me with sorrow.

**Act:** How might you bring healing to the pain you have caused others or carry in yourself?

### The Defeat and Death of Absalom

**18** Then David mustered the men who were with him, and set over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds. <sup>2</sup> And David divided the army into three groups:<sup>c</sup> one third under the command of Joab, one third under the command of Abishai son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and one third under the command of Ittai the Gittite. The king said to the men, "I myself will also go out with you." <sup>3</sup> But the men said, "You shall not go out. For if we flee, they will not care about us. If half of us die, they will not care about us. But you are worth ten thousand of us;<sup>d</sup> therefore it is better that you send us help from the city." <sup>4</sup> The king said to them, "Whatever seems best to you I will do." So the king stood at the side of the gate, while all the army marched out by hundreds and by thousands. <sup>5</sup> The king ordered Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king gave orders to all the commanders concerning Absalom.

<sup>6</sup> So the army went out into the field against Israel; and the battle was fought in the forest of Ephraim. <sup>7</sup> The men of Israel were defeated there by the servants of David, and the slaughter there was great on that day, twenty thousand men. <sup>8</sup> The battle spread over the face of all the country; and the forest claimed more victims that day than the sword.

<sup>9</sup> Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak. His head caught fast in the oak, and he was left hanging<sup>e</sup> between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him went on. <sup>10</sup> A man saw it, and told Joab, "I saw Absalom hanging in an oak." <sup>11</sup> Joab said to the man who told him, "What, you saw him! Why then did you not strike him there to the ground? I would have been glad to give you ten

<sup>a</sup> 1 Chr 2.17: Heb *Israelite*

<sup>b</sup> Heb and *lentils and parched grain*

<sup>c</sup> Gk: Heb *sent forth the army*

<sup>d</sup> Gk Vg Symmachus: Heb *for now there are ten thousand such as we*

<sup>e</sup> Gk Syr Tg: Heb *was put*

pieces of silver and a belt.”<sup>12</sup> But the man said to Joab, “Even if I felt in my hand the weight of a thousand pieces of silver, I would not raise my hand against the king’s son; for in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, saying: For my sake protect the young man Absalom!”<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, if I had dealt treacherously against his life<sup>a</sup> (and there is nothing hidden from the king), then you yourself would have stood aloof.”<sup>14</sup> Joab said, “I will not waste time like this with you.” He took three spears in his hand, and thrust them into the heart of Absalom, while he was still alive in the oak.<sup>15</sup> And ten young men, Joab’s armor-bearers, surrounded Absalom and struck him, and killed him.

<sup>16</sup> Then Joab sounded the trumpet, and the troops came back from pursuing Israel, for Joab restrained the troops.<sup>17</sup> They took Absalom, threw him into a great pit in the forest, and raised over him a very great heap of stones. Meanwhile all the Israelites fled to their homes.<sup>18</sup> Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up for himself a pillar that is in the King’s Valley, for he said, “I have no son to keep my name in remembrance”; he called the pillar by his own name. It is called Absalom’s Monument to this day.

### David Hears of Absalom’s Death

<sup>19</sup> Then Ahimaaz son of Zadok said, “Let me run, and carry tidings to the king that the LORD has delivered him from the power of his enemies.”<sup>20</sup> Joab said to him, “You are not to carry tidings today; you may carry tidings another day, but today you shall not do so, because the king’s son is dead.”<sup>21</sup> Then Joab said to a Cushite, “Go, tell the king what you have seen.” The Cushite bowed before Joab, and ran.<sup>22</sup> Then Ahimaaz son of Zadok said again to Joab, “Come what may, let me also run after the Cushite.” And Joab said, “Why will you run, my son, seeing that you have no reward<sup>b</sup> for the tidings?”<sup>23</sup> “Come what may,” he said, “I will run.” So he said to

him, “Run.” Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the Plain, and outran the Cushite.

<sup>24</sup> Now David was sitting between the two gates. The sentinel went up to the roof of the gate by the wall, and when he looked up, he saw a man running alone.<sup>25</sup> The sentinel shouted and told the king. The king said, “If he is alone, there are tidings in his mouth.” He kept coming, and drew near.<sup>26</sup> Then the sentinel saw another man running; and the sentinel called to the gatekeeper and said, “See, another man running alone!” The king said, “He also is bringing tidings.”<sup>27</sup> The sentinel said, “I think the running of the first one is like the running of Ahimaaz son of Zadok.” The king said, “He is a good man, and comes with good tidings.”

<sup>28</sup> Then Ahimaaz cried out to the king, “All is well!” He prostrated himself before the king with his face to the ground, and said, “Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king.”<sup>29</sup> The king said, “Is it well with the young man Absalom?” Ahimaaz answered, “When Joab sent your servant,<sup>c</sup> I saw a great tumult, but I do not know what it was.”<sup>30</sup> The king said, “Turn aside, and stand here.” So he turned aside, and stood still.

<sup>31</sup> Then the Cushite came; and the Cushite said, “Good tidings for my lord the king! For the LORD has vindicated you this day, delivering you from the power of all who rose up against you.”<sup>32</sup> The king said to the Cushite, “Is it well with the young man Absalom?” The Cushite answered, “May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up to do you harm, be like that young man.”

### David Mourns for Absalom

<sup>33</sup><sup>d</sup> The king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, he said, “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!”

<sup>a</sup> Another reading is *at the risk of my life*

<sup>b</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>c</sup> Heb *the king’s servant, your servant*

<sup>d</sup> Ch 19.1 in Heb

### Read 2 Samuel 19:1–15

David's reaction to Absalom's death reveals even more the depth of his suffering. Joab's stern attitude with the king will not win him any favor. David replaces Joab with Amasa.

**Reflect:** David is not embittered by what he has endured. His tenderness for Absalom and for those who supported him in battle might remind us of God's tenderness for us in our sinfulness.

**Pray:** Lord, may I always know your tender heart for me in my need. May I imitate your tenderness in my relationships.

**Act:** Give thanks to someone whose tenderness has been a comfort to you.

### Read 2 Samuel 19:16–43

After all the trouble, it is now time for David to go home to his palace. His return is marked not by vengeance but by mercy to those who offended him.

**Reflect:** David's mercy is motivated by his knowledge of God's mercy toward him. How conscious am I of God's goodness to me? Have I shared that goodness in my relations with others?

**Pray:** Pray the prayer of the tax collector from Luke's gospel: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" (Lk 18:13).

**Act:** Remember a time when someone extended mercy and forgiveness to you.

**19** It was told Joab, "The king is weeping and mourning for Absalom."<sup>2</sup> So the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the troops; for the troops heard that day, "The king is grieving for his son."<sup>3</sup> The troops stole into the city that day as soldiers steal in who are ashamed when they flee in battle.<sup>4</sup> The king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, "O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!"<sup>5</sup> Then Joab came into the house to the king, and said, "Today you have covered with shame the faces of all your officers who have saved your life today, and the lives of your sons and your daughters, and the lives of your wives and your concubines,<sup>6</sup> for love of those who hate you and for hatred of those who love you. You have made it clear today that commanders and officers are nothing to you; for I perceive that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, then you would be pleased.<sup>7</sup> So go out at once and speak kindly to your servants; for I swear by the LORD, if you do not go, not a man will stay with you this night; and this will be worse for you than any disaster that has come upon you from your youth until now."<sup>8</sup> Then the king got up and took his seat in the gate. The troops were all told, "See, the king is sitting in the gate"; and all the troops came before the king.

### David Recalled to Jerusalem

Meanwhile, all the Israelites had fled to their homes.<sup>9</sup> All the people were disputing throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "The king delivered us from the hand of our enemies, and saved us from the hand of the Philistines; and now he has fled out of the land because of Absalom.<sup>10</sup> But Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore why do you say nothing about bringing the king back?"

**11** King David sent this message to the priests Zadok and Abiathar, "Say to the elders of Judah, 'Why should you be the last to bring the king back to his house? The talk of all Israel has come to the king.'<sup>a</sup> **12** You are my kin, you are my bone and my flesh; why then should you be the last to bring back the king?'<sup>13</sup> And say to Amasa, 'Are you not my bone and my flesh? So may God do to me, and more, if you are not the commander of my army from now on, in place of Joab.'" **14** Amasa<sup>b</sup> swayed the hearts of all the people of Judah as one, and they sent word to the king, "Return, both you and all your servants."<sup>15</sup> So the king came back to the Jordan; and Judah came to Gilgal to meet the king and to bring him over the Jordan.

**16** Shimei son of Gera, the Benjaminite, from Bahurim, hurried to come down with the people of Ju-

<sup>a</sup> Gk: Heb to the king, to his house

<sup>b</sup> Heb He

dah to meet King David; <sup>17</sup> with him were a thousand people from Benjamin. And Ziba, the servant of the house of Saul, with his fifteen sons and his twenty servants, rushed down to the Jordan ahead of the king, <sup>18</sup> while the crossing was taking place,<sup>a</sup> to bring over the king's household, and to do his pleasure.

### David's Mercy to Shimei

Shimei son of Gera fell down before the king, as he was about to cross the Jordan, <sup>19</sup> and said to the king, "May my lord not hold me guilty or remember how your servant did wrong on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem; may the king not bear it in mind. <sup>20</sup> For your servant knows that I have sinned; therefore, see, I have come this day, the first of all the house of Joseph to come down to meet my lord the king." <sup>21</sup> Abishai son of Zeruiah answered, "Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD's anointed?" <sup>22</sup> But David said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should today become an adversary to me? Shall anyone be put to death in Israel this day? For do I not know that I am this day king over Israel?" <sup>23</sup> The king said to Shimei, "You shall not die." And the king gave him his oath.

### David and Mephibosheth Meet

<sup>24</sup> Mephibosheth<sup>b</sup> grandson of Saul came down to meet the king; he had not taken care of his feet, or trimmed his beard, or washed his clothes, from the day the king left until the day he came back in safety. <sup>25</sup> When he came from Jerusalem to meet the king, the king said to him, "Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?"<sup>b</sup> <sup>26</sup> He answered, "My lord, O king, my servant deceived me; for your servant said to him, 'Saddle a donkey for me,<sup>c</sup> so that I may ride on it and go with the king.' For your servant is lame. <sup>27</sup> He has slandered your servant to my lord the king. But my

lord the king is like the angel of God; do therefore what seems good to you. <sup>28</sup> For all my father's house were doomed to death before my lord the king; but you set your servant among those who eat at your table. What further right have I, then, to appeal to the king?" <sup>29</sup> The king said to him, "Why speak any more of your affairs? I have decided: you and Ziba shall divide the land." <sup>30</sup> Mephibosheth<sup>b</sup> said to the king, "Let him take it all, since my lord the king has arrived home safely."

### David's Kindness to Barzillai

<sup>31</sup> Now Barzillai the Gileadite had come down from Rogelim; he went on with the king to the Jordan, to escort him over the Jordan. <sup>32</sup> Barzillai was a very aged man, eighty years old. He had provided the king with food while he stayed at Mahanaim, for he was a very wealthy man. <sup>33</sup> The king said to Barzillai, "Come over with me, and I will provide for you in Jerusalem at my side." <sup>34</sup> But Barzillai said to the king, "How many years have I still to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? <sup>35</sup> Today I am eighty years old; can I discern what is pleasant and what is not? Can your servant taste what he eats or what he drinks? Can I still listen to the voice of singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king? <sup>36</sup> Your servant will go a little way over the Jordan with the king. Why should the king recompense me with such a reward? <sup>37</sup> Please let your servant return, so that I may die in my own town, near the graves of my father and my mother. But here is your servant Chimham; let him go over with my lord the king; and do for him whatever seems good to you." <sup>38</sup> The king answered, "Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do for him whatever seems good to you; and all that you desire of me I will do for you." <sup>39</sup> Then all the people crossed over the Jordan, and the king

<sup>a</sup> Cn: Heb *the ford crossed*

<sup>b</sup> Or *Merib-baal* : See 4.4 note

<sup>c</sup> Gk Syr Vg: Heb *said, 'I will saddle a donkey for myself*

crossed over; the king kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and he returned to his own home. <sup>40</sup>The king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him; all the people of Judah, and also half the people of Israel, brought the king on his way.

<sup>41</sup>Then all the people of Israel came to the king, and said to him, “Why have our kindred the people of Judah stolen you away, and brought the king and his household over the Jordan, and all David’s men with him?” <sup>42</sup>All the people of Judah an-

swered the people of Israel, “Because the king is near of kin to us. Why then are you angry over this matter? Have we eaten at all at the king’s expense? Or has he given us any gift?” <sup>43</sup>But the people of Israel answered the people of Judah, “We have ten shares in the king, and in David also we have more than you. Why then did you despise us? Were we not the first to speak of bringing back our king?” But the words of the people of Judah were fiercer than the words of the people of Israel.

### Read 2 Samuel 20

This story of the revolt of Sheba seems to demonstrate the rehabilitation of Joab. Joab, still an unsavory character, kills Amasa by a rather nasty trick. Still, when all is said and done, Joab will be loyal to David. The rebellion is settled in a rather bloodless fashion as the people of Abel Beth-maacah surrender Sheba to Joab.

**Reflect:** David seeks humbly to restore peace to his kingdom, yet there are still those who will not forgive. How many situations can I think of where lack of humble forgiveness has created more pain?

**Pray:** Pray the words of the Prayer of St. Francis: “Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred let me bring your love.”

**Act:** Take some time to pray about situations where hatred and lack of forgiveness bring greater violence to our world.

### The Rebellion of Sheba

**20** Now a scoundrel named Sheba son of Bichri, a Benjaminite, happened to be there. He sounded the trumpet and cried out,

“We have no portion in David,  
no share in the son of Jesse!  
Everyone to your tents, O Israel!”

<sup>2</sup> So all the people of Israel withdrew from David and followed Sheba son of Bichri; but the people of Judah followed their king steadfastly from the Jordan to Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten concubines whom he had left to look after the house, and put them in a house under guard, and provided for them, but did not go in to them. So they were shut up until the day of their death, living as if in widowhood.

<sup>4</sup> Then the king said to Amasa, “Call the men of Judah together to me within three days, and be here yourself.” <sup>5</sup> So Amasa went to summon Judah; but he delayed beyond the set time that had been appointed him. <sup>6</sup> David said to Abishai, “Now Sheba son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom; take your lord’s servants and pursue him, or he will find fortified cities for himself, and escape from us.” <sup>7</sup> Joab’s men went out after him, along with the Cherethites, the Pelethites, and all the warriors; they went out from Jerusalem to pursue Sheba son of Bichri. <sup>8</sup> When they were at the large stone that is in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Now Joab was wearing a soldier’s garment and over it was a belt with a sword in its sheath fastened at his waist; as he went forward it fell out. <sup>9</sup> Joab said to Amasa, “Is it well with you, my brother?” And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. <sup>10</sup> But Amasa did not notice the sword in Joab’s hand; Joab struck him in the belly so that his entrails poured out on the ground, and he died. He did not strike a second blow.



Then Joab and his brother Abishai pursued Sheba son of Bichri. <sup>11</sup> And one of Joab's men took his stand by Amasa, and said, "Whoever favors Joab, and whoever is for David, let him follow Joab." <sup>12</sup> Amasa lay wallowing in his blood on the highway, and the man saw that all the people were stopping. Since he saw that all who came by him were stopping, he carried Amasa from the highway into a field, and threw a garment over him. <sup>13</sup> Once he was removed from the highway, all the people went on after Joab to pursue Sheba son of Bichri.

<sup>14</sup> Sheba<sup>a</sup> passed through all the tribes of Israel to Abel of Beth-maacah;<sup>b</sup> and all the Bichrites<sup>c</sup> assembled, and followed him inside. <sup>15</sup> Joab's forces<sup>d</sup> came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maacah; they threw up a siege ramp against the city, and it stood against the rampart. Joab's forces were battering the wall to break it down. <sup>16</sup> Then a wise woman called from the city, "Listen! Listen! Tell Joab, 'Come here, I want to speak to you.'" <sup>17</sup> He came near her; and the woman said, "Are you Joab?" He answered, "I am." Then she said to him, "Listen to the words of your servant." He answered, "I am listening." <sup>18</sup> Then she

said, "They used to say in the old days, 'Let them inquire at Abel'; and so they would settle a matter. <sup>19</sup> I am one of those who are peaceable and faithful in Israel; you seek to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel; why will you swallow up the heritage of the LORD?" <sup>20</sup> Joab answered, "Far be it from me, far be it, that I should swallow up or destroy! <sup>21</sup> That is not the case! But a man of the hill country of Ephraim, called Sheba son of Bichri, has lifted up his hand against King David; give him up alone, and I will withdraw from the city." The woman said to Joab, "His head shall be thrown over the wall to you." <sup>22</sup> Then the woman went to all the people with her wise plan. And they cut off the head of Sheba son of Bichri, and threw it out to Joab. So he blew the trumpet, and they dispersed from the city, and all went to their homes, while Joab returned to Jerusalem to the king.

<sup>23</sup> Now Joab was in command of all the army of Israel;<sup>e</sup> Benaiah son of Jehoiada was in command of the Cherethites and the Pelethites; <sup>24</sup> Adoram was in charge of the forced labor; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the recorder; <sup>25</sup> Sheva was secretary; Zadok and Abiathar were priests; <sup>26</sup> and Ira the Jairite was also David's priest.

### David Avenges the Gibeonites

**21** Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the LORD. The LORD said, "There is bloodguilt on Saul and on his house, because he put the Gibeonites to death." <sup>2</sup> So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them. (Now the Gibeonites were not of the people of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; although the people of Israel had sworn to spare them, Saul had tried to wipe them out in his zeal for the people of Israel and Judah.) <sup>3</sup> David said to the Gibeonites, "What shall I do for you? How shall I make expiation, that you may bless the heritage of the LORD?" <sup>4</sup> The Gibeonites said to him, "It is not a matter of silver or gold between us and Saul or his house; neither is it for us to put anyone to death in Israel." He said, "What do you say that I should do for you?" <sup>5</sup> They said to the king, "The man who consumed us and planned to destroy us, so that we should have no place in all the territory of Israel—<sup>6</sup> let seven of his sons be handed over to us, and we will impale them before

<sup>a</sup> Heb *He*

<sup>b</sup> Compare 20.15: Heb *and Beth-maacah*

<sup>c</sup> Compare Gk Vg: Heb *Berites*

<sup>d</sup> Heb *They*

<sup>e</sup> Cn: Heb *Joab to all the army, Israel*

## Read 2 Samuel 21

David is still seeking to make peace with those who have been hurt by violence. The Gibeonites' request to slaughter seven relatives of Saul seems distasteful to us, but for them it was a realistic way of achieving peace. David continues to seek peace by burying the dead properly.

**Reflect:** All of David's later days seem dedicated to making peace with various people. How far must those who control the fates of nations in our world go to bring about a peaceful, just society?

**Pray:** Pray for the nations of our world most afflicted by violence. Pray that good people might not give up the hope for peace.

**Act:** Make a contribution of some kind to an organization that works for the lessening of violence and hatred in our world.

the LORD at Gibeon on the mountain of the LORD.”<sup>a</sup> The king said, “I will hand them over.”

7 But the king spared Mephibosheth,<sup>b</sup> the son of Saul's son Jonathan, because of the oath of the LORD that was between them, between David and Jonathan son of Saul. <sup>8</sup> The king took the two sons of Rizpah daughter of Aiah, whom she bore to Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth;<sup>b</sup> and the five sons of Merab<sup>c</sup> daughter of Saul, whom she bore to Adriel son of Barzillai the Meholathite; <sup>9</sup> he gave them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they impaled them on the mountain before the LORD. The seven of them perished together. They were put to death in the first days of harvest, at the beginning of barley harvest.

10 Then Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it on a rock for herself, from the beginning of harvest until rain fell on them from the heavens; she did not allow the birds of the air to come on the bodies<sup>d</sup> by day, or the wild animals by night. <sup>11</sup> When David was told what Rizpah daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done, <sup>12</sup> David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of his son Jonathan from the people of Jabesh-gilead, who had stolen them from the public square of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hung them up, on the day the Philistines killed Saul on Gilboa. <sup>13</sup> He brought up from there the bones of Saul and the bones of his son Jonathan; and they gathered the bones of those who had been impaled. <sup>14</sup> They buried the bones of Saul and of his son Jonathan in the land of Benjamin in Zela, in the tomb of his father Kish; they did all that the king commanded. After that, God heeded supplications for the land.

## Exploits of David's Men

15 The Philistines went to war again with Israel, and David went down together with his servants. They fought against the Philistines, and David grew weary. <sup>16</sup> Ishbi-benob, one of the descendants of the giants, whose spear weighed three hundred shekels of bronze, and who was fitted out with new weapons,<sup>e</sup> said he would kill David. <sup>17</sup> But Abishai son of Zeruah came to his aid, and attacked the Philistine and killed him. Then David's men swore to him, “You shall not go out with us to battle any longer, so that you do not quench the lamp of Israel.”

18 After this a battle took place with the Philistines, at Gob; then Sibbecai the Hushathite killed Saph, who was one of the descendants of the giants. <sup>19</sup> Then there was another battle with the Philistines at Gob; and Elhanan son of Jaare-oregim, the Bethlehemite, killed Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a

<sup>a</sup> Cn Compare Gk and 21.9: Heb *at Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of the LORD*

<sup>b</sup> Or *Merib-baal*: See 4.4 note

<sup>c</sup> Two Heb Mss Syr Compare Gk: MT *Michal*

<sup>d</sup> Heb *them*

<sup>e</sup> Heb *was belted anew*

weaver's beam. <sup>20</sup> There was again war at Gath, where there was a man of great size, who had six fingers on each hand, and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number; he too was descended from the giants.

<sup>21</sup> When he taunted Israel, Jonathan son of David's brother Shimei, killed him. <sup>22</sup> These four were descended from the giants in Gath; they fell by the hands of David and his servants.

### Read 2 Samuel 22

In this chapter we find a song attributed to David when he was a young man during the lifetime of Saul. The first part praises God for saving him from Saul, whom he likens to a thundering storm. The second part tells of how God made David into a great warrior and assured his victories.

**Reflect:** David's praise of God is rooted in God's concrete acts of favor to him. How do you praise God? Do you think of concrete acts in which God has "saved" you?

**Pray:** Take some time to allow feelings of gratitude for God to arise in your heart.

**Act:** Write your own song of praise to God.

### David's Song of Thanksgiving

**22** David spoke to the LORD the words of this song on the day when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. <sup>2</sup> He said:

- The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer,  
<sup>3</sup> my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,  
 my shield and the horn of my salvation,  
 my stronghold and my refuge,  
 my savior; you save me from violence.  
<sup>4</sup> I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,  
 and I am saved from my enemies.  
<sup>5</sup> For the waves of death encompassed me,  
 the torrents of perdition assailed me;  
<sup>6</sup> the cords of Sheol entangled me,  
 the snares of death confronted me.  
<sup>7</sup> In my distress I called upon the LORD;  
 to my God I called.  
 From his temple he heard my voice,  
 and my cry came to his ears.  
<sup>8</sup> Then the earth reeled and rocked;  
 the foundations of the heavens trembled  
 and quaked, because he was angry.  
<sup>9</sup> Smoke went up from his nostrils,  
 and devouring fire from his mouth;  
 glowing coals flamed forth from him.  
<sup>10</sup> He bowed the heavens, and came down;  
 thick darkness was under his feet.  
<sup>11</sup> He rode on a cherub, and flew;  
 he was seen upon the wings of the wind.  
<sup>12</sup> He made darkness around him a canopy,  
 thick clouds, a gathering of water.  
<sup>13</sup> Out of the brightness before him  
 coals of fire flamed forth.  
<sup>14</sup> The LORD thundered from heaven;  
 the Most High uttered his voice.  
<sup>15</sup> He sent out arrows, and scattered them  
 —lightning, and routed them.  
<sup>16</sup> Then the channels of the sea were seen,  
 the foundations of the world were laid bare  
 at the rebuke of the LORD,  
 at the blast of the breath of his nostrils.

- 17 He reached from on high, he took me,  
he drew me out of mighty waters.
- 18 He delivered me from my strong enemy,  
from those who hated me;  
for they were too mighty for me.
- 19 They came upon me in the day of my calamity,  
but the LORD was my stay.
- 20 He brought me out into a broad place;  
he delivered me, because he delighted in me.
- 21 The LORD rewarded me according to my  
righteousness;  
according to the cleanness of my hands he  
recompensed me.
- 22 For I have kept the ways of the LORD,  
and have not wickedly departed from my God.
- 23 For all his ordinances were before me,  
and from his statutes I did not turn aside.
- 24 I was blameless before him,  
and I kept myself from guilt.
- 25 Therefore the LORD has recompensed me  
according to my righteousness,  
according to my cleanness in his sight.
- 26 With the loyal you show yourself loyal;  
with the blameless you show yourself blameless;
- 27 with the pure you show yourself pure,  
and with the crooked you show yourself perverse.
- 28 You deliver a humble people,  
but your eyes are upon the haughty to bring  
them down.
- 29 Indeed, you are my lamp, O LORD,  
the LORD lightens my darkness.
- 30 By you I can crush a troop,  
and by my God I can leap over a wall.
- 31 This God—his way is perfect;  
the promise of the LORD proves true;  
he is a shield for all who take refuge in him.
- 32 For who is God, but the LORD?  
And who is a rock, except our God?
- 33 The God who has girded me with strength<sup>a</sup>  
has opened wide my path.<sup>b</sup>
- 34 He made my<sup>c</sup> feet like the feet of deer,  
and set me secure on the heights.
- 35 He trains my hands for war,  
so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.
- 36 You have given me the shield of your salvation,  
and your help<sup>d</sup> has made me great.
- 37 You have made me stride freely,  
and my feet do not slip;
- 38 I pursued my enemies and destroyed them,  
and did not turn back until they were consumed.

<sup>a</sup> Q Ms Gk Syr Vg Compare Ps 18.32: MT  
*God is my strong refuge*

<sup>b</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>c</sup> Another reading is *his*

<sup>d</sup> Q Ms: MT *your answering*

### Read 2 Samuel 23

This chapter does two things: it records David's "last" words and it lists the men who were among his most distinguished warriors. Many names are familiar to us from the story we have read, while others are not recognizable. Last of all, an interesting name is included, that of Uriah the Hittite, who you will recall was Bathsheba's husband.

**Reflect:** David's words praise God for anointing him and making him righteous. Nevertheless, the names of the warriors remind us of how violent was the time of David's reign. The mention of Uriah reminds us of David's great sin with Bathsheba and his murder of an innocent man. At the conclusion of this story of David we must realize that he was a person who struggled with God's will in his life and, in typical human fashion, often failed to live up to what God called him to be.

**Pray:** Pray for the grace to grow in knowledge of the mystery of God's call in your life.

**Act:** Compose a short prayer that you can use to give expression to the way in which you struggle to understand God's will for yourself.

- 39 I consumed them; I struck them down, so that they did not rise;  
they fell under my feet.
- 40 For you girded me with strength for the battle;  
you made my assailants sink under me.
- 41 You made my enemies turn their backs to me,  
those who hated me, and I destroyed them.
- 42 They looked, but there was no one to save them;  
they cried to the LORD, but he did not answer them.
- 43 I beat them fine like the dust of the earth,  
I crushed them and stamped them down like the mire of the streets.
- 44 You delivered me from strife with the peoples;<sup>a</sup>  
you kept me as the head of the nations;  
people whom I had not known served me.
- 45 Foreigners came cringing to me;  
as soon as they heard of me, they obeyed me.
- 46 Foreigners lost heart,  
and came trembling out of their strongholds.
- 47 The LORD lives! Blessed be my rock,  
and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation,
- 48 the God who gave me vengeance  
and brought down peoples under me,  
49 who brought me out from my enemies;  
you exalted me above my adversaries,  
you delivered me from the violent.
- 50 For this I will extol you, O LORD, among the nations,  
and sing praises to your name.
- 51 He is a tower of salvation for his king,  
and shows steadfast love to his anointed,  
to David and his descendants forever.

### The Last Words of David

**23** Now these are the last words of David:  
The oracle of David, son of Jesse,  
the oracle of the man whom God exalted,<sup>b</sup>  
the anointed of the God of Jacob,  
the favorite of the Strong One of Israel:

- 2 The spirit of the LORD speaks through me,  
his word is upon my tongue.
- 3 The God of Israel has spoken,  
the Rock of Israel has said to me:  
One who rules over people justly,  
ruling in the fear of God,
- 4 is like the light of morning,  
like the sun rising on a cloudless morning,  
gleaming from the rain on the grassy land.

<sup>a</sup> Gk: Heb from strife with my people

<sup>b</sup> Q Ms: MT who was raised on high

- 5 Is not my house like this with God?  
For he has made with me an everlasting covenant,  
ordered in all things and secure.  
Will he not cause to prosper  
all my help and my desire?
- 6 But the godless are<sup>a</sup> all like thorns that are  
thrown away;  
for they cannot be picked up with the hand;  
7 to touch them one uses an iron bar  
or the shaft of a spear.  
And they are entirely consumed in fire on the  
spot.<sup>b</sup>

### David's Mighty Men

8 These are the names of the warriors whom David had: Josheb-basshebeth a Tahchemonite; he was chief of the Three;<sup>c</sup> he wielded his spear<sup>d</sup> against eight hundred whom he killed at one time.

9 Next to him among the three warriors was Eleazar son of Dodo son of Ahohi. He was with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle. The Israelites withdrew,<sup>10</sup> but he stood his ground. He struck down the Philistines until his arm grew weary, though his hand clung to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day. Then the people came back to him—but only to strip the dead.

11 Next to him was Shammah son of Agee, the Hararite. The Philistines gathered together at Lehi, where there was a plot of ground full of lentils; and the army fled from the Philistines.<sup>12</sup> But he took his stand in the middle of the plot, defended it, and killed the Philistines; and the LORD brought about a great victory.

13 Towards the beginning of harvest three of the thirty<sup>e</sup> chiefs went down to join David at the cave of Adullam, while a band of Philistines was encamped in the valley of Rephaim.<sup>14</sup> David was then in the stronghold; and the garrison of the Philistines was

then at Bethlehem.<sup>15</sup> David said longingly, "O that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate!"<sup>16</sup> Then the three warriors broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and brought it to David. But he would not drink of it; he poured it out to the LORD,<sup>17</sup> for he said, "The LORD forbid that I should do this. Can I drink the blood of the men who went at the risk of their lives?" Therefore he would not drink it. The three warriors did these things.

18 Now Abishai son of Zeruiah, the brother of Joab, was chief of the Thirty.<sup>f</sup> With his spear he fought against three hundred men and killed them, and won a name beside the Three.<sup>19</sup> He was the most renowned of the Thirty,<sup>g</sup> and became their commander; but he did not attain to the Three.

20 Benaiah son of Jehoiada was a valiant warrior<sup>h</sup> from Kabzeel, a doer of great deeds; he struck down two sons of Arieli<sup>i</sup> of Moab. He also went down and killed a lion in a pit on a day when snow had fallen.<sup>21</sup> And he killed an Egyptian, a handsome man. The Egyptian had a spear in his hand; but Benaiah went against him with a staff, snatched the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his

<sup>a</sup> Heb *But worthlessness*

<sup>b</sup> Heb *in sitting*

<sup>c</sup> Gk Vg Compare 1 Chr 11.11: Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>d</sup> 1 Chr 11.11: Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>e</sup> Heb adds *head*

<sup>f</sup> Two Heb Mss Syr: MT *Three*

<sup>g</sup> Syr Compare 1 Chr 11.25: Heb *Was he the most renowned of the Three?*

<sup>h</sup> Another reading is *the son of Ish-hai*

<sup>i</sup> Gk: Heb lacks *sons of*



own spear.<sup>22</sup> Such were the things Benaiah son of Jehoiada did, and won a name beside the three warriors.<sup>23</sup> He was renowned among the Thirty, but he did not attain to the Three. And David put him in charge of his bodyguard.

24 Among the Thirty were Asahel brother of Joab; Elhanan son of Dodo of Bethlehem;<sup>25</sup> Shammah of Harod; Elika of Harod;<sup>26</sup> Helez the Paltite; Ira son of Ikkesh of Tekoa;<sup>27</sup> Abiezer of Anathoth; Mebunnai the Hushathite;<sup>28</sup> Zalmon the Ahohite; Maharai of Netophah;<sup>29</sup> Heleb son of Baanah of Netophah; Ittai son of Ribai of Gibeah of

the Benjaminites;<sup>30</sup> Benaiah of Pirathon; Hiddai of the torrents of Gaash;<sup>31</sup> Abi-albon the Arbathite; Azmaveth of Bahurim;<sup>32</sup> Eliahba of Shaalbon; the sons of Jashen: Jonathan<sup>33</sup> son of<sup>a</sup> Shammah the Hararite; Ahiam son of Sharar the Hararite;<sup>34</sup> Eliphélet son of Ahasbai of Maacah; Eliam son of Ahithophel the Gilonite;<sup>35</sup> Hezro<sup>b</sup> of Carmel; Paarai the Arbite;<sup>36</sup> Igal son of Nathan of Zobah; Bani the Gadite;<sup>37</sup> Zelek the Ammonite; Naharai of Beeroth, the armor-bearer of Joab son of Zeruiah;<sup>38</sup> Ira the Ithrite; Gareb the Ithrite;<sup>39</sup> Uriah the Hittite—thirty-seven in all.

### Read 2 Samuel 24

This final story demonstrates David's total compliance with God's will. David sins, but is then ready to do whatever will make things right again. His words at the threshing floor of Araunah are classic: "I alone have sinned, and I alone have done wickedly."

**Reflect:** David united Israel and Judah so that they would be regarded as a nation worthy of respect in his world, yet in all this, the nation, the people, belonged to God. David was the visible symbol of what being the people of God meant for his people.

**Pray:** By baptism we become children of God. Pray for the grace to understand more and more the great mystery in which you live, move, and have being.

**Act:** Bring home a small flask of baptismal water and place it where it can be easily seen. Treat it with due reverence.

### David's Census of Israel and Judah

**24** Again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, "Go, count the people of Israel and Judah."<sup>2</sup> So the king said to Joab and the commanders of the army,<sup>c</sup> who were with him, "Go through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba, and take a census of the people, so that I may know how many there are."<sup>3</sup> But Joab said to the king, "May the LORD your God increase the number of the people a hundredfold, while the eyes of my lord the king can still see it! But why does my lord the king want to do this?"<sup>4</sup> But the king's word prevailed against Joab and the commanders of the army. So Joab and the commanders of the army went out from the presence of the king to take a census of the people of Israel.<sup>5</sup> They crossed the Jordan, and began from<sup>d</sup> Aroer and from the city that is in the middle of the valley, toward Gad and on to Jazer.<sup>6</sup> Then they came to Gilead, and to Kadesh in the land of the Hittites;<sup>e</sup> and they came to Dan, and from Dan<sup>f</sup> they went around to Sidon,<sup>7</sup> and came to the fortress of Tyre and to all the cities of the Hivites and Canaanites; and they went out to the Negeb of Judah at Beer-sheba.<sup>8</sup> So when they had gone through all the land, they came back to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days.<sup>9</sup> Joab reported to the king the number of those who had been recorded: in Israel there were eight hundred thousand soldiers able to draw the sword, and those of Judah were five hundred thousand.

### Judgment on David's Sin

10 But afterward, David was stricken to the heart because he had numbered the people. David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O LORD, I pray you, take away the guilt of your

<sup>a</sup> Gk: Heb lacks *son of*

<sup>b</sup> Another reading is *Hezrai*

<sup>c</sup> 1 Chr 21.2 Gk: Heb *to Joab the commander of the army*

<sup>d</sup> Gk Mss: Heb *encamped in Aroer south of*

<sup>e</sup> Gk: Heb *to the land of Tahitim-hodshi*

<sup>f</sup> Cn Compare Gk: Heb *they came to Dan-jaan and*

servant; for I have done very foolishly.”

<sup>11</sup> When David rose in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David’s seer, saying, <sup>12</sup> “Go and say to David: Thus says the LORD: Three things I offer<sup>a</sup> you; choose one of them, and I will do it to you.” <sup>13</sup> So Gad came to David and told him; he asked him, “Shall three<sup>b</sup> years of famine come to you on your land? Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days’ pestilence in your land? Now consider, and decide what answer I shall return to the one who sent me.” <sup>14</sup> Then David said to Gad, “I am in great distress; let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is great; but let me not fall into human hands.”

<sup>15</sup> So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel from that morning until the appointed time; and seventy thousand of the people died, from Dan to Beer-sheba. <sup>16</sup> But when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented concerning the evil, and said to the angel who was bringing destruction among the people, “It is enough; now stay your hand.” The angel of the LORD was then by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. <sup>17</sup> When David saw the angel who was destroying the people, he said to the LORD, “I alone have sinned, and I alone have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let your hand, I pray, be against me and against my father’s house.”

### David’s Altar on the Threshing Floor

<sup>18</sup> That day Gad came to David and said to him, “Go up and erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.” <sup>19</sup> Following Gad’s instructions, David went up, as the LORD had commanded. <sup>20</sup> When Araunah looked down, he saw the king and his servants coming toward him; and Araunah went out and prostrated himself before the king with his face to the ground. <sup>21</sup> Araunah said, “Why has my lord the king come to his servant?” David said, “To buy the threshing floor from you in order to build an altar to the LORD, so that the plague may be averted from the people.” <sup>22</sup> Then Araunah said to David, “Let my lord the king take and offer up what seems good to him; here are the oxen for the burnt offering, and the threshing sledges and the yokes of the oxen for the wood.” <sup>23</sup> All this, O king, Araunah gives to the king.” And Araunah said to the king, “May the LORD your God respond favorably to you.”

<sup>24</sup> But the king said to Araunah, “No, but I will buy them from you for a price; I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing.” So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. <sup>25</sup> David built there an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being. So the LORD answered his supplication for the land, and the plague was averted from Israel.

<sup>a</sup> Or hold over

<sup>b</sup> 1 Chr 21.12 Gk: Heb seven