

On Eagles' Wings¹
-in the Promised Land-

- In Verse -

Maya Etkin, B.A., M.Ed.
Clinical Member (ret'd)- American, Canadian and Ontario
Associations of Marriage and Family Therapy

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1. Exodus: 19, 4: God said to Moses: "I brought you here on eagles' wings"

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PREFACE

This second edition is a retitled version of “People of the Bible - in the Promised Land”-2001. The illustrations and some commentaries have been omitted and some minor changes have been made to the text of Chapter four.

The book deals primarily with material from the Holy Bible – the Books of Joshua, Judges, I and II Samuel, and I Kings – which cover the period beginning with the conquest of Canaan, and ending with the death of King Solomon. There is, however, some coverage, in Chapter IV, of events following the death of Solomon and the division of the kingdom of Israel. That section is written in much less depth and detail.

This authentic work is written in easy-to-read verse, using contemporary English.

The material that is taken directly from the Biblical text is printed in regular type. The original meaning is always preserved, even if different words are used. When the text is augmented – for example by descriptions of appearances of people - it is footnoted as “author’s image”. These augmentations are also printed in regular type. However, there are verses that originate with the author – for example, prologues and epilogues; these are printed in italics, to distinguish them from the Biblical text.

Most of the commentaries in the footnotes are not original with the author. They were selected from various Biblical sources.

Maya Etkin, B.A., M.Ed.
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
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betkin@rogers.com

*Moses was dead -
he who had the Hebrews led.
Moses - powerful prophet God had sent,
Himself to represent,
who'd been God's choice to be His
Voice.*

*Giver of laws, leader of men,
who had brought Commandments Ten,
who taught the laws that God had sent,
by God meant
to be the cornerstone -
seeds sown from His Holy throne.*

*Moses was dead,
and a different time now lay ahead
for a people newly bred.²*

²Except for Joshua and Caleb (Numbers 14:24) who were the only survivors of the slave generation.

CHAPTER ONE

*Joshua*¹

The Conquest of Canaan

Prologue - The Fulfillment

*The Hebrews - crushed in Egypt, hopeless slaves,
were by Godly miracles saved.
They were freed through Moses when hope fled,
then were by the Lord God led
through the hostile wilderness
where they lived in much distress.
There, for forty long and weary years -
they were filled with fears, wept many tears.
They were fed on hope and manna bread,
and were by Moses taught God's Laws,
and His commandments, every clause.*

*When the elders passed away,
the younger - made of different clay -
who'd learned the laws and how to pray
were ready to obey.*

*For those Israelites of old
it was a time now to be bold.
They would have to fight with all their might,
yet also live by what was right.
The land to which they would be led
now lay ahead.*

*T'was known as Canaan,
the land promised by God to Abraham,
and to his seed, to meet their need.
This was a Sacred covenant that was permanent,
and now the time had come for it to be fulfilled,
in ways according to God's Holy will.*

¹The Book of Joshua

*Inside Canaan lived many pagan tribes unclean,
with evil practices, cruel and obscene.
They worshipped idols made of clay,
to which they would bow and pray,
or idols carved from stone.
Living things were thrown
into a pit of flame till death them claimed.
Humans too were sometimes burned alive,
in the hope the pagan tribes would thrive,
and the Ashteroth religious rites were a blight
to those upright in God's Sacred Sight.
This was the land the Hebrews must take,
conquer in wars that they must make.*

*Now it's Joshua who is God's choice,
who hears His Holy Voice.
Joshua - given Moses' place
by God's grace.
Joshua - given full command
to lead them to their promised land,
where they'd be a people free
and fulfill their destiny -
if they would obey God's laws
and fight hard for their own cause.*

*They now have a leader new,
devout, courageous, to God true.
When his leadership began,
he was a strong and hardy man,
knowing the laws - knowing the right
with skill to lead and strength to fight.*

*He reflected Moses' glory;
this underlies his steadfast story;
from Moses he learned to be wise,
to see the world through Moses' eyes.*

***Joshua heard God's Sacred Word!
Joshua - soldier of the Lord!***

The Lord Speaks

To Joshua the Lord God said:
Moses, my servant now is dead.
You must do as I command -
take the Israelites to their land.
Go over Jordan,¹ go you all,
in Canaan land² I'll you install.
No one will stand up to you,
you will all your foes subdue.
AS I WAS WITH MOSES, SO I'LL BE WITH YOU.
Wherever you go, whatever you do.
I won't fail you, nor will I forsake -
My promises I will not break.
Be courageous and be strong
as leader now you do belong.

¹ The Jordan river.

² The land God promised Abraham for the Israelites. Genesis 15:18, Exodus 23:31, Joshua 1:4

To the Book of Laws³ adhere,
be not dismayed and have no fear,
then with confidence you'll lead
and you will succeed.
Divide the land among the tribes
as I prescribed.
My Blessings go with you!

Rahab and the Spies

Joshua, needing ears and eyes
sent from Shittim two brave spies -
men who were resourceful, who were strong⁴
with memories excellent and long.

These spies would go to Jericho
to scout the land and report back
so he could plan his first attack.

After they had explored, hungry and footsore⁵
they found their way to Rahab's door.
They had learned she ran an inn
and they sought to lodge therein.

Rahab let them in, into her inn.
She wore a dress of crimson red,⁶
a crimson ribbon on her head,
her dusky shoulders showing bare,
through cascading jet-black hair.
Her dark brown and gentle eyes
showed her to be kind and wise.
She helped the spies -

³ The Torah.

⁴ Author's image.

⁵ Author's image.

⁶ Author's image.

sent them to her roof, where they were hid beneath a grid
made of stalks of flax - there to relax,
to be safe from fear lest their enemy appear.

Jericho's king had been apprised
that Rahab harboured Hebrew spies.
His men now thundered at her door⁷
causing great furor.

Bring them out!

Bring out those scouts!

Bring out the men you've sheltered in your inn!
They've come from the Hebrew high command
to spy out our entire land!

We are here at the king's behest
to arrest those cursed Hebrew 'guests'.

Give them to us, we say -
our king will make them pay!

Although Rahab had hid the spies
now she told the king's men lies.

She said that

after dark the spies had gone, on the run;
she knew not who they were nor whence they'd come.

She said: pursue them quickly, overtake
in order your arrest to make.

Rahab spoke then to the spies:

I understand

that God has given you this land.

We live in terror, faint with fear
because we know that you are near,
because of all we've heard of you:
how the God to whom you're true
dried up for you the Sea of Reeds

⁷ Author's image.

when from Egypt you were freed;
how you have destroyed two kings⁸
and all they owned - everything!

When we heard all this our hearts did melt
and terror is what our men felt,
for in Heaven and Earth does your God reign -
all that is, is His domain.

Now, hear my plea,
by the Lord God, swear to me -
because I have been kind to you
that you will kindness show me too;
for my family and for me
it is my heartfelt plea
that you save us, let us live,
your mercy give;
and all that we own, do let us keep
that from my kindness we may reap.

The spies replied:
If you do not us betray,
then when comes our victory day -
on the day of our conquest
we shall honour your request,
and deal in a kindly way
your own kindness to repay.
On our own lives we do swear
that you and your family we will spare.

To them she said:
Hide in the mountains for three days,
and after that go on your way.

⁸ Sihon and Og, who had lived on the other (East) side of the Jordan river. Joshua 2:10.

They answered her:
When we come back into your land
with all of our fierce warrior band,
in your window bind this scarlet line
and it shall be for us a sign;
this line with which you'll let us down
from this high wall around your town.
All who stay within your inn will save their skin;
those whose feet outside will tread will be found dead.

Thus - Rahab and the spies agreed
how to proceed.
By the line she let them down⁹
from the high wall of the town .
In the window Rahab placed the line
the scarlet sign.
In the mountains the spies stayed
for three days
and were not found,
though the king's men searched all round.

Then the spies went on their way
to tell at home about their prey;
how all of them were faint with fear
that Israelites were now so near,
and would soon to them appear.
To Joshua they made report:
The Lord has given all that land
into our hand.

⁹ From a window in her inn, which was built on top of the wall. Joshua 2:15.

A Miracle

*Another miracle now takes place
by God's Will and by His Grace.
Between the wilderness and Canaan
the mighty Jordan river ran -
in harvest season swift and wide,
hard to cross from side to side.*

When the Hebrews to the river came
they became inflamed,¹⁰
and turned on Joshua in blame:
Why are we here? We fear!
How are we to get across?
We don't trust you as our boss!

*But Joshua had no fear
he knew that God was near;
knew that God would safely guide
His people to the other side.*

He calmly answered them,
their anger and their fear to stem:
In God I trust, He'll give us aid;
we'll not the waters swim and wade.
God will never us betray;
He will the waters stay
in His Wisdom, in His Way.
Do not fear, be not dismayed.
I'll let you know what God will say.
Make yourselves sanctified and clean,
tomorrow God will intervene.

¹⁰ Author's image.

*'Twas early in the morn
just as day was born,
as orange streaks lit up the sky -
Joshua's hopes soared high.*

He spoke to the priests:
Take up the sacred Ark,
carry it so it will show,
so all the people know
exactly where to go.
And they did as he had bid.

And the Lord said to Joshua:
I will raise you up this day
that Israel will know I say -
as I was with Moses, so I'll be with you,
always there and always true.
To the priests you shall command -
when you come to edge of land
where Jordan's waters flow,
know -
it is God's Will that you stand still.
And Joshua said to the children of Israel:
The living God is here 'mongst you -
the Lord our God who's to you true.
Approach and hear the words of the Lord
Who will protect you with His sword.
He will without fail, prevail,
and Canaan's pagan tribes¹¹ throughout
will be driven out.

Watch and see -
the Ark pass over Jordan before you -
watch and see what God will do.

¹¹ Joshua 3:10 The Canaanites, Hitites, Hivites, Perrizites, Gergashites, Amorites, and Jebusites,

As soon as the soles of the Levites'¹ feet
the Jordan's waters greet,
God will stop the upstream river's flow
while it continues on below,
so there will be dry ground
which will all who watch astound.
The priests will firmly stand
in the middle, upon land,
on ground that's dry
as they upon Lord God rely;
and then will all you people go
where the waters ceased to flow -
walk beside the watery wall
standing tall.

And so it came to pass -
Holy Lord God had ordained a miracle again.
So that the miracle would be forever known,
they built a little monument of Jordan's stones.²
God raised up Joshua on that day,
that people great respect him pay;
and for as long as he would live
that respect would they him give.

The Battle of Jericho³

*The first fought for Canaan land,
was directed by God's Hand.*

About forty thousand prepared for war⁴
to be the conqueror.

¹ The priests

² Joshua 4:8 Twelve stones, picked from the Jordan's bed, one by a representative of each tribe.

³ The Israelites invaded Canaan in 1220-1200 BCE. Jericho was the key to southern and central Canaan.

⁴ Joshua 4:13

Jericho baked beneath the sun;
the battle had not yet begun,
and fear gripped its people - every one.
The massive winding double walls,
a barrier thick and tall,
were made of blocks of stone.

There, outside the walls of Jericho,
stood Joshua alone,
before the unknown,
hair of white, shining in the bright sunlight,¹
strong hands clasping tight,
brow furrowed with care,
he stood, head bowed in prayer.
His humble soul soared up to the Lord.

Now Jericho was shut up tight;
behind its walls lay all its might.
Much determined it would win
none went out and none went in.

When the Hebrews looked at Jericho's walls
so huge, so thick, ever so tall,
appearing like they'd never fall -
they were appalled;
so insurmountable they seemed,
of walls like this they'd never dreamed.
They murmured loud among themselves:
What's been given us to do?
What kind of battle to pursue?
We need another miraculous deed
for this venture to succeed.

And the Lord said to Joshua:

¹ Author's image.

Jericho is in your hand
by My command.
He told Joshua what to do, the enemy to subdue;
how to march around the town to bring the great walls down

Then Joshua told the priests of all he heard
of God's instructions and His Word.

The procession was a sight to see !
They moved according to God's decree.
Beneath the early morning sun¹
the procession had begun.
First, the soldiers' strong and sandaled feet
marched as one, as to a beat,
making a loud and frightening sound,
pounding on the hard baked ground.
Each held his sword in steady hand
ready to fight for his new land.
The priests in robes, red, gold, and blue,
their ram's horns² blew
making dreadful raucous sound
which loudly echoed round and round.
Then the sacred golden Ark,³ held up high
devoutly raised up toward the sky,
reflecting with a golden light -
Holy symbol of God's Might.
The rearguard came with *shofars* too
which with all their might they blew.
The people- thousands - walked behind,
with unity of mind,
prepared to shout out with a roar
so loud it would to heaven soar.
In obedience to God's orders sent

¹ Author's image.

² *Shofar*, a wind instrument made of a ram's horn.

³ Exodus 25:11

to Joshua His instrument,
the procession, in array
march round the walls for seven days.
Early on the seventh day, without delay
as priests circled the city round
shofars making raucous sound,
Joshua to the people said:
Now loudly shout with all your clout.
The Lord has given you the city!
As the *shofars* blew and the noise grew,
and the people's shouting joined it too,
the walls collapsed and fell down flat
and the people entered for combat.

Joshua said to the two spies:
Find Rahab's inn, save all within.
for our messengers she hid
on her roof beneath her grid.
So Rahab and her family
were spared that fatal agony.¹

Joshua commanded the people:
In the city - take no objects that you see
or you will have agony.
Only vessels of silver, brass and gold ²
find and hold -
they are the treasures of the Lord,
for His Sacred hoard.

They took the city without pity.
All that was alive did not survive
The city entire was destroyed by fire.

¹ Joshua 6:23. Rahab lived on among the Israelites.

² Also vessels of iron. Joshua 6:19.

The idols of Baal¹ burned in the flames,
the groves of Ashtaroth,¹ the same.
Joshua forbade Jericho to ever be rebuilt;
he that did so would carry heavy guilt,²
for all his children would one by one die
if such a man the great ban did defy.

God's Will was fulfilled,
and Joshua's name was covered with fame.

The Sin of Achan³

*A disastrous deed of greed
a victory at Ai impedes.
And when the sin has been atoned
a victory by God was shown.*

Before Jericho was burned
Achan saw things for which he yearned.⁴
When them he took, he God forsook.
God knew, and His anger grew.

Joshua's spies who went to Ai had told him lies,
so too few men were sent to the attack;⁵
routed, the men turned back,
and home they fled in dread.

When Joshua heard of the fright and flight -

¹ Pagan gods; Judges 2:13: groves; Judges 3:7.

² Joshua 6:26, commentary "The children of the builder will die one by one ... Some five centuries later, Joshua's ban was defied by Hiel of Beth-el, and the curse was fulfilled (1Kings 16:34)."

³ One of the soldiers who attacked Jericho. Joshua 7:1

⁴ 50 shekels of gold, 200 shekels of silver, and a Babylonian garment. Joshua 7:21. The garment was accursed, Joshua 7:15, but the silver and gold were consecrated to God. Joshua 6:19

⁵ Joshua 7:3-6.

he tore his garment in lament,
then fell upon his face
before the Lord to himself abase.

Joshua said to the Lord:
Alas, why have You brought us here?
Canaanites will hear of our defeat and our retreat,
and at us sneer and jeer.
They will us surround, and destroy us to the ground;
to Your great and Holy Name
might it not bring shame, and You defame?

Answered the Lord:
Get up; why do you lie upon your face
as if you're in disgrace?
Israel has sinned and needed discipline.
My covenant has been transgressed;
an accursed thing has been possessed.
Someone stole and lied
and the things he took did hide.
Disobedience I'll not abide -
I'll not let this slide.
For this your soldiers turned their backs in the attack!
For this they were accursed by Me, by My decree!
I won't be with you any more,
not in peace and not in war,
unless the cursed thing is gone from your domain
and the guilty person slain.
Get up - and to the people say:
sanctify yourselves - for tomorrow is the day;
for God says: Unless you take that cursed thing away
you'll never fight and win the day.

Find the man who broke my sacred ban;
first find his tribe, then find the clan;
his household next, then find the man.

The sin aroused God's great ire.
He said: That man must be burned by fire,
and his children, animals entire.
Make an enormous fire where they will all expire
with all he owns, his spoils and tent -
burn them as well as punishment,
because My sacred ban he broke,
and did Me, your God, provoke.
Thus the Lord God spoke!

Achan was the guilty man,¹ of the Zerah clan.
Joshua gently asked him to confess
what and how he did transgress.

Achan was penitent²
and spoke with piteous lament.
He confessed what he had done -
spoke almost like a simpleton -
spoke of his sin with chagrin,
seeking to explain
how he was tempted those things to obtain.

*He seemed oblivious to future pain
or that he might be slain.
He'd known what God did not permit -
so was he morally unfit?
or simply slow of wit?
Was he naive, believing he could God deceive?
That he could punishment evade?
That a high price would not be paid?
Driven by covetousness and greed
he did the blasphemous and foolish deed.
His Lord God he disobeyed, betrayed,*

¹ Joshua 7:11

² Author's image.

*for he had known what Lord God spake -
that no spoils might they take.
Yet he stole silver, gold, and a garment
and buried it all beneath his tent.*

Messengers were sent to his tent
where they found them all -
thus did the tragedy befall.

God would not the sin condone.
Achan and children all were stoned
and were burned with all he owned.
So the transgression was atoned.

*Achan, covetous and greedy man
who had defied God's sacred ban,
who had confessed his sin and shame,
perished under stones and flames.
The message now was clear; God was to be feared.
Those who God defy must die!*

A monument of stone was made in that glade
and the valley given a name¹
to commemorate its tragic fame.

The Ambush at Ai²

*This second battle was by God directed,
- He Who the Israelites protected -
using brilliant strategy
which assured their victory.*

¹ The Valley of Achon; (The valley of trouble).

² Ai commanded the entrance to the valley leading into western Canaan.

*For the conquest of Canaan
Joshua had made a plan -
after Jericho, conquer Ai
strategically sited very high
on a ridge down the middle of the land;
then, to the south and north expand.*

The Lord said to Joshua:
do not be dismayed, nor fear - have cheer.
Make an ambush behind Ai
and their people will all die.
The king of Ai and all his land
I've given you into your hand.
Go - do as you did at Jericho.¹
Except, spoils and cattle are for you,
after the people you subdue.

Joshua chose his bravest men²
to go to battle once again.
These he sent away by night
that they make ready for the fight.
He commanded them:
Behind the city, lie in wait;
five thousand and I will be the bait,
when they come out at us, we'll flee
and as they will heedless be
we will draw them out
and you'll come in and make a rout;
from your ambush you will rise³
the city then will be your prize.
The Lord has said to you what you must do -
set the city all on fire,

¹ Meaning : kill all and burn the city.

² Joshua 8:3: thirty thousand men.

³ A tactic used by many military commanders since. They may have learned from Joshua.

according to the Lord's desire.

And so it came to pass.
All the men of Ai, and Beth-el too
left the city to pursue.
Then the Lord said to Joshua:
stretch out your spear to Ai
and all within will die.

Those who ambushed then came in,
set everything on fire,
and Ai became a flaming pyre
consuming all who worshiped Baal.
The men of Ai looked back, and saw the smoke
which rose high and fear evoked.
There was nowhere they could flee,
no route out to being free.
They were caught within a trap
for on no side was there a gap.
All were killed by edge of sword¹
as commanded by the Lord;
and Ai, destroyed by flame, desolate became,
became a dusty heap in grim decay,
and so it lies until this day.

The king of Ai was hanged upon a tree
by Joshua's decree.
Then, Joshua built an altar of stones²
and wrote thereon words by all known;
'Twas the Laws of Moses he wrote there
with great care and a silent prayer,³
that all could see and thus be blessed
by all these holy words expressed.

¹ Joshua 8:25 Twelve thousand people of Ai were killed.

² Joshua 8:30, On Mount Ebal, of whole stones.

³ Author's image.

The Sun and the Moon Stood Still

*There came a miracle of another kind -
one to stagger the human mind.
God made the sun and moon stand still
by the power of His Will.*

The evil Amorites¹ were making war
and were close to Gibeon's² door.
The Gibeonites under threat
that they would be beset
went to Joshua seeking aid
against the coming terrible raid.

God spoke to Joshua:
Be not afraid!
The Amorites will meet defeat!
By My command, they will Gibeon not withstand.
Then God let loose His mighty Power!
First He confused the Amorites
so they ran around in fright, desperate in their plight.
Then God sent a rain of hail,
stones of an enormous scale
from which they fled to no avail.
Many perished in that lethal rain
but still some enemies remained.
Then Joshua , desperate³ to complete the Amorite defeat
his faith in God so powerful-
his love for him so wonderful-
before all the Israelite crowd
he shouted these words aloud:

“Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and moon, in the valley of Aijalon”

¹ Joshua 10:3

² Joshua 10:1, a Canaanite city whose men had tricked Joshua into making a covenant of peace with them.

³ Author's image.

and privately, he beseeched the Lord
a miracle to award.
The sun and the moon did each submit
stopped in their Divinely set orbits,
and stood still in obedience to God's Will.
For one whole day they stayed that way,
for the Hebrews' sake,
for their revenge to take.

There's been no other time
when such a deed was done by God Divine;¹
when God changed his laws for a human cause
because of a plan originated by a man.

Joshua's Farewell

*Joshua, having reached old age,
spoke like a teacher and a sage.*

After a lengthy time of peace,
Joshua aged, sensed his release.
He knew his earthly time was spent -
his day of death was imminent.

He gathered the elders of the tribes and said:
You've seen what God has done for you,
fought for you, slain for you.
By lot I've divided the land for you.
Be courageous, keep all the Laws,²
follow them faithfully and read them with awe.

¹ Joshua 10:14

² Moses' Book of Laws

The conquest is not yet complete,
some land still lies 'neath pagan feet;
God will keep the promise made to you -
that this land will belong to you;
the pagan tribes still here He will subdue.

Don't go among those pagan nations
nor to their gods make adaptations.
Speak not their names, nor serve, nor bow;
nor use their names to make a vow.
Your own Lord God you must revere
and in your own faith persevere.

Do not with pagans intermarry,
they are evil and your adversary.
If you marry them, God will you condemn.
If your God you leave and to them cleave,
He won't drive them out for you;
nor will he them slay nor them subdue.
If you backslide,
they will be scourges in your sides.
If you fraternize,
they'll be thorns in your eyes.
Beware - for they'll be traps and snares;
beware - lest you perish in this good land!

Then Joshua brought them together once again
that they more wisdom attain.
The leaders came to hear and to Lord God revere;
and Joshua spoke:
The Lord God of Israel speaks now to you -
He speaks of your history, and of all He did decree.
He tells of the olden times before the big flood¹ came,
of your forefathers, mentioned by name.

¹ Genesis 6 - 8

He speaks of Abraham and Isaac his son,
and of Jacob and Esau born in unison.¹
Jacob and family, who went to Egypt's land;
Moses and Aaron, who spoke out the Lord's demand.
He saved the Hebrew slaves with His mighty Hand
and brought them all to this Canaan land.
He defeated and he slew the pagan tribes for you.
He gave you everything - all you can see,
all that have you got for free.

So fear Him and serve Him in sincerity
and don't have strange² gods in your destiny -
for that He'll not forgive as long as you shall live -
for that He'll bring you harm with His everlasting Arm.

The Pledge

The people agreed that their God they'd serve
and never from Him would they swerve.
They always would love Him and Him obey -
that pledge they gave freely on that fateful day.

Then a covenant was with Joshua made,
and that it not vanish, go, or fade,
Joshua inscribed it in the Book of Laws³
with reverence and a deep sense of awe.

As witness -
so that covenant⁴ be forever known,
Joshua chose a stone,
and placed it in a special spot
that has never been forgot.

¹ Isaac's twin sons, Genesis 25:24

² Pagan gods.

³ Joshua 24:26

⁴The covenant between Joshua and the people.

After Joshua had had his say
he passed away,¹
beloved by his Holy Lord,
whom he served with faith and sword.

**“... and Israel served the Lord
all the days of Joshua ...”²**

Mission Completed

*With his brilliant, wise command
Joshua won most of Canaan land.³
By his Lord God inspired
he did all that was required.⁴*

*His given missions were threefold.
The first: to conquer and to hold
the promised land,
given to Israel by God's command.
The second: to that land divide⁵
so each tribe could there abide,
inheritance being made by lot⁶
of the land for which they'd fought.
Third: the Book of Laws must he observe
and for the people that sacred Book conserve,
so all of God's Laws be instilled,
and His Holy Will fulfilled.*

¹Joshua 24:29 , Joshua died at 110 years of age.

² Joshua 24:31

³ Joshua 13:1

⁴ Joshua 11:15

⁵ Joshua 13:9

⁶ Joshua 14:2

*Joshua, soldier of the Lord,
who won his wars by edge of sword,
was devout and to God true,
and his missions did pursue,
by the Lord God blessed, with success.*

The Miracles

*The miracles that God had sent
were all a lasting monument.
They showed His Purpose, Power and Love,
how all was formed from God above.*

*When walls fell down 'round Jericho city
and all there were slain without pity,
His purpose was shown: pagans must die;
their worship of idols was an evil lie.*

*Thus people would learn, would worship Him well,
and faith in His Being would grow to a swell.
Those miracles three,¹ brought about by His decree,
were part of the Israelite's planned destiny;
to build up the nation that He had set free,²
to be uncorrupted by idolatry.³
His people must have a strong spiritual base
to be able to live within His Holy Grace.*

¹ The crossing of the Jordan, the fall of Jericho, the sun standing still.

² Exodus 14: 21-30.

³ Exodus 20:4,5, and 23:24.

Epilogue

*It's been a tale of agony,
writ in blood in history
of what did pagan tribes befall -
those who worshipped Ashtaroth and Baal.
'Twas God's command to cleanse the land,
to make it clean
of the evil and obscene,
so that His faith He could install
replacing Ashtaroth and Baal -
idols made of stone, who sat upon a man-made throne.
No more grief from false belief.
No more human sacrifice
where living children paid the dreadful price;
where adults also died that way,
when burning fire did them slay.
No more would priestesses entice,
offering a false paradise,
by practices that were obscene,
that did participants demean
trying to their gods appease
with sensual and base orgies.*

***Just as all evil was drowned in His flood ¹
the worship of Baal ² He wiped out with blood.***

*God's people now could live His way,
Him obey and to Him pray.
Evil had been fought with God's might,
changing darkness into light.*

¹ Genesis 6:17, 7:17-24

² Judges 2:13, Baal and Ashtaroth (his consort) were the idols that were worshipped.

CHAPTER TWO

*Judges*¹

**“In those days there was no king in Israel;
every man did what was proper in his own eyes.”²**

Prologue

*Joshua was dead
and different times now lay ahead.
The older ones who followed him
and tried to function without sin
were dwindling and were dying off.
Their children then began to scoff.
The new generation got into contamination,
began to worship pagan gods
without thinking it was odd.
They intermarried without thought
not wondering ‘should’ or ‘ought’,
but went on in their careless way
leaving the old faith to decay.
Evil ways began to grip,
evil thoughts began to trip.*

*Since there was no king
to rule the land, to whom to cling,
every man did what was right in his own eyes,³
which was often foolish, rarely wise.⁴
Pagan pockets still remained*

¹ The period of the judges between Joshua and Samuel lasted for approximately 350 years. During this period there were 14 judges, of whom four are written about here.

² Judges, 17:6.

³ Judges 17:6

⁴ Deuteronomy 32:6

*where they'd not been driven out nor slain,
so the Israelites – no more restrained
learned pagan ways and them retained,
Idolatry became widespread,
to pagan gods¹ they bowed their head.
Intermarriage was seen as right,
though a sin in Lord God's sight.
The pagan culture gained in Israel's domain.*

*Now – very angry was the Lord
and gave them to the pagan sword,
hoping they might learn
their old religion not to spurn.
Eventually, under their pagan heel
they suffered, knelt to God to appeal
that forgiveness he would grant
and idolatry they would recant.
The Lord God then did relent
and a righteous leader² sent
against the pagan ones to fight,
to the pagans smite.*

*Then they again entered God's domain
followed the laws that He'd ordained,
freed from idolatrous sin
they returned to worship Him.*

*Over and over the cycle went;
idolatry being prevalent,
the Israelites suffering punishment
experiencing much torment
until they became penitent
and of their evil did repent.*

*Over and over came their lament
saying that they did repent
begging God that he relent
and end the pagan instrument.*

¹ Baal and Ashtaroth

² i.e. a *judge*

*Over and over God then sent
a leader great, benevolent,
fighting pagans virulent
and winning battles subsequent.
Conversion then they underwent
and learned much as God had meant.
For the nation had a righteous base¹
given to them by God's Grace,
which did evil ways displace
and led them back to God's embrace.
But when their leader passed away,
they went again astray.
So God again did mortify
and with pain did purify;
and again a leader sent
to put a stop to their descent,
to fight with might the pagan heel
and move again the turning wheel,
to the people sanctify
and the Lord God glorify.*

Ehud the Cunning

*Ehud the Benjaminite
learned early how to fight.²
He was clever, cunning, very tough,
and could deal with matters rough.*

Ehud was short and broad with muscled arms,³
able to inflict great harm.
Being a left-handed man,
he carried out a special plan;
it was devised by him, was very grim.
It needed someone strong and smart
with a calm, courageous heart.

When Israel began again to sin,
and the pagan ways began to win,

¹ The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20)

² Author's image.

³ Author's image.

God chose again, from a pagan domain,¹
a tribe whose purpose was to smite, their lives to blight.
Moab did Israel overrun
and for eighteen years they served Eglon.
Then, caught in a snare, in despair,
they turned to God with fervent prayer.
Help us! they cried,
we cannot this abide!
God heard their torment and Ehud, his instrument, sent.²

The Israelites, being astute, sent to Eglon a great tribute.
Ehud, as messenger, was to please the king, to him defer.
A dagger he made with a two-edged blade,
a dagger long, sharp and strong.
He hid the weapon beneath his cloak
in preparation for his master stroke.
The dagger rested on his right thigh,
up quite high;
with his left hand he could it draw
before anyone the action saw.
After the royal gift was shown
Ehud asked they be alone
saying he had a secret to declare
about which Eglon was then unaware.
The king – curious and with greed,
agreed to proceed.

Now the king was very, very fat
and in his little room alone he sat.

Ehud said:

I have a message sent by God to you –
then with his left hand, from his right thigh his dagger drew
and the king he slew!

With a swift and well-aimed thrust,
he plunged the dagger deep inside the gut
making so deep a cut
that the shaft and blade got stuck
and he could not pull it out, or move it about,
for the fat closed in on it
around the slit.

¹ From Moab, whose king was Eglon, Judges 3:14.

² Judges 3:15.

Eglon collapsed and died
with the dagger still inside.

After Ehud fled, the courtiers found Eglon on the ground;
horrified at the bloody harm, they sounded an alarm.

Ehud, in safety, ran away,
the news at home to relay.

He told the Israelites to him obey;
he shouted out:

Follow me and you'll be free!
By God's Will we will attack,
and take our country back!

The Moabites, ten thousand able bodied men
were conquered, were all slain –
ending Moab's reign.

Then Israel lived without fear for eighty years.

Deborah, Beloved Prophetess, and Barak

*Her mind, her heart, her soul
committed were to God's control.
People came, sat at her feet,
her wise judgements to entreat.*

She dwelt beneath a great palm tree
her long grey hair flowing free.¹
She was tall and thin, with sun-bronzed skin,
her face strong, yet feminine;
She had deep – set eyes of softest brown
that matched her long and flowing gown.
Her feet were often bare,
especially when she knelt in prayer,
her face intent, uplifted, reverent,
her love for God most eloquent.
Her fame spread far and wide
reached many needing her to guide.

After Ehud was dead,
the people's faith in God had fled,

¹ Author's image

they turned to worship Baal instead.
Because they had become depraved,
God let them be again enslaved.
It was the time of Jabin's reign,¹
a reign cruel and inhumane
with much misery and many slain.
Under Sisera, his army's head
was much oppression, many dead
For twenty years he ruled the land
with a cruel and iron hand.
The Israelites had great fear
and begged the Lord to interfere.

Deborah called for Barak –
together they'd take power back.

Barak had been a fighter long,
he was powerful and strong,²
a man brave, to whom God courage gave.
He was devout, yet in himself he had some doubt,
but with Deborah he made a pair –
they were a power to beware;
with ten thousand men they went,
in their success confident,
with faith they were God's instrument.
As they went on their way,
Deborah prophesied that on that day
a woman would Sisera slay.

The Lord brought about complete defeat.
Sisera, his forces in retreat
on foot fled,
leaving all his men for dead;
and indeed, all were slain in that campaign –
as God ordained.
Sisera – on foot – fled to Jael's³ tent.
She, appearing innocent,
invited him to enter in,
and covered him with a good skin.

¹ Jabin was king of the Canaanites at Hazor. Judges 4:2

² Author's image

³ Jael was the wife of Heber, the Kenite who was at peace with King Jabin. Judges 4:17

She gave him milk to drink, and told him to have cheer,
to have no fear.

He said to her:

Stand before the door;
if a person does appear
and asks if a man is here
say No – and they will go.

Then, when he slept, she, very adept,
hammered a peg¹ right through his head.
and he lay dead.

Jael had struck a blow for Israel!
Then when Barak came, she exclaimed:
come and see, Sisera is dead
with a peg right through his head.

So God defeated king Jabin –
for the Hebrews He did win.

Deborah and Barak sang a song,²
ecstatic and long,
praising God for all and for Jabin's fall.
And praising Jael too, that Sisera she slew.

Then there were forty years of peace,
as fighting ceased and prosperity increased.

Deborah – judge and prophetess,
by God blessed,
with Barak, judged Israel for forty years
and was by the people much revered

The Sword of Gideon

*Gideon was called to the service of the Lord
to conquer enemies by edge of sword.
He was strong and brave, yet a humble man,
who played his part in Lord God's plan.*

He was tall and slim and long of limb,³

¹ It was a tent peg. Judges 4:21.

² Judges 5:1-27

³ Author's image.

with grave brown eyes, knowing, wise;
his wavy hair was shoulder length
and rippling muscles spoke of strength.
Inside him was a lion's heart, intelligence to spare,
and devotion to his Lord God rare.

In Gideon's day, there was much dismay.
Israel had God disobeyed and betrayed,
doing evil in His Sight,
so He set them under Midian might.
For seven bitter years
they suffered, and wept copious tears.
They lived in dugouts¹ and in caves,
wherever nature shelter gave.

They were under three-fold attack²
as their land was all ransacked.
They were oppressed and dispossessed.
Their enemies came in amount
too numerous to count;
with their livestock, camels, tents,
they plundered as they went.
What Israel did sow, their enemies did reap,
leaving them to starve and weep.
Like swarms of locusts they devoured
and the land they scoured,
eating all that they could see
leaving only sad debris.
The Israelites, impoverished and in despair
sent up to God a fervent prayer,
begging Him to give them aid
against the pagans who did raid.

Gideon was threshing wheat that they might eat,
hidden by a broad oak tree
where the Midianites could not see.
The angel of the Lord appeared, radiant in light,
dressed in white³;
then – he sat beneath the oak,

¹ In the mountains. Judges 6:2

² From the Midianites, the Amalekites, and "children of the east", Judges 6:3

³ Author's image.

and to Gideon spoke.
The Lord is with you, O mighty hero !
Gideon said: I beg you my Lord –
if God is with us Israelites
why are we in this dreadful plight?
Where are the wonders of His Might?
He has deserted us and we are lost,
paying a terrible cost,
for we are beneath the Midian heel
everything we have they steal.
Then the Lord turned to him and said:
Go with all your might
and you will win the fight.
Behold, I have sent you!
I know what you can do.

Gideon said:
With what shall I Israel save?
My doubts are grave;
my father's house is poor
and I'm the least and so obscure.
The Lord said to him:
I shall be with you all the way through;
you shall strike Midian
as if it were a single man.
Then the Lord left before Gideon's eyes,
leaving him to agonize.
He was terrified,
for he feared that he would die.¹
The Lord returned and said to him:
Peace be with you!
Hear me and do not fear,
you shall not die, on that you can rely.
And the Lord went, ending that divine event.

The enemies were gathering for war;²
they were an enormous corps³
as across the landscape they did pour.
The Spirit of the Lord flowed over Gideon,

¹ Because he saw an angel face to face.

² Judges 6:33 The Midianites, the Amalekites, and "the children of the east" gathered in the valley of Jezreel.

³ The Midianites numbered one hundred and thirty five thousand.

who then knew what must be done.
He blew his horn with a loud sound
that did everywhere resound;
many messengers were sent
for his army to augment.

The Miracle¹ of the Three Hundred

Gideon and his host rose early in the day
in preparation for the fray.
The Midianites were in a valley to his north,²
and from there they would come forth.
The Lord said to Gideon:
You have too many men to win over Midian;
when they win they'll think its their own feat,
and will feel conceit.
They must know it is the Lord
who defeats the Midian horde.
So they did a test from which they chose the best.
The Lord God said to Gideon:
With the three hundred that remain
I will save Israel's domain.
I will be your strength
throughout this battle's length.

Into three bands did Gideon his men divide
and thus he did them guide:
He gave to each an empty pitcher and put a lamp inside,
and put a *shofar* in the other hand
to be blown upon demand.
He said to them:
Watch me and copy what I do,
when I blow my horn, then blow yours too;
and shout out:
The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!!!
We'll surround the camp
carrying the pitcher with the lamp;
break the pitcher, hold the lamp in your left hand
and in the right, hold the *shofar* tight
and blow with all your might.

¹ Judges 7:2, God wanted the victory to be known as a miracle.

² Judges 7:1.

And the three hundred did as Gideon had bid.
The enemy was amazed, dazed, completely fazed.
God set up the kill according to His Will.
He sent confusion and delusion;
they turned upon each other –
each man slew his brother.
The enemy then fled
leaving many lying dead.

Gideon sent messengers to many tribes,
who did the victory describe.
So they came and joined the fight
and vanquished the enemy Midianites.
At last, as more enemies were slain
and Israel did its land regain,
the Midianites were subdued,
and no more their fight renewed.

Hostilities ceased
and the country lived in peace,
for forty years –
finally a release from fears.

To a ripe old age Gideon survived,
had a great many loving wives;
and had a large number of sons ¹
before his earthly life was done.
On his death bed he well knew
that to God's mission he'd been true.

Tragically, after he died, there was no gain
for Israel turned to Baal again.
They forgot once more their loving Lord
who rescued them by Gideon's sword;
nor to Gideon's house were they kind –
kept not his goodness in their mind;
they forgot he did succeed
and how at long last they were freed.
Again, idolatry began to reign
and the people God disdained,
going back to evil ways,

¹ Judges 8:30. Gideon had seventy sons by his wives, and one, Abimelech, from his concubine.

and setting up more tragic days.

*Farewell, Gideon,
a strong and brave and humble man,
who played his part in Lord God's plan.*

The Mighty Samson¹ – Strong Man of the Lord

*Samson – hero to the Israelites,
in whose strength they took delight;
a holy person in God's Sight,
who fought Philistines with all his might.
He had a strong and handsome face²
glowing with God's Grace.
His black hair, so thick and long³
was what made him super strong
His back was as an iron rod,
his shoulders massive, hard and broad.
His hands were big, with a powerful grip.
With his tall height and his great might
he was a man who'd win a fight.*

*Again had Israel gone astray
and followed evil pagan ways.
They worshiped Ashteroth and Baal
in their tragic spiritual fall.
So God's anger grew
and from the Israelites He withdrew.
Again, He sent them punishment
so they'd repent.
This time, the Philistines were his violent instrument⁴
to torment and cause lament.*

A Danite woman⁵ who could not conceive,
a fact which caused her much to grieve,
an angel saw, one thrilling day,
whom the Lord had sent to say:
You shall conceive and bear a son
a very special blessed one.

¹ Judges 13:5.

² Author's image.

³ He wore his hair in seven locks.

⁴ Judges 13:1. The Israelites lived under Philistine rule for forty years.

⁵ Judges 13:2. She was married to Manoah and lived in Zorah.

Be careful, drink nothing strong
for that would be very wrong.
Drink no wine, any time,
nor dare to eat of food unclean
for that is harmful and obscene.
No razor may touch your son's head,
his hair on it must grow instead.
While in your womb God will him bless¹ –
great qualities will he possess,
and he will have much success
to aid your people in distress.
He is destined to fulfill God's Will.

The woman to her husband came and exclaimed,
that she met a man of God who had no name,
but like an angel he appeared,
awesome, with eyes blue and clear,²
with hair as golden as the sun
and great beauty that could stun.
A radiant light did him surround
leaving her entranced, spellbound.
She told her husband all the words that she had heard.

Manoah offered up meat and a kid,
and as he did
the flame, with the angel deep inside,
ascended high into the sky;
an amazing, beautiful sight
of soaring brilliant light.
The couple watched the swift ascent, reverent,
and in awe and wonderment.
Dumbfounded, they fell, faces to the ground.
Manoah, fearing death,³ was in despair;
but his wife, more spiritually aware,
said to him: God will not us kill,
that is not His Will.

¹ Judges 13:5. He'll be a Nazirite unto God. See also Numbers 6:1-8.

² Author's image.

³ Judges 13:22. Because they'd seen an angel of the Lord.

The woman gave birth to a son;
the name they gave him was Samson.
He would God serve
with vigour and with verve.

Samson's Marriage

When Samson was grown, his great strength shown,
He spied a Philistine girl¹-
as lovely as a pearl.²
She was exquisite, tall and slim
with sparkling eyes and dusky skin.
His meeting her was not by chance³
'twas to create a circumstance
that could the chance of war advance.
He told his parents he wanted her,
but his parents did demur.
No! No! they cried: you can't her wed,
choose a Hebrew maid instead;
you must wed within our creed –
do not commit a gross misdeed.
But Samson, not letting them impede,
insisted to proceed.
He chose a marriage of a different kind
than his parents thought he had in mind.
The girl would be his spouse
but live still within her father's house.
There he could her visits pay,
and as long as he wished he could stay.

One day, when he to Timnath made his way
a young lion came at him and roared,
and he, not armed with a sword,
with both hands bare,

¹ In the Philistine town of Timnath.

² Author's image.

³ Judges 14:4.

with strength and courage rare,
tore the lion apart, and did depart.
When later he saw again the lion that he'd slain
it was lying dead, outspread,
and had a swarm of bees inside
with honey that they did provide.
Oh! He cried, what a tasty treat,
and took the honey out to eat.
He continued on his way
to celebrate his wedding day.

To his wedding feast were invited friends¹ to attend.

Thirty Philistine men came
and Samson offered them a game.
'Twas a riddle he put to them –
a riddle he thought was a gem,
since he thought he would them best
with his cunning text.

It went like this:

'Out of the eater came forth meat
and out of the strong there came forth sweet.'
The men had one week to the answer seek.²

The bet, which made them fret,
was thirty garments and thirty sheets
to the one who did defeat.

Try as they might the guests could not see the light.

They could not the riddle understand
and so the answer did demand
from Samson's mate
threatening her with a fiery fate.

They said to her:

find the answer from your spouse
or we'll burn you and your father's house.

With her eyes aflood with tears,
her anxious heart all full of fears,
she went to Samson to inquire

¹ Philistine friends of his in-laws to be.

² Judges 14:17 the wedding feast lasted seven days.

the answer that would stave off fire.
But Samson told her the answer not,
nor of his plot.

But she wept and pled for seven days
threatened she would make him pay
until he gave in, and so they did win.

The men came and said to him:

‘What is sweeter than honey?

What is stronger than a lion?’

Samson said that they had learned that
straight from his mate:

Had you not ‘plowed with my calf’,
you would not have solved my riddle!¹

He felt the Lord His guidance send,
felt God’s Spirit o’er him descend,
and knew what Lord God did intend.
He went down to a Philistine town,²
where thirty men he attacked and slew
taking their garments as his due.

To the winners he delivered on his bet
so he would not be in their debt.
Thirty garments, thirty sheets, did they receive
so they could not be aggrieved.

After a while, Samson, with a smile,
as a new bridegroom
came to visit in his wife’s room.

Her father would not let him enter:

he said to Samson:

You are too late –

I thought you did her hate,
so I’ve given her to your good friend,
so now you have to bend.

¹ Judges 14:18.

² Ashkelon Judges 14:19.

Her younger sister is more fair –
take her to be with you to pair.

Samson said:
Am I less to blame than they who did betray?
Though I did some harm one day
I'll make them further pay.
So he did not overlook, but his revenge he took.
Three hundred foxes¹ he sought and caught,
turned them tail to tail with a torch between each pair
and with great care
set each torch on fire, letting loose the group entire
into the Philistine farms
to the crops to do great harm.
The foxes ran according to his plan;
They ran through the Philistine domain
burning standing grain,
burning vineyards, olive trees, struggling to get free.
The Philistines, inflamed, roared: Who's to blame?
What is his name?
Who did this vile deed?
In our revenge we will succeed!
They were told:
It was Samson who has this done;
he is the Timnites son-in-law
whom people saw,
who burned those fields, destroying all their yields;
for the father gave his wife unto his friend,
bringing his marriage to an end.
The Philistines commenced to take vengeance
for Samson's offence.
Their means was to kill innocence with violence.
They burned alive Samson's wife,
thus ending horribly her young life;
then they burned her father as well,
within the house where he did dwell.

¹ Judges 15:4

Samson now had an excuse to use,
He said to them: I'll take revenge and then
I'll cease, and give you peace.
With all his might he did them smite;
a multitude he slayed that day to make them pay.
Then he left and dwelt in Etam's cleft.¹

The raging Philistines to Judah stormed,
over the land they swarmed.
The men of Judah said in dread:
Why have you come 'gainst us?
What's the reason for all this fuss?
The Philistines in angry hate replied,
telling what Samson did unto their side.
We wish to Samson find
that we can him bind;
to punish him we have in mind;
as he did to us, so we'll do to him.
Three thousand Judah's men went to the rock Etam,
and to Samson said:
Don't you know the Philistines are our foe?
They rule us and they dominate,
determine what will be our fate.
What have you to us done?
What have you now begun?

Samson gravely answered:
As they did to me, so have I done to them,
for their deeds I do them condemn.
They said to him, faces most concerned and grim:
we'll have to give in to their demand,
bind you and put you in their hand.
Samson spoke with courage, yet with grief:²
Swear to me you won't me slay this day.
They promised, with sincerity:
No! No! we definitely won't kill you,

¹ Judges 15:8 Etam was a rock, and the cleft was at the top.

² Author's image.

we'll only bind you to subdue.
So to the Philistines they gave him, bound
with two new ropes, that did surround.
The Philistines, when they saw him,
shouted out with an enormous sound.
Then did God send a Spirit¹ of His to descend
and over Samson flow
so that he could defeat his foe.
His ropes softened and fell away,
much to the Philistines' dismay.
The jawbone of an ass by the roadside lay.
Samson seized it and used it to slay
a thousand Philistines on that day,
in that famed fray
when he made them dearly pay.

Then he judged in Israel for twenty years,
while the Philistines still domineered.

Samson and Delilah

Delilah was of the Philistines,
whom God had judged to be unclean.
She was seductive, tall,²
and did many men enthrall.
Her wavy dark cascading hair
crowned a figure that was rare;
her almond eyes, smoldering, smokey grey
did her passions well convey.
She was a woman strong, who could do wrong,
who could a man betray and even slay,
with no conscience in her way.
Samson loved her with great desire
her beauty set him all afire.

¹ Judges 15:14

² Author's image

The Philistine lords spoke to her:
We want you to him entice,
be seductive, very nice.
Apprise us where his great strength lies,
so we'll know how to assail
and with certainty prevail.
We'll bind him then, so he can't flee
and do to him great injury.
If our wish you gratify, our pay to you will be quite high.
Eleven hundred pieces of silver from each
is the sum that you will reach.
We'll gladly pay that fee, if you to our plan agree.

Delilah said to Samson, seductively:
Hear my plea! Please tell me
where does your great strength lie?
From whence is its supply?
With what and where can you be bound around,
to you disarm, to do you harm?

Of course Samson understood her fuss
and would not the truth discuss.
He lied, laughing inside
but with his face stern, as her requests he did spurn.

With three tests she failed, and at him railed –
reproachful, angry, full of hate
that he once more did her frustrate.
She cried out, desperate:
how can you say, every single day,
that you love me with all your heart
and that you don't want us to part,
when you've mocked me for times three,
each time I've bound you, you went free.
She pressed and nagged him every day, in every way,
which on his nerves did play,
and fearing she would go away,
forgetting she might him betray,
and the price he'd have to pay,
that his enemies might him slay,

he lost his way.
He broke down and had to say
what was in his heart –
with loss of will – the truth he did to her impart.
He said to her:
I am a Nazirite, dedicated to the Lord, and holy in His Sight;
from the time I was conceived,
I did that identity receive;
from my hair's great length
stems my enormous strength;
if it were shaven off,
my enemies could scoff.
For then like other men I'd be,
and they could vanquish me.
When Delilah saw that he'd told her all he knew,
and she was certain it was true
she told the lords and got her pay
for the man she did betray.
How evil was that treacherous deed,
motivated by her greed,¹
from a heart so cold that it loved only gold.

Then she made him sleep upon her knee,
while a man shaved off the hair that kept him free.

Delilah said:
The Philistines be upon you , Samson.
He awoke from his sleep
unaware of what he'd reap;
that his strength failed when he was assailed
and his enemies prevailed.
He knew then that God withdrew
for to Him he'd not been true,
that himself and God he had betrayed
on that tragic day.
He now faced misery and great agony.

Now that the lords had got their prize
they cruelly gouged out his eyes;

¹Author's image

a gruesome deed
typical of their evil creed.
After they made him blind, and did with fetters bind,
in the prison house they made him grind
like a beast going round and round,
tired feet dragging on the ground.
What a heart-rending sight –
the mighty man who'd lost his might,
the fighter who could no more fight,
who lost the light
living in this dreadful plight,
knowing people came to stare;¹
feeling misery and despair.
Yet inside he said a prayer
to God that he be spared,
that for a little time he be freed
to get revenge for their cruel deed.
His hair began to grow again,
of which his tormenters did in ignorance remain,
and as it grew back, he gained in strength for one last attack.

The pagan lords, rejoicing in his downfall,
happy to see him crawl,
gathered in their worship place,
to sacrifice² and see his disgrace;
to watch him suffer and so have joy
that they were able him to destroy.

They brought him from his prison place
him to abase;
Samson bade the lad who led him by the hand
to cooperate with his demand:
lead me to the pillars which do the house uphold
the lad he told,
and place me so I can lean between.
Then he felt the two pillars with his two hands
and he knew God would understand

¹ Author's image.

² Judges 16:3 to sacrifice to Dagan, their pagan idol god.

what it was he wished to do, his plan to pursue.

The house was full, with lords and people worshipful –
three thousand on the roof alone
watched Samson with their hearts of stone.
Samson, his heart full of faith and love
prayed to his Lord God above:
Remember me, I pray, this once;
listen my Lord to their cruel taunts,
strengthen me to revenge my eyes,
on those who Dagan idolize.
With both his hands, taking a strong and solid stand
he pushed at the pillars and the house fell in
– killing all within for their great sins.

At his death he did more pagans slay
than in all his fighting days.

He was buried by his family, freed at last from agony.

His was a story of tragic glory!

*Samson the warrior-judge, did his best his mission to fulfill
and to carry out God's Will.
His weakness led to his downfall
but he still stands very tall,
for he loved his God until the end,
even in his last torment.*

*He was a hero to the Israelites,
as a Nazirite, and for his great might,
and for reflection of God's Holy Light.
He will live for evermore
in the scriptures and in folklore .*

Epilogue to the Book of Judges

*Days of darkness, times of light,¹
days of weakness, times of might,
days of sinning, falls from grace
abandonment of God's embrace.*

*Days of bitter punishment,
then times when God the judges sent
to release the nation from torment,
to halt their evil and descent.*

*Like rebellious children slow to learn,
who for parental love do yearn,
at times they needed fright
to learn what was right.*

Then God forgave, and gave the help they craved.

*And thus the wheel revolved – to idolatry the people turned
and their own true God they spurned.*

*Punishment they earned, and it burned –
the people suffered and they learned –
and to their God they then returned.*

*At last those times came to an end,
a new beginning God did send.*

*A new era now begins –
Of Samuel and kings*

¹ The combined years of peace and righteousness outnumbered the years of failure and persecution.

CHAPTER THREE

Kings of Israel — Saul to Solomon

The Prophet Samuel — Anointer of Kings

*Samuel – cloaked in Godly rays,
devout and pure throughout his days,
served the Lord in many ways
sought always to fulfill God's Holy Will;
God made him His prophet great,
chose him to be His advocate,
chose him to anoint and consecrate
and His Will to communicate.*

Hannah sat with her head bent,
her fervent prayer, reverent;
her heart was bitter with torment
for to her no child was sent -
she was a barren wife.

Yet with her husband Elkanah there was no strife
for her spouse adored her as before,
and even more,
his love for her deep and complete.

He, however, had another wife
who indeed brought Hannah strife.
Peninnah was her name
and harrassment was her game.
Because Hannah had not yet conceived
Peninnah always made her grieve;
she provoked her, made her fret
that her barrenness she not forget.
Peninnah felt she could be rude
for she herself had a large brood;

sons and daughters she possessed
and believed that God her blessed.¹

Hannah, weeping bitter tears
for her childless years,
finally ceased to eat, feeling ultimate defeat.

It was time to go to the temple at Shiloh,²
to God to bring a sacrificial offering.
Elkanah gazed upon her heart-shaped face³
whose loveliness expressed her grace -
a face now wan and pale,
her hair covered with a veil,
her eyes, large, sad and dark
showed no lightness and no spark.
His Hannah - his beautiful bride,
his joy and pride.

He looked at her with troubled eyes,
wishing he was very wise,
wishing he could her advise.

Then, her tears he could no more abide,
and he spoke - as inwardly he sighed -

Why do you not eat? he did entreat,
Why do you weep? Why is your heart so much aggrieved?

Is it because you've not conceived?
Am I not better than ten sons for you?
Is not my love ever strong and true?

He made this heartfelt appeal,
and then they went to take their meal.

Later in that day she went to pray⁴
where Eli the priest did stay,
Bitterly she wept and silently she prayed
that the Lord would send her aid.

She made a sacred vow, if God her prayer would allow:
Please send me a special son
holier than anyone,

¹Author's image.

² I Samuel 1:3; the annual sacrifice at Shilo.

³ Author's image.

⁴ I Samuel 10-12; at the temple

and I will dedicate him all to Thee -
serving Thee will be his destiny;
and she further pled: no razor will ever touch his head.¹
So she sat in silent prayer, in her despair.

Because Eli saw only her lips move,
but no sound heard, he did not approve;
began to think she'd had too much to drink.
He spoke to her:
How long have you been drinking wine?
So much to drink is never fine.
Hannah answered him, her face sad and grim:
I am a woman deeply sad, in sorrow clad.
I am not a woman bad, I do not what God forbade.
I do not drink wine at anytime.
To the Lord I've opened up my soul -
poured out my heartfelt goal.

Then Eli answered her:
Go in peace. May God give you your release,
may He grant your prayer,
may He further pain you spare.

And Hannah said:
May I find grace in your sight,
I think you've helped me in my plight.
And she went away with hope²
and feeling too she would not mope.
Her spirits lifted high, with sparkle in her eye,
no more burdened by a weight - she ate -
expectant of a change in fate,
that good news would her await,
hopeful God had heard her prayer
and soon she would a fine son bear.

Early the next day,
they worshiped and went on their way.
When they returned to their home
her husband took her for his own;

¹ like the Nazirites.

² Author's image

and the Lord did not forget
her prayer that she a son beget,
and she conceived, her goal achieved,
and a special son received.
She gave him Samuel as his name,
a name that would become acclaimed;

She said:
that 'twas because she asked him of the Lord,
that God did her a son award.
With gratitude and joy¹
she greeted her new baby boy.

The time came near
for offerings given once a year.
Elkanah and all his house
but without Hannah, his loving spouse,
went to do that sacred deed
as that was part of Israel's creed.

Hannah still fed her baby at her breast,
that boy with whom God had her blest;
until she had him weaned
she wished that he not yet be seen.

She said to Elkanah:
When he is weaned, he will appear,
and that time is not yet here.
To God he will belong.

Elkanah replied:
Do what you think is good,
do what you think you should.

When the boy was weaned,
Hannah, happy and serene,²
gave her son into God's care
'cause of His answer to her prayer.
To Eli she brought her son,
her precious and beloved one,

¹ Author's image

² Author's image

and said to him:
I'm the woman you saw one day
as for a son I prayed,
and here he is today!!
I've brought him to the Lord to serve
and learn how to His laws observe.

Then, rejoicing and with love,
she prayed to the Lord above:
There's none so holy as the Lord, our Rock
who cares for us, His loving flock;
be not arrogant nor puffed with pride
for God knows all that dwells inside;
all your actions are by Him weighed
and for your sins you will be paid.
Mighty men He does degrade,
but those who stumble, are afraid,
receive support, receive His aid.
Those who with food are full now work for bread,
and hungry people are now fed.
He fed the hungry, demeaned the full,
made the beggars bountiful.
Those who were barren gave birth to seven;
and she who had many, who had the most
and with pride did of them boast,
is now weak, is now bleak.
The Lord does kill, and make alive,
and those who die He can revive.
He makes the poor, He makes the rich,
He places all into their niche.
He lifts up high, He puts down low,
from His will He does bestow.
He raises poor out of the dust
for He is merciful and just,
and sets them on a glorious throne
of their very own.
He takes care of all His saints,
and keeps the wicked in restraint.
His adversaries He will break,
His enemies will fear and quake,

for He shall judge until the end
and then justice He will send.
He will give strength unto His king -
to His anointed honour bring.

- *So prayed Hannah to the Lord* -

Elkanah returned to his own place
to his wife's embrace,
her lovely face now filled with grace.
The boy was left with God's family¹
to live out his destiny,
to serve at first before Eli,
and learn to be God's devotee.

Now Eli's sons went not in God's way,
but Samuel did God obey,
and his parents, by Eli blessed
received the Lord's largesse,
for Hannah conceived five times more,
three sons, two daughters more she bore.
Samuel flourished well and grew,
and his God he served and knew.
Eli then grew very old,
and of his two sons were stories told;
he heard of all their evil deeds
how they disobeyed the Lord God's creed,
how with women² they were impure,
and Eli could not such things endure!
He said to them as he condemned:
I hear evil things of you.
Why do you do the things you do?
You make God's people to transgress;
you cause sin, you cause distress.
If against the Lord you sin
you cannot win,
no one can thwart God's discipline.

¹ In the temple at Shiloh.

² I Samuel 2:22 ; women who served at the Temple.

But they listened not to him and continued with their sins.

*But Samuel gained favour in God's sight
and did also man delight.
He was a handsome boy
who brought delight and joy.
The promise of what he would be - his destiny -
was there for all to see.
He was absorbed in matters spiritual
and learned with care the ritual.*

A man of God came one day, a message to relay,
To Eli he appeared, bringing messages loud and clear.

He warned that God would not tolerate
that Eli's sons Him desecrate
and His laws violate.

God said:

Because you honour not my Law
I will My support withdraw.

Those who honour Me, I'll honour in my turn,
and my respect they'll earn.

But those who Me despise
shall be lowered in My Eyes.

God continued:

I want you to know as My sign -
that both your sons will die -
and on the same day, for my Laws they've disobeyed.

In Egypt when your ancestor was enslaved,
an honour to him I gave -

I chose him to be my priest,
to be the best - not the least.

But now -

I arrange that there will be a change.
A new priest will move into this place
one who will the office not disgrace;
a faithful priest who will follow
what is in My Heart,
who won't from Me depart;
a priest who'll do what I desire,

do as I require.
Samuel served the Lord 'neath Eli's eyes -
his duties Eli supervised.

God Speaks to Samuel

*In those days, the Lord's Word was rarely heard –
that miracle seldom occurred,
but now Samuel heard that word.*

'Twas in the Temple, in the night;
Eli's eyes were dim, had lost their sight;
he lay outspread upon his bed.
The Lord's lamp was still lit,
and Samuel, God's favourite,
was sleeping near the sacred Ark
in the growing dark.
The Lord called out to Samuel:
He said: Here I am;
Samuel to Eli ran,
and spoke: Is it me you wish to see?
I did not call you, Eli said,
lie back down upon your bed.

Three times in all,
the Lord called to Samuel the small;
Three times in all
Eli sent Samuel back to his bed.

Then Eli realized, for he was wise,
that t'was God's word that Samuel had heard.
So to Samuel he said:
Put your head back on your bed;
if the Lord calls you again,
answer him in this vein :
Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.
The Lord appeared to the future seer
and called his name yet once again:
Samuel ! Samuel!
And Samuel answered :
Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.
The Lord said to Samuel:

I shall do such a thing
as will make both ears ring.
The downfall of Elis's house is what the future brings.
For he censured not his sons
when their commitments were undone,
although he was well aware
since they were within his care.
No sacrifice will this atone -
I them disown.
Samuel lay until the morn
feeling fearful, feeling torn.
How could he tell Eli this news?¹
Would he not be hurt, feel abused?
Or be confused?
Would he speak with an excuse?
Or to listen would he refuse?

At last he opened up the temple door
and heard Elis's voice of him implore:
Samuel, my son, what said God to you?
Tell me true!
Or what would happen to me will happen to you.
Samuel did not withhold what God him told.
Eli, face drawn and pale, did not bewail.²
Although he was stunned and aghast
his faith in God remained steadfast.
He said: He is the Lord!
He will do what is good in His Eyes -
He cannot do otherwise.

*Samuel was a holy man,
as ordained by God in His own plan.
Nothing he said did God reject,
for 'twas Samuel He did select
to be His prophet – faithful and perfect.
As a judge, with quick and brilliant mind,
he understood about mankind.*

¹ Author's image

² Author's image.

*His understandings were profound,
his deep insights others did astound.
He had purity of soul,
kept emotions in control.
Though gentle, he was also strong,
he never sinned, was never wrong.
He was a paragon – a rare phenomenon.
His fame quickly spread –
all through Israel it sped.*

The words of Samuel were known to all of Israel.

Just as Samuel foretold,
when he did not God's word withhold,
both of Eli's sons were in battle killed
as God prophesied, and by His Will.¹
When Eli heard, he fell and died.
He had judged for forty years;
many in Israel held him dear.²

Samuel spoke to the people:
If you turn to God with all your heart,
you must from pagan gods depart;
serve only Him without sin,
and He'll save you from the Philistines.
So Israel gave up Ashteroth and the Baalim³
with practices grim,
They gave the Lord their dedication
from their whole nation.
They confessed their sins
and offered sacrifice to Him;
they begged Samuel to pray
that He mercy would display.
Samuel prayed and God heard his word.

It was a time of war, with hardship fraught,
and many battles had against the Philistines been fought.
When the Philistines again drew near

¹ I Samuel 3:13

² Author's image.

³ I Samuel 7:4.

and the Hebrews were beset with fear,
God intervened.
He sent loud thunder and confusion
and as well He sent delusion.
Israel the battle won, the Philistines were overcome.

**Then God was for Israel
all the days of Samuel.**

By the Hand of Holy Lord
their cities were restored;
the coastal areas were set free,
and no more did they flee.
Between Israel and the Amorites hostilities ceased
and there was peace.
From his home in Ramah, Samuel judged Israel,
always brilliant, always just, always upright –
beloved was he in God's Sight.

Until in his old age, the land had reached another stage.
The elders watched this with dismay
as wickedness was by his sons displayed.

They came to Samuel to say:
"It's you they disobey.
We want a king who will order bring."

Samuel, displeased with the words he heard
prayed to the Lord for what to say.
The Lord said to Samuel:
Listen to what the people say,
allow them to have their way.
'Tis not you they do reject
'Tis to My rule they do object.
Despite all I've done, from Egypt until now,
they forsook their sacred vows;
from Me they've swerved and other gods they've served.
What they did to Me, so now they do to you,
as their way they do pursue.
You may agree, but tell them what you do foresee.

Samuel obeyed.
To the people he explained how it would be if a king reigned:
He'll take your daughters and your sons – your best ones;
He'll use them for his own needs;
he'll take your best food, and best seeds,
he'll take a tenth of all your sheep,
he'll take the best of what you reap.
And you will cry out on that sad day,
but the Lord will stay away.
He will not hear, nor bring you cheer,
nor will He help, nor will appear.

The people insisted on their way,
refusing Samuel to obey,
saying: We want to be like other nations;
we want a king, a coronation;
a king to settle disputations.
And if there is a provocation or a battle situation,
he'll go out and fight, and our enemies will smite.

Samuel spoke to the Lord who said:
Bring to them a king!
Then Samuel, (perhaps with an internal frown)¹
sent each man back to his own town,
knowing that he would obey
what God commanded on that day.

¹ Author's image.

Saul – The First King

Prologue

*God had heard the peoples voice
and had made His choice.
'Twas Saul who was to be their king!
Saul – dark and handsome, very tall,
towered one head over all.
As a general he won fame,
his brilliant strategies acclaimed;
but he sinned, God disobeyed;
let arrogance his soul pervade.
So God withdrew from him His aid,
made his mind be sick, afraid;
then Saul was filled with pain and hate.
No more glory, no longer great.
Though splendidly his reign began
he ended it a broken man.*

When Samuel anointed Saul to be the king,
with all the hope that that would bring,
he kissed him, and he said:
Understand, the Lord has chosen you to rule this land.

Then Samuel called the people and he said –
his arms outspread,¹
his voice deep and eloquent, as he did God represent.
Thus saith the Lord God of Israel:
I brought you out of Egypt's land by My hand,
I who saved you all from agony,
and today you have rejected Me!
And asked to have an earthly king instead to be your head.
Now find and bring him who'll be the king,
for he has hid from everything.
They fetched Saul who stood so tall
he towered one head over all.

¹ Author's image.

Samuel declared: Here is your king!
And the people's happy shouts did ring;
and the crowds shouted loud: God save the king!
Then all went home, and Saul¹ went too,
his old life to pursue.

In Saul's first conflict with an enemy
he won a glorious victory.
'Twas Nahash the Ammonite who the war began²
with a threat to kill or maim each man –
the Israelites were given a frightful choice –
a choice to die or lose an eye!³
They pleaded for a stay of seven days,
and, worried and afraid
fled to Saul for aid.
He swiftly raised an army corps
of three hundred thousand,⁴ and three thousand more
and won the war!
His military reputation
quickly swept throughout the nation –
a reputation superbly earned,
as king he was again confirmed.⁵

Samuel spoke to all of Israel:
I have granted your request;
I've brought God's choice at his behest.
Now I am old and grey – I have had my day.
Now my sons are here and they will stay.
Let any witness say today:
Did I defraud? Did I oppress? Did I ever dispossess?
Or cause unjust distress? Did I deceive? Or bribes receive?
They answered: You have not robbed nor us coerced
nor taken ought from any purse.
God is your witness, and the king as well
that this is the truth of what befell.

¹ Saul's home was in Gibeah.

² I Samuel 11:1. Against Nabesh - gilead.

³ I Samuel 11:2. The price of surrender by the men of Nabesh-gilead was the loss of the right eye.

⁴ I Samuel 11:4. Counted at Bezel.

⁵ I Samuel 11:15.

Samuel continued:
Your forefathers were saved from Egypt's land
by God's Sacred Hand –
now stand you still while I present His Holy Will;
He brought your forefathers to this place by His Grace.
When they forgot their Lord, and His laws abhorred,
He gave them to the pagan might
and they had repeatedly to fight.

Samuel spoke again with disdain:
God sent Jephthah¹, God sent Gideon,
God sent Samson and sent you Samuel, –
as well were other judges sent –
all meant for release from cruel pagan torment;
always God was there to hear your fervent prayer,
but when Nahash came upon you what did you do?

You asked me for a king!
It is **God** who's everything!
His voice rose: **God** who is your king!
However, here is the earthly king you chose –
God did not such a king oppose,
but has ordained that over you he'll reign.
God will His people not forsake nor break,
for He has sworn to make you His own,
and this will be shown.

As for me, he said, voice serious, imperious,²
I will you instruct how you should yourselves conduct.
Only fear God and Him revere;
agree to serve Him faithfully,
for all He's done for you the years through;
keep in your mind He's been compassionate and kind.
But if you behave with wickedness or are depraved
I prophesy – you and your king will die.

So spoke the great Samuel, prophet of Israel.

Then the people, stricken to the core

¹ Judges 11:11; a judge.

² Author's image.

cried out to God, to Him implore:
We have forsaken God, we have sinned!
We have worshipped Ashtaroth and Baalim,
but now we repent – said they in heartfelt lament;
we wish to begin again – in misery they exclaimed.
We promise we'll be true and we'll worship you.
In the second year of his reign,
Saul a general again became,
and three thousand soldiers could he claim.
In the meantime –
Jonathan¹ did a Philistine garrison attack,
a provocative aggressive act.
All Israel was filled with fear,
for the Philistines now gathered near,
with thirty thousand chariots, six thousand cavalry
and countless fighting men of fearless infantry.
The Israelites, with terror filled that they'd be killed,
fled in dread –
hid in pits, in rocks, in caves – wherever protection gave,
while Saul stayed on with others in Gilgal.

Samuel was due in seven days, but he was late,
and Saul became impatient with the wait.
Saul perceived that some began to leave,
so, despite God's clear command
he took events into his hands.
He made offerings to the Lord²
hoping for aid and for reward.
When Samuel came and saw an offering aflame,
in horror he exclaimed: what have you done!
God will your offering shun.
Saul lamely explained he hoped God's aid to gain
and wished the people to detain.
Samuel replied:
That was a foolish act that will heavily on you impact.
You have God disobeyed
and now He will withdraw His aid.
He would have let you forever reign,

¹ Saul's son, I Samuel 13:4.

² Author's comment; a function reserved for priests (Leviticus, Ch. 1).

but now you shall not that attain.
Since you served not God's command,
you won't be ruler in this land.

*Saul's sinning begins –
as he shows his lack of discipline,¹
as he placed his need above the Lord,
yet expected God's reward.
His judgement showed a fatal flaw
which Samuel with wisdom saw.
The Lord would now King Saul reject –
another king would He select –
another whom He did respect
who had a righteous intellect,
whose conduct would be correct,
from whom greatness could the Lord expect.
A king after the Lord God's Heart
who would not from Him depart.
God had such a one already found,
a choice divine, a choice profound.
A king who would express God's Will
and who His orders would fulfill.*

The Philistines had come forth to make war;
in three companies came their corps.
Now, nowhere in all Israel's land
was there to be found even one smith's hand² –
to make a sword or make a spear,
to sharpen any tool or shear,
so in this time of war the Hebrew corps no weapons bore;
except for Saul and Jonathan who had a shield
and sword to wield.

Jonathan had a design, and knew God would show to him a sign.
He'd get the Philistines into a fight,
and God would destroy them with His Might.

¹ Author's comment.

² I Samuel 13:19. The Philistines said "Lest the Hebrews produce a sword or spear."

A Miracle

And so it came to pass.
When Jonathan and his armour bearer attacked,
the Philistines were turned back.
At first were twenty of them slain,
then the many thousand that remained
were by a dreadful terror gripped,
their courage was completely stripped;
in their camp, in the field – all did to that terror yield.
Everywhere they were, wherever they did stir,
that terror registered.
The very ground did shake, and the Philistines did quake.
In their panic they all turned manic.

Saul became aware that Jonathan had gone away,
and that with Philistines there was a fray.
So he and Israel all joined in the fight,
even former “traitors”¹ added to their might.
God the Philistines confused, so that each other they abused,
and each other killed, by His Will.
After the battle was won, after the fighting was done
all of Israel came to give chase to the pagan race.

So God saved Israel on that day,
again a miracle He displayed.

*Celebration swept the nation!²
Like lightning the news got round –
the enemy lay slain on bloody ground.
With sighs of relief they let go of grief;
they were safe at last, the danger past.
No longer felt they helpless and alone,
God had for them His Power shown.*

Saul united all the nation, to universal acclamation.
He saved those oppressed from those who had aggressed.
His army had success where'er it pressed;

¹ I Samuel 14:21, commentary: Hebrews who had sided with the Philistines out of fear, or had been forced to fight with them.

² Author's image.

constantly he waged war,¹ always was the conqueror.

Saul Sins

Then he grew weary of the fight,
and wished he'd have a long respite;
but he was in for a surprise, from Samuel the good and wise.
Samuel said to him, face stern and grim:
I have a message from the Lord;
you must again take up your sword.
Since Amalek² has us pitilessly attacked, you must strike back.
Go to Amalek, destroy it all!
Men and women, babes that crawl,
no animal you see may be allowed to flee.
It is God's Will that **everything** be killed.
So all the Amalekites he subdued and slew –
**except Agag their king he took alive,
and good livestock he let survive.**

*His sin of disobedience had no defence,³
it was to God a great offence;
God lost in him all confidence,
with grave and tragic consequence.
Was it negligence followed by penitence?
Or innocence without intelligence?
Was it arrogance or a rebellious stance?
Was it pride? Some inner drive to suicide?
For he must have known he could not that sin survive!*

The Lord said to Samuel:
I have reconsidered that I had Saul anointed –
in him I'm very disappointed!
He has not fulfilled My Will.
He has turned away from Me, ignored My decree.

¹ I Samuel 14:47. Saul warred against Moab, the Ammonites, Edam, kings of Zebah, the Philistines, and the Amalekites.

² I Samuel 15:1,3 commentary: Amalek was the leading force of evil in the world, to be wiped out entirely.

³ Author's comment.

Samuel cried out to God that night,
so distressed was he at Saul's sorry plight.
In the morning he found Saul
who said, standing proudly straight and tall:
I have fulfilled God's Word.
Samuel answered sarcastically, sardonically:
What are those sounds I've heard?
They sound to me much like a herd.
Saul replied, not at all contrite:
They were taken from the Amalekite after we did them smite.
But we slew the rest outright.

Samuel forcefully and loudly spoke, an understanding to evoke,
feeling some despair, knowing Saul was in a snare
of which he was not yet aware.
Stop! Desist! And I shall tell you what the Lord said to me last night.
He told you: Go, destroy **all** those who sin!
Why did you not obey Him?
You did evil in God's Eyes. Do you not that realize?
Saul defensively tried to explain, mercy to obtain:
But I **did** God heed when I did my deed.
I slew all the Amalekites; only Agog did I bring back
after my attack.
The people took good animals for offerings
which to the Lord God's altar they will subsequently bring.
But Samuel replied, trying to his feelings hide,
face set and stern as Saul's excuses he did spurn:
That is no defence!
Does God delight in offerings more than in obedience?
Obedience is the all-important thing!
It's better than any offering you could bring!
For rebelliousness is like the sin of sorcery
and verbosity is like the iniquity of idolatry.
Because you have rejected God's own Word
which you understood and clearly heard,
He has rejected you as ruler of this land –
no more may you command!

Thus, implacable and incorruptible, spoke the prophet Samuel.

Saul begged in despair, trying to repair:
I realize that I have sinned and that I need discipline;
I realize I have transgressed and am now dispossessed;
I disobeyed God's Word and yours, and now I am impure;
You see – 'twas the people that I feared,
that they might not to me adhere,
and, Saul further pled,
I listened much to what they said;
now please forgive – understand my wrong motive,
return with me and you will see –
I will prostrate myself before the Lord,
hoping He'll mercy me award.
Samuel, implacable as before, spoke to shut the door:
I will return with you no more.
The Lord does you as king reject
no longer does He you respect.
Then he turned to leave, even though inside he grieved.
Saul, in his torment, seized the hem of Samuel's garment
and it tore, beyond restore.
Samuel said: for your sins you must pay,
God has torn your kingship away this day.
Another soul, better than you,
who will to the Lord God be true,
will sit in your place;
for he walks in God's favour and God's Grace.
God does not lie, nor does He relent,
even if you much repent.

In great pain Saul pleaded again:
I have sinned, yet honour me I pray thee and return with me,
that I may worship the Lord thy God.
And Samuel did; and then he said:
bring Agag the king to me.
Samuel said to Agag:
As your sword made women childless be, left weeping in agony,
so shall your mother childless be,
for you she will no longer see.
And before the Lord, he hewed Agag into pieces with his sword.
Then he returned to Ramah and Saul returned to Gibeah.
Samuel never came to Saul again,
but he did not him scorn, and he did him deeply mourn.

David – Future King

The Lord spoke to Samuel:
When will you cease for Saul to grieve,
knowing he did Me deceive?
Why are you so dejected that I've him as king rejected ?
Another one I have selected – one who is by me respected.
I have this other, chosen him from all his brothers.
Go to Jesse, the Bethlehemite
and see the son who walks in light
and who will Me delight;
and take your horn of oil when you go;
you will use it when you know.
But Samuel asked: How can I go? It will bring me woe.
If Saul finds out it is my end,¹
for how could I my act defend.
God replied: take a heifer with you and say,
this offering is for God today.

When you offer up the beast
invite Jesse to the feast.
I will tell you what to do.
Anoint the one I'll show to you.
And Samuel did as God had bid.

He arrived in Bethlehem having in mind God's stratagem.
To the nervous elders who came to him meet and greet,
he said: I come in peace.
I bring an offering – we'll have a feast.
He invited Jesse and his seven sons, whom he met one by one.
None of them were of God's choice,
then – Samuel heard from God's own Voice.
The youngest son was herding sheep
so Samuel to Jesse said:
Send for him. Bring him here; we won't dine till he appears.

David was that son, the youngest one.

¹ I Samuel 16:2, commentary: For Samuel to anoint a new king could be considered a subversive act, which the reigning king could punish by death.

He came in to join his kin.
He was beautiful – with hair of red
that curled around his fine-shaped head;
his eyes were large of light sky blue,
a rare hue seen only in a few.
He had a perfect nose, a rounded chin¹,
and full red lips in a boyish grin.
Well muscled, tall and lithe,
he walked with pride and a graceful stride.

He had immense intelligence,²
much courage and great confidence;
his parents raised him with diligence
exerting a strong influence.
They taught often from parables and tales –
would with stories him regale.
Following is one heard with joy
by this precocious boy.

Your Great-Grandmother Ruth³

One day when David was a youth,
his mother spoke to him of Ruth:
That she was his great-grandmother,
that she was a woman like no other.
She told him how she was brave and steadfast,
this woman of the past,
how she was loving, good and strong
and how she came to us belong.
“In the time of the judges, when a famine swept the land,
it was terrible to withstand.
A certain man⁴ of our own clan
left with his family⁵ to seek another destiny.
They went to Moab, where there was food,

¹ Author's image.

² Author's image.

³ The story of Ruth as the author imagines it might have been told to the youth David by his mother.

⁴ Ruth 2:2 The man was Elimelech.

⁵ Ruth 2:2 His wife Naomi, his two sons Mahlon and Chilion.

where life was certain, life was good.
They did there abide till Elimelech died,
and Naomi and her sons were left bereft.
Both the sons married Moab wives
and both couples thrived.
They lived there for ten good years, free of fears,
with Oprah married to Mahlon
and Ruth to his brother Chilion.”

David’s mother continued on, her sweet face now sad and wan.

“All went well till both sons died
and Naomi, unable to provide,
decided to return to her own home, alone.
She told Oprah and Ruth to go to their mothers’ sides,
with them to abide.

She wished them well,
and hoped that with another husband they might dwell.
Lovingly she kissed them both farewell.
Both wept and Oprah left.
But Ruth, the faithful, steadfast, true,
would not that path pursue.
She said, shaking her lovely head:
Entreat me not to leave;
whersoever you go, there I will go,
where you lodge, there I will lodge.
Your people will be my people,
your God shall be my God.
Where you die, so will I,
and there I will be buried;
only death will us part!
And they went to Bethlehem, to Naomi’s home,
hopefully no more to roam.
Once there, Ruth gleaned in some corn fields,
picking through the ample yields.
These fields were owned by a wealthy man –
Boaz, of Naomi’s clan.
He saw Ruth and she pleased him well
He fell beneath her spell,

for she was beautiful to behold,
with lots of charm and a heart of gold.

Now David's mother, her sweet face alight
her light blue eyes sparkling and bright,
continued with great delight.

“Well, to make this story short;
I'm happy to report –
in the end they loved and wed,
and had a son, Obed.
He was Jesse's father, your grandfather!
So that's the truth
about your great-grandmother Ruth! ”

She ended with a happy face
and gave her son a tight embrace.

*David thought much of what he'd heard,¹
the lessons now well understood;
feel free to chose your destiny!
Find the right place to belong,
be brave and strong,
love courageously and long,
be faithful and steadfast –
all this he learned from this woman of the past.
And he was content of his descent,
happy for this enlightenment.*

David is Anointed

Said the Lord to Samuel, prophet of Israel:
Anoint him now, for this is he!
Such is My decree.
And Samuel with oil anointed him as king,²
a king who would new hope to his people bring.

¹ Author's image.

² Author's comment: Although anointed now, it would be many years before David ascended to the throne.

*Saul is now by God replaced by David of the beautiful face;
David, whose soul is clean,¹
his mind uplifted and serene;
Spiritually he is high – he will his office dignify,
he will his enemies defy, he will his nation glorify.
Welcome David, hero king! Your nation will rejoice and sing.*

And the spirit of the Lord passed over him from that day on.

*David's the noblest, he's the best,
by God chosen, by God blest.
Steadfast in faith, steadfast in duty,
unspoiled by talent, unspoiled by beauty.
He is courageous, he is brave;
he'll give his best his land to save.
His sacred psalms, ever a balm,
will bring comfort, will bring calm.
His numerous heroic deeds,
helped by Lord God to succeed,
will bring him glory, bring him fame
and make beloved his great name.
David, anointed now by the prophet Samuel –
is the second king of Israel.
But his time to rule is yet to come –
that time still lies ahead, when Saul is dead,
only then is David ruler in his stead.*

God abandoned Saul for his arrogance and sin,
and a spirit of melancholia² sent to him,
which caused him much torment,
oft made him incompetent,
made him at times belligerent and violent.
When it came it stole his soul,
took his mind in its control.
His servants seeing his distress, how he was oppressed,
had an idea to suggest.
Said they – music would help it go away!

¹ Author's image.

² I Samuel 16:14,15,23;18:10;19:9.

Find a harpist who would play.

David, although young, was the harpist that was found.
He drew from his harp sweet silvery sounds;¹
as if from heaven sent
he played his instrument.
Every caring heart was touched by his inspired art;
every heart in pain
could some relief obtain;
every grieving soul
could feel somewhat consoled.

And Saul – at times in mental pain,
at times profane, at times with rage insane,
would listen to the music play,
and his distress would melt away.
He would his sanity regain
and for a time retain.
The music flowed over him like a healing balm,
and he was full of peace and calm.
His heart loved David from the start;
and David, his face with love of God alight,
played for Saul with great delight.

Following is an excerpt from one of David's numerous beautiful psalms:²

“The Lord's is the earth and its fullness, the inhabited land and those who dwell in it .
For He founded it upon seas and established it upon rivers.
Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord,
and who may stand in the place of His sanctity?
One with clean hands and pure heart;
who has not sworn in vain by My soul, and has not sworn deceitfully.
He will receive a blessing from the Lord
and just kindness from the God of his salvation.”

¹ Author's image.

² Psalm number 24, verses 1-5.

David Faces Goliath

The Philistines gathered for war,
to finally become the conqueror.
They encamped upon a mountainside
with great efficiency and pride.

The Israelites were on another mountainside –
with a valley between, in the divide.

A giant Philistine emerged! Indeed he was a scourge!
What an incredible sight was that pagan man of might;
a sight to terror strike in every heart,
a sight to make enemies wish quickly to depart.
He was the top champion of all their land
against whom no man could stand.
Goliath of Goth was his name and killing was his claim to fame.
Massive, over twelve feet high, a terror to the Hebrew eye.
He walked with measured heavy tread,
his shield bearer just ahead.
He wore a copper helmet on his enormous head,
his heavy armour made of mail,
protection gave which could not fail;
his long heavy spear inspired fear,
between his shoulders he wore copper gear –
shoulders the broadest one could see, legs like trunks of trees
shielded by copper, thigh and knee.
Huge hands tough and rough.¹
Voice like a lion's roar, causing fright and great furor.
Indeed this was some man of war!
this giant who came to the fore.
He called out to Israel with a shout:
Why go you to wage a war? You can't be a conqueror!
I am a Philistine who has much battle seen.
But you, he jeered, what has Saul done for you
that you his war pursue?
Choose a man and send him out to me,

¹ Author's image.

and we shall see what the end will be.
If he can me defeat and kill, we'll be enslaved beneath your will;
but if I win and I kill him,
you'll be our slaves with future grim.
The Israelites were with terror filled
that they might be enslaved or killed.

David, Jesse's youngest son, still tended sheep at Bethlehem,
traveling back and forth to Saul's royal court.

Early each morn for forty anxious days
Goliath did to the Hebrew line a visit pay
and hurled his hateful challenge at his prey –
who stared at him with fear and in dismay.

As David brought his brothers food¹
he heard Goliath's hateful words –
words insolent and virulent.
The battalions, already face to face,
were caught up in war's embrace –
fighting, dying, with blood and gore,
always at death's cruel door.

When Goliath drew near, the Hebrews fled in fear.
They said: he comes forth that he may us disgrace,
he comes forth in order that we should lose face.
It is Saul's will that whoever does him kill
shall his princess daughter wed,
shall have wealth to spread;
and all his family from service be set free.

David spoke with anger to the nearby men:
What will be done for him who slays that Philistine?
Who's that pagan clod who insults the armies of God?
David's indignant angry words were by nearby soldiers heard
and they all were told to Saul,

¹ I Samuel 17:12. Jesse had eight sons, of whom the three oldest were in Saul's army. David was the youngest. David brought them food from home.

who summoned him about the situation grim.
 David, loyal, brave, who wished to see his nation saved,
 said to Saul:
 Let no man lose heart, nor depart.
 I'll go out and fight this pagan man of might!
 But Saul, astonished, fearing for young David's life,
 tried to keep him from this strife.
 He said: you cannot go and fight, for Goliath will you smite.
 Look at his weight and height¹,
 compared to him you're very slight.
 He is a warrior in heavy armour clad
 while you wear but a tunic and are still a lad.
 David, face reddened by emotion,
 could not hold back his passion,
 and speaking without fear, he persevered:
 When I kept my father's sheep
 and fierce animals near me did creep
 I slew the lion and the bear;
 so Goliath should beware.
 God, who rescued me from the lion's paw,
 from his deadly claw,
 who spared me from the raging bear,
 will intervene when I fight this obscene pagan Philistine.
 I have faith He'll rescue me!
 Saul, impressed by David's faith in his success said to him:
 Go, and may the Lord go with you!
 Do what you must do.
 David put on Saul's battle dress, but it did him oppress,
 for never before had he armour wore.
 So in his simple tunic clad, armed only with the sling he had
 he took five smooth stones from a brook,
 put them in his shepherd's sack and readied him for his attack.
 With his staff in his other hand
 he advanced to save his land.
 This brave young Israelite, his face with faith in God alight²
 courageously stepped forth to fight.
 He approached the Philistine, confident he was and serene.

¹ Author's image.

² Author's image

The Philistine walked close to him,
huge sneering face split in a grin;
his shield bearer walked in front, looking near him like a runt.
Goliath peered down and saw the shepherd boy
who had come forth him to destroy.
He saw a youth, ruddy and handsome too,
making his warfare debut.
Goliath derided, jeered at him,
ready to tear him limb from limb:
Am I a dog, that you come after me with staves,
how will you from my spear be saved?
And by his pagan gods he tersely David cursed.
Come to me, contemptuously he said,
I'll make sure you're dead,
fowl and beasts will on your flesh be fed.

David calmly said, without fear –
you come with sword and javelin and spear,
but I – I come armed with but God's Holy Name,
the "Master of Legions" is He acclaimed.
The God of Israel you have ridiculed,
to make His battalions look like fools.
Well – on this day, God will deliver you into my hand.
He will your life demand.
I shall smite you and remove your head,
which others look upon with dread.
The carcasses of your camp will bleed;
beasts and fowl will they soon feed.
Then the people of the earth will know
what the God of Israel can bestow;
that not through sword and spear grants He salvation
but through love of Him, through dedication.
He shall deliver you into our hands
as we guided are by His commands.

When the Philistine moved toward him,
his angry face more grim, flushed with chagrin,
David ran quickly to the line, towards the Philistine.
He put his hand into his sack and when he drew it back
it held but a single stone;

this stone he slung, and with great skill flung
striking Goliath in his forehead
with such force he fell down dead!
He fell without a sound, his massive face upon the ground.
David ran up, unsheathed the enormous sword,
and took his reward –
he cut off Goliath's head!
When the Philistines saw their hero dead,
they ran away in great dismay.

Abner¹ brought David to Saul to tell it all,
holding still dreaded Goliath's great bleeding head.

David Saul obeyed and finished what he had to say.
Jonathan² heard David's words;
his soul and David's soul became as one –
and a friendship rare and beautiful was sown.
Jonathan loved David as himself, as if he'd David always known.
Jonathan and David sealed a covenant,
each so handsome and gallant.
Jonathan gave David his robe and battle gear,
and they held their friendship very dear.
So that David not go away Saul conscripted him that day.

Saul's Treachery

All David did for Saul was a success,
in everything he made progress.
As a general David won fame, made a celebrated name.

*But then comes a tragic twist of fate
as Saul becomes consumed with hate.*

The troops came back from an attack.
David had slain the Philistines and people came to celebrate
and him to adulate.

¹ Saul's general, I Samuel 14:50

² Saul's son, I Samuel 14:49.

From all Israel women came to honour Saul.
Here is what did then befall:
With drums and cymbals the women sang,
with gladness their voices rang.
They called out with joy that Saul his thousands did destroy,
but *tens* of thousands did David slay, as he fought the pagan prey.

Saul grew angry at those words, very disturbed by what he heard.

Jealously he repeated all their words,
adding – he lacks only to be king, to him more honour bring.
From that day on his love for David was completely gone.
Saul now looked at him with dread
as suspicion and envy reared their ugly heads.

God then sent over Saul a kind of deep depression,
which took of him complete possession.
He began to loathe and hate, to wish David evil fate.
Kill him! Was the thought unkind in his unbalanced mind.
His mind was mad, his motive bad.

One day, as David sat with harp to play,
Saul raved around the place, demented and debased, wishing David were erased,
his wild staring eyes fixed on David's chest –
the man he did detest!
He was in an agony of hate and fear;
there sat David near; Saul's hand held his spear,
and no one there to interfere!
Suddenly, thinking all the while, although the thought was vile –
I'll thrust it through him to the wall and to his death he'll fall!
He hurled his spear to kill, David's blood to spill.
But David eluded the spear, shocked and stricken with fear.

Saul was now afraid, for on David God His Hand had laid,
while Saul had the Lord betrayed.
So Saul sent David away, to be the captain of one thousand men.

David achieved success, since he was by Lord God blessed;
the people loved him and were impressed.
Saul felt by him intimidated, and even more him hated.

*This demented man begat an evil plan
to take David's life by means of a royal wife.*

He offered Merab¹ to be David's wife
to keep him in the current strife.
He said to himself:
Let the Philistines him kill, I won't do it from my own will.
David said to Saul in true humility:
Who am I? What is my family?
that as your son-in-law I live my destiny?
So Merab was given instead to another man to wed.
Michal – petite and slight,²
Her father Saul's delight;
great dark eyes, gentle, wise;
hair of black falling down her back;
rosy lips, dusky skin, graceful neck,
long and slim;
dimpled smile, lit from within,
and at times – an impish grin.
She loved David with all her heart,
wished that they might never part.
When her feelings were to Saul made known,
it led to a plot made by him alone –
a plot vicious in its intent, a plot against David meant.
To himself he said, thinking how his net to spread:
I'll offer David that he Michal wed,
take her to his marriage bed.
She will be to him a snare,
for its for me she'll truly care.
The Philistines surely won't him spare,
and he will be so unaware!
So – he'll be lost
and to myself at no cost!

*He chuckled to himself with glee
that he might bring to David agony,*

¹ I Samuel 18:17. Merab was Saul's oldest daughter.

² Author's image

and even death!
In this way, filled with hate,
Saul plotted to manipulate.
First he would David placate
then he would him dominate;
he would put him in a trap
and then he would the closing snap.

He summoned David, and to him said:
You may my daughter Michal wed;
and – speaking here much like a friend,
trying not to condescend –
you may be my son-in-law this very day, without delay.

Then he ordered that servants David sway,
that on his feelings they should play,
when his messages they did convey.

He said to them:

Only in secret, seek him out and speak
but not in manner meek or weak;
strongly say: you are by the king desired;
to be his son-in law you should aspire;
David replied, with humility but also pride:

I don't mean to criticize,
but is this a trivial matter in your eyes?
Is it a small thing to be son-in-law of the king?
I am a poor and simple man,
I come from a modest clan.

The servants passed this on to Saul, telling all.

Then Saul thought of another way to David sway.
Tell him, he said, no dowry does the king desire,
he wants that only you he would acquire.

Only one thing does he of you require –
bring to him one hundred foreskins of the Philistines,
as revenge upon those enemies.

So did Saul wickedly cast his net, in secret.
David, being of Saul's plot innocent,
gave to that arrangement his consent.

The day had not yet expired,
the sky still aflame with orange fire,
when David and his loyal men pursued and slew
two hundred Philistines and took their foreskins.

They all were sent to Saul.
He said that David and Michal might wed.
Now he knew that God would with David stay
in every way;
knew also that Michal would David not betray,
for her love for David was very great
and she would not it desecrate.

*So, Saul feared David even more,
and greater hate he now him bore.*

When Philistines came forth to attack,
David repulsed them, turned them back.
More than any was he victorious –
his name became even more glorious.
One day, Saul could David no more abide,
could not his hate and anger hide,
and thinking Jonathan was on his side
he decided to confide.
On his face appeared a vicious sneer¹
as he spoke into Jonathan's ear.
with a whisper rough and gruff
I want David to die! I want David to die!
Calmly in reply, Jonathan tried to David justify
tried his father to mollify.
He said: David put his life on the line
when he slew Goliath the Philistine;
all Israel was saved because he was so brave.
David is innocent, his conduct excellent;
he has not sinned even once against you –
in fact he has been loyal and true;
so – don't you sin against him!

¹ Author's image.

Saul listened well, and Jonathan did his doubts dispel.
Saul swore by the Lord that David would not die,
that he would remain a faithful ally.
His hostility ceased, and for a time there was peace.

War came again – with its blood and pain.
David fought the Philistines and dealt that foe
a mortal blow;
and they ran – every man.

David's Exile

Then suddenly the melancholia again overwhelmed Saul;
like a black cloak it did upon him fall,
like a madness it came over him,
and he raved around the place, debased, his face terrible and grim¹.
He was holding tight his battle spear
and David was sitting near
playing on his harp, so Saul's illness would depart.
When Saul tried to thrust his spear right through David's chest
where his heart beat in his breast.
David slipped aside with a quick glide;
the spear hit the wall and with a clatter it did fall.
David in dismay, quickly ran away.
He well understood his plight
understood Saul's hatred and his spite.
He decided upon flight,
and that he should escape that very night.
Michal, taut and pale with fright, warned him outright:
If you don't leave tonight, tomorrow you'll be killed,
your blood will be spilled!
She lowered David through her window and he fled;
then she placed a mannequin upon the bed,
covered it well and put a goatskin at its head.

Saul, distraught, to his agents yelled so he could vengeance wreak:
Bring David to me that I may him kill.
They went to his bed but Michal said he was ill.

¹ Author's image.

When they searched they found only the mannequin
and the cover and the goatskin.

Saul, furious, raging with frustration,
cheated of David's annihilation,
confronted Michal with a roar, creating a furor:
Why did you me deceive?
You let my enemy leave!
But Michal cleverly replied, with a lie –
Father – he said that I must help him flee
or else he surely would kill me.

David fled to Samuel,¹ prophet of Israel,
and told him of all things done by Saul.
Then David ran to Jonathan:
What have I done? He implored of him,
What is my iniquity and sin
that he seeks to end my life?
That he continually creates strife?
Jonathan, although worried inside, replied:
It would be a sacrilege were you to die!
You shall not die! There is no way he can that justify.
My father, the king, tells me everything,
so I know it is not so.
But David swore that what he said was true
and continued his explanation to pursue.
Your father knows that I've found favour in your eyes
so he does himself disguise;
he wishes not to make you grieve
so he does you deceive.
However, by your life, my brother, and as God lives
Saul's hate is lethal and explosive.
For sure there is but a breath
between myself and death!

Jonathan replied:
David, whatever your soul will say, I'll obey.
David answered:

¹ I Samuel 19:18. Samuel was in Ramah at that time and he and David went to Naioth.

I'll set up a test that will the truth attest.

Said Jonathan:

I will the truth reveal, not conceal
If it is my father's will that you be killed
I'll give you a release and you can leave in peace.
May God go with you!

*David suggested a test
which would tell all about Saul.
Did he really wish David to die?
The test would that affirm or deny.
Jonathan set it up at a dinner where they supped.
David was not in his usual seat
to partake of the new moon meat.
Jonathan explained that David went
to Bethlehem for a family event.
Saul reacted with great rage, his anger flared
and at Jonathan he fiercely glared.*

He shrieked as in a pique:
Son of a perverted rebellious woman
do I not know you choose the son of Jesse who did flee!
Bring him to me;
he deserves to die; nothing less will me satisfy.
But Jonathan bravely spoke up to Saul,
trying the killing to forestall;
Why should he die?
What has he done to you that you should wish him dead?
So Jonathan pled – his hands outspread.

But Saul, eyes ablaze, looking crazed
in fury and in fear
hurled at Jonathan his spear!
Jonathan, unhurt, spoke no more and left outraged and agonized,
knowing now Saul was intent on David's quick demise.
He ate nothing all that day
for grief enfolded him, held sway,
and he was filled with great dismay.
He was humiliated, he felt violated.

He now saw Saul as he truly was,
demented, lost in an insane cause.

Knowing how much it would hurt,
he shared with David all the truth.
They kissed as brothers, wept with one another.

Jonathan said to David:

Go in peace –
the covenant made in love between you and me
is our destiny.

God was the witness, God did it bless;
it applies to our seed as well,
wherever they dwell, whatever does them befall.
That covenant is permanent.

David pled: When you are king and I am dead
please protect those whom I've bred.
And David left – and with Goliath's sword
that had been stored in the Tabernacle¹ of the Lord;
he fled, a new path to tread.

He escaped to a cave
where his brothers and many others
found him and gathered round,
every man in distress, under duress,
every man with bitterness, or dispossessed
or in debt, by a creditor pressed.
He became their head, and he led.
About four hundred men a commitment made
to obey whatever David bade.

Saul renewed his hot pursuit whenever he received a clue,
whenever he learned something new.

Never did he relent, always he was virulent.
David escaped the chase, and went into the wilderness,
where Saul searched for him with no success.

¹ I Samuel 21:2 , commentary. The Philistines had destroyed the Tabernacle at Shilo, and a new one was constructed at Nob.

However, Jonathan found him and gave encouragement
around the injustices he underwent.
With warmth and support he said:
Be not afraid, my father's hand will not on you be laid.
He will never locate you, no matter how long he will pursue.
You, David, will be the king, and will reign over Israel's domain.
I will be second to you, and always loyal and true.
My father is aware that you are his true heir.
And they sealed again a covenant between them both
with a sacred oath.

David Spares Saul

Saul was in his mad pursuit to David persecute.
In the wilderness¹ he went into a cave
that shelter gave
to relieve himself, but did not perceive
that David and his friends sat at the farthest end.
David's men said to him, eager that he attack
Saul the maniac:
God gave Saul to you this day
so that you can him slay.

But David did not to this consent;
instead, stealthily, quietly he cut off the corner of Saul's garment.
With an attitude of respect he did King Saul protect;
because he was by God anointed and as king appointed,
he would not permit his men to assault Saul.

As Saul arose to go on his way, he heard David say:
My lord, my king!
Saul looked 'round and saw David prostrate on the ground.
Passionately, eloquently, David spoke to Saul:
Why do you listen to those who stories invent,
and trouble foment

¹ I Samuel 24:4. The wilderness of En-gedi.

about me who is your faithful servant?
They falsely warn that I mean you harm.
Behold! Today some bade me kill, but that was not my will.
In the cave God gave you to me
but I would not raise my sword against you, my lord.
See, my father, look at my hand,
see that it holds a corner of your garment!
You must know – there's no evil or rebellion in my hand,
I covet not this land!
I have not sinned against you,
but to your crown I have been true.
Yet you hunt me to the death,
to my very dying breath!
Here David's voice broke,¹
and he coughed
as if he choked.
He continued in a lower tone, with a little groan:
May God be the judge between you and me
and make His Holy decree;
if He chooses retribution against you
it won't be through me! for I would not agree:
And whom do you, the king, pursue –
a dead dog? a single flea?
I pray that God vindicate me.

Then Saul, his mind for the moment clear and sane,
his soul humane,
with remorse, voice thick and hoarse
replied:
Is that your voice, David, my son?
My David, whom I've made to run?
And now he wept aloud,
no longer arrogant and proud,
ashamed, accepting blame.
You, my son, whom I've wrongly shunned,
are more righteous than am I;
he continued sadly with his reply:

¹ Author's image.

with goodness you have me repaid,
did not attack nor me degrade,
while I – I confess – have repaid you with wickedness,
brought you danger and distress.
You have proved yourself today,
you did not raise your hand to me, you did not slay.
May God your beneficence repay!
Now I know for sure you will reign over this domain;
the kingship of this land will be given into your hand!
Now I ask you to swear that my offspring will survive,
and that my name will remain
and not be put to shame.

David swore all of this to Saul.

At this time, Samuel the great prophet of Israel, passed away
and all of Israel gathered to pray;
they eulogized and praised him –
the prophet who had never sinned.

Later on, David went down to another wilderness, that of Paran,
where there lived a wealthy business man.
Although he owned one thousand goats and three thousand sheep
he was miserly, very cheap.
He had a belly sticking out,¹
and a nose that looked like a snout;
he had coarse black hair everywhere,
arms that were long and strong;
piggish eyes of a small size,
with breath that was foul, he spoke with a surly growl.
He was a churl, an evildoer.
Nabal² was his name and revulsion was his fame.
Most people did him hate, did him abominate.
He had a wife who could bless any life.
She was beautiful –
with waving copper-coloured hair³, a colour rare,

¹ Author's image.

² Nabal means revulsion.

³ Author's image.

coiled in a crown, set off by an azure gown.
Her mouth, like a petal of a rose,
was gentle in repose,
but her radiant smile did all enchant.
Her large eyes were aquamarine,
her skin of ivory glowed with a silky sheen.
Brave, tall, strong, serene,
she moved like a stately queen.

She was Abigail, a name to hail!
With a heart of gold, that did all enfold;
with her wisdom and intelligence,
with her skill and competence,
she stood well above the crowd –
a wife of whom one could be proud.

David and his men needed food;
one of them approached Nabal, the selfish and the rude,
and he said to him:
May you and yours have peace,
may your holdings increase.
David's men need food to eat
so we you entreat –
please, spare for us a small share of your supply
before we weaken and we die.

Nabal replied: I care not if you die.
I know not David, nor any one of you;
I care not what will ensue.
Get lost – I'll not bear your cost;
I won't share; my food I will not spare.
I need it all for my own and I won't give to those unknown.

When David heard these words he became inflamed,
he girded on his sword,
and ordered his men to do the same.
With four hundred men, without delay, he set out to slay
the man who did him deny,
and all who lived with him must die.

Meanwhile, Abigail was told what had occurred
and of David's threatening words,
so without Nabal's knowledge or consent
the slayings to prevent,
quickly took wine, cakes of figs, cooked sheep, grain and bread
for those needing to be fed.

She headed up the mountain to where David stayed
and met him coming down the other way.

She bowed to the ground and pled:
please my lord, don't strike him dead:
it would be a grievous sin to harm him;
take no more note of him than you would of a flea;
he is in truth a brutal fool, a boor;
folly is his game, revulsion is his name!
His name means revulsion
and he invites repulsion;
don't shed blood over that piece of mud;
it's pity he deserves to get – please don't be upset.

David, on listening to her plea, issued his decree:
I will spare him and his, and forgive; I'll let him live.
And he blessed Abigail who kept him from sin.
His decree changed his destiny,
for in ten days God struck Nabal dead,
and David Abigail did wed.

She became his queen who intervened, kept him from sin.
He took another wife as well – Ahinoam from Jesreel.
At this time, his (intended)¹ wife Michal, Saul's daughter,
was given to another by her father.

David went away, again into the wilderness,²
and Saul, in his cruel madness
continued his pursuit – to persecute.

There David found Saul sound asleep with his spear stuck in the ground
and his people lying around did him surround.
Said Abishaw, who'd come with him to see

¹ Samuel 25:44 . Biblical sources disagree as to whether she was his *intended* or *actual* wife.

² I Samuel 26:1. Into the wilderness of Ziph, but the Ziphites betrayed his whereabouts to Saul.

God has given you your enemy!
I volunteer to kill him with his own spear.
But David demurred, would not guilt incur.
No, he said to kill would be a sin;
he is still our anointed king
so no harm to him would I bring.
God will him smite, or he'll be killed in a fight,
or his time to die will come and he will succumb.
Now, I pray you – take his flask of water and his spear
which are to his pillow near;
they took them both away, but Saul they did not slay.
And no one knew, for all were deep asleep –
a sleep by God sent, detection to prevent.

David went and stood still on top of a hill
a distance away, with a big space between,
from where he could be heard but not be seen.

He cried out to Abner¹:

In all of Israel there is no better man than you! Nor one as true.
Who is better to protect the king when danger threatens him?
But where were you last night when someone came near to him?
Where is his water, where his spear? which were both near.

Saul knew David's voice, his anger fled, and he said:
Is this thy voice, David my son?
David answered, his patience almost gone:
It is my voice, my lord, my king;
what evil do I to you bring?
What have I done to you, that you me so pursue?
Please – listen to me!
If it is the Lord who stirred you up against me,
I will bring an offering,
but – if it is men who've done this thing,
they are cursed! For they have driven me from my land,
the land given me by God's Holy Hand!
Driven from my Lord God, whom I love;
Spill not my blood, don't kill.

¹ Saul's commander-in-chief.

Then Saul, upset, by guilt beset, spoke with great regret:
I have sinned, David, my son, return to me;
you will be safe and free;
be no more alarmed, for I won't do you harm.
When I slept and was disarmed, you held back your arm.
My soul was dear to you this day and you did not slay.
I have erred, I was a fool
to let my suspicions rule!

David replied:
Send a man over to this side to fetch your spear;
and do not fear –
as your life was to me dear,
so let my life be in God's sight
and may he save me from my plight.

Saul, perhaps trying to beguile? Perhaps to reconcile?
In a pleading voice said:
David, my son, may God you bless,
may you have accomplishment and much success.
And they each went their separate ways.

David Flees to the Philistines

David, knowing better than to believe
someone who did so much deceive,
wisely said to himself:
One day I may perish at Saul's insane hand,
or die at his command.
In desperation he made a painful decision:
In order that I not be slain
I'll go to Philistine's domain.
There I'll be safe from Saul's insane mind;
perhaps the Philistines will be more kind.

So he dwelt in Philistine land with Achish the king of Gath,
establishing a brand new path.
With six hundred men and his two wives,
he finally in Gath arrived.

Saul, being told that David had fled,
no more a searching party led.

David conceived a plan that would Achish deceive,
but would safety and possessions for him achieve.

He asked to dwell within a town¹
where he and his could live on their own.
He and his men ranged throughout the countryside,
raided Gesherites, Gizurites and the Amalekites,
leaving none alive to tell the tale;
took animals and clothes that he and his men chose.

King Achish knew not where he went,
had no presentiment,
but thought that David raided in Israel,
that he'd come it to abominate, its king to hate.
He also believed that David would him ever serve
and would not from that commitment swerve.

At that time the Philistines mobilized
to attack again Israel's terrain.
Achish said to David:
Its four months that you've been here
and the time to fight Israel is near.
You'll join with us when we strike –
we expect to win that fight.
Because I have for you a high regard
you will be my bodyguard.
David gave a vague reply:
You will see what I will do, what will ensue.

The Witch of Endor

Philistines and Israelites were encamped, ready for a fight–
each believing in its own might.
When Saul saw the enemy near
his heart trembled, full of fear.

¹I Samuel 27:6. A town called Ziklag.

He asked God to make an answer to appear
but God was silent – made no acknowledgment,
did not answer in a dream nor through His prophet supreme.
On pain of death, Saul had forbidden necromancers¹ in his realm;
but now, desperate, distraught, he sought for such a one
and was told of an old crone
who practiced black arts in Endor
behind a secret door.
She of Endor² was somewhat bent, gave off a sour scent;
her eyes were sharp and black, very aware,
penetrating, with a baleful stare;
her hair was long and black streaked with grey,
unkempt, hanging in disarray.
She often coughed, she shuffled as she walked;
her face was lined, her expression dour;
she was mysterious and obscure
but knew how to results procure.

Saul disguised himself, and with two friends
on whom he could depend,
without a sound, furtively her place they found.
It was in the dark of night, for he wished to hide from sight;
he kept his voice hoarse, his manner coarse,
as part of his disguise, to deceive her ears and eyes.
He said to the crone at her door:
please divine for me through necromancy;
raise up whom I shall tell, with your spell.
But the crone, trying her powers to hide, replied:
Surely you know that Saul has banished all
wizards and necromancers from this land;
I could be killed at his command!
Why do you seek to entrap me,
cause me to break his strict decree?
Saul then swore by the Lord it would not be
held against her as a wicked deed,
and she could proceed.
Whom shall I raise up? She inquired.

¹ Practitioners of black magic.

² Author's image.

Whom do you desire?
Saul, his voice now more guttural and thick,
heart beating quick, said:
Raise up Samuel for me!
When Samuel appeared, she screamed –
voice shrill, eyes with terror filled –
Why did you deceive me? You are Saul!
Ruler of all Israel.
King Saul replied: Do not fear!
What do you see? Quickly, tell me!
The woman slowly spoke:
I saw a great man ascending from the earth !
Asked Saul: How does he look?
Answered the crone: He is elderly, dressed in a cloak;
she was amazed to see the soul she did invoke.
Saul realized it was indeed Samuel –
great prophet of Israel.
He bowed down with his face upon the ground,
feeling dumbfounded, astounded
Samuel addressed Saul,
speaking with a sound hollow, distant and deep, as from a sleep:
Why did you disturb me, raise me up?
Saul in anguish replied:
O Samuel – I am in great distress
for God does me no longer bless.
The Philistines make war against me
and despite my urgent plea,
God has turned away and answers me no more –
he does me ignore!
No answers come through prophets nor in dreams,
in thoughts or in schemes.
so Samuel, I call upon you to tell me what to do.
So spoke Saul,¹ distraught, like a helpless child,
now no longer mad and wild,
but in despair, his pain more than he could bear;
knowing Samuel had tried for him,
tried to teach him not to sin.
Now his eyes wept bitter tears as he fought his fears.

¹ Author's image.

Samuel, speaking from the spirit side
 had but one answer to provide.
 But why do you ask me?
 You know that God is now your adversary;
 he's torn the kingship from your hand.
 David is now in command.
 Because at Amalek you disobeyed
 therefore he's done this thing today.
 The Philistines will win the war –
 they will be the conqueror.
 And Israel will weep with despair
 as that heavy burden it will bear.
 Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me –
 that is your destiny.
*Saul's mind was now clear
 and of death he had no fear,
 for in death he'd be with Samuel
 and all those who'd died for Israel;
 he'd be with his beloved sons
 when his time on earth was done.*
 The Philistine royalty mistrusted David's loyalty
 so Achish, reluctantly and with a frown,
 sent them back to Ziklag town.
 There they found a terrible tragedy, leaving all of them in agony.
 The Amalekites had burned down their town
 and abducted all who were inside,
 not one wife or child could escape or hide –
 and took them away – a helpless prey.
 The men, husbands, fathers, sons and brothers
 wept and wept till they had no tears
 and did David blame and smear,
 and wished to stone him till he bled,
 till he was dead.
 David, deeply distressed, drew strength from God
 and wearing the ephod¹
 he asked: Shall I pursue? Will we overtake?
 And God spake.
 The answer he received was – yes! Pursue,

¹ A richly embroidered vestment worn by the high priest.

he was told, you will succeed in the rescue.
And so it was.

The Amalekites were found and slain,
the Hebrew families safely regained,
all wives and children safe and spared,
all booty equally shared.

Saul's Death – David Ascends the Throne

The Philistines won the war;
the Israelites fled, did the battle yield,¹
fell slain upon the bloody battlefield.
Jonathan, Israel's pride, also died.
Saul, afraid of capture and humiliation
by that evil nation,
fell upon his sword of his own accord.
His armour-bearer did not himself spare
and in loyalty and despair
he chose to die in the same way, with his beloved Saul
his lord, his king, his ruler over all.

*So died Saul – a king who failed
now no more a hero hailed.
The dark days of his reign are past
and David is the king at last.*

*David – beloved, beautiful boy who brought to many so much joy
– beloved man, who a royal dynasty began,
– beloved psalmist, whose sacred poems will always live,
– and faith and comfort give,
– beloved leader of his land, ever in God's Holy Hand
– beloved brilliant warrior king, to whom his people
always cling*

David – chosen by the Lord Divine to be in history enshrined.

Saul and Jonathan are dead and David mourns:²
“O precious one of Israel, upon your heights lie the slain!

² Two of Saul's other sons were also killed in that battle, I Samuel 31:2.

² From II Samuel 1:19-27.

How have the mighty fallen!
Saul and Jonathan, beloved and pleasant in their lives,
and in their death not parted.
They were swifter than eagles
stronger than lions.
How have the mighty fallen
in the midst of battle –
Jonathan, slain upon the heights of Israel.
I am distressed over you, my brother Jonathan;
you were so pleasant to me!
Your love more wondrous to me than the love of women!
How have the mighty fallen
and the weapons of war gone to waste.”

*O Jonathan! He wept, my beautiful brother,
never like you will there be another!
He felt as if his heart would break
in his soul he felt an ache,
in that empty space
where lived Jonathan's beloved face.
He rocked to and fro in pain
that he'd not be with Jonathan again.
My dearest brother, he wept, my beloved friend
my love for you will never end!
And Saul, my father, my lord, my king
your death does me sorrow bring.
Now you're one, father and sons
you royal mighty ones.
Rest in peace!*

David was anointed Judah's king,
which a war did bring
between his House and that of Saul.
David won, giving him control of all.
Now he reigned over a united land
which he led under the Lord's command.
The house of Saul came to an end, its power spent
for Ishbosheth, Saul's remaining son

was cruelly overcome –
was assassinated, his body violated.

* * * * *

David ascended to the throne in the city of Hebron
He was thirty when he began his reign
and a glorious king became.
There he sealed a covenant with all the tribes of his united nation
to the joyous sounds of jubilation.
He asked for Michal to be returned to him;
she came and his true wife became.
Six sons¹ were born to him in Hebron –
six beloved seeds were there sown.

* * * * *

He built a palace in Jerusalem,
and after he arrived
took more concubines and wives;
consequently he acquired more progeny –
eleven² more they bore
for David to adore.

He brought back the golden Ark
with its Divine and sacred spark,
to Jerusalem where it belonged,
to the sound of joyous song
from the happy and contented throng.

David, the king, leading the procession
for that celebration,
leaped ahead, twirling as he tossed his head,
his arms lifted and outspread,
in ecstasy and joy he danced!

¹ II Samuel 3:2-6. Amnon to Ahinoam; Chileah to Abigail;
Absalom to Maacah; Adonijah to Haggith; Shephatiah to Abital; Ithream to Eglah.

² II Samuel 5:14,15. Shamua, Shobab, Nathan, Soloman, Ibhaz, Elishua,
Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphalet.

He danced as if entranced –
his body lithe, his fair skin glistening,¹
his ears to God's Voice listening,
his light blue eyes reflecting bright blue skies,
his curly head, still a beautiful red,
his limbs, still long and strong and slim –
he danced with love for his God above,
danced up the road to his own abode.

Michal, peering from her place,
watched with a contemptuous face.

The Ark was set within its tent
and offerings for it were sent.
In the name of God, David blessed the population,
and gave to everyone in all the nation,
a loaf of bread, a piece of beef, and a jug of wine
as a sign of favour divine.²

When he came to bless his own household
Michal began to scold;
in tones caustic and sarcastic she said:
How honoured was the king today
as he did himself display!
Why would you expose yourself as would a boor,
or someone impure?
My handmaidens did you see and that embarrassed me!

David rebuked :
In the presence of the Lord, who did me the crown award,
I shall always rejoice! I shall dance and raise my voice!
Even more humble shall I be,
and all who see will honour me;
and your handmaids too
will honour what they view.

Michal, daughter of Saul, who did David so deride

¹ Author's image.

² Author's comment

never had a child until the day she died.

*The prophet Nathan told David of God's plan:
The Lord made known that a house of His own
would be built by David's son named Solomon
and also said to him
from David would a dynasty begin;
his dynasty would reign and his kingdom would remain.
David thanked the Lord with all his heart and soul
at what was to him foretold.
He fervently prayed for Israel's welfare,
that it remain in the Lord God's care,
for God to bless his dynasty
and help fulfill its destiny.
King David conquered many pagan enemies¹ with ease.
Many did he subjugate; many did eradicate.
His fame progressed as he met with great success.
His rule was kind and just, and he engendered trust.
He delegated much command to those at his right hand.
He cared for Jonathan's son, who had both legs lame,
and gave him what remained of the House of Saul's domain.
He served his God with reverence and obedience.*

David and Bathsheba

One fateful day, as evening was on its way
David strolled on the high roof of his home, alone.
Suddenly something caught his eye
outlined against the pink-streaked sky.
In the fading rays of the day's sunlight,
he saw a captivating sight –
the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen,
even in a dream!
She'd been in her bath and now arose,
standing in a graceful pose.
He saw loveliness beyond compare,

¹ Among them the Philistines, the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Amalekites.

he saw a form rare.
He saw a skin, unflawed and fair,
a waving flow of jet-black hair.

Dazed, as in a dream, he gazed at this vision supreme.
He saw his soulmate, his fate,
his dearest love, sent to him by God¹ above.

He fell in love with her that fateful day
at first sight
in the rosy fading light.
Bathsheba was her given name,
this one who set his heart aflame.
He sent for her, and they met in unity,
in perfect love, in perfect harmony.
Their love was bliss,
from the moment of their first ecstatic kiss.
From that night of deep delight
a child began to bloom within her womb.

Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah the Hittite,²
who was in David's army in the fight
against the pagan Ammonites.
She was young, and he was twice her age,
always in a war engaged.
Never home, Uriah left his young wife all alone.
David, concerned for her, wishing to protect,
before others could the child detect,
sent a message to Joab³ to send Uriah back,
that he should to his home return.
When he did, David showed concern;
for he was dirty and he stank,
a smell sour and rank.
David said to him:
Wash your feet, have food to eat

¹ II Samuel 11:4. David recognized that she was his divinely intended mate.

² II Samuel 11:3. The Hittites were a pagan people. Uriah could have been either a convert of Hittite descent or an Israelite who had lived among the Hittites.

³ Commander of David's army.

you've had enough of war and strife,
go home to your wife.
But Uriah disobeyed,¹ and across the palace threshold lay,
for, said he, his comrades lived in great hardship
so he himself must pleasure skip.
He refused to go to his own home
so Bathsheba still remained alone.
David let him stay, for another night and day.
Then he summoned him again to come;
plied him with food and drink until he did to wine succumb;
he made Uriah drunk, and sent him again to his house,
hoping he'd lie with his spouse.
But no! Uriah would not go!
By this time, David was in despair²
no longer could he wait, forbear
so he set a snare.
He sent a letter to Joab by Uriah's hand
containing this command:
Place Uriah in the line of fire
where he's certain to expire;
where the fighting is most fierce;
where a weapon will him pierce:
then you withdraw and let him die!
I rely on you to comply.

And so it was.
Along with others in the fight
the enemy did Uriah smite;
he met his end dying with his friends.
When Joab's message was to David sent, it this way went:
Archers shot him from a wall, and I saw Uriah fall.

When Bathsheba heard Uriah was dead,
that she was no longer wed,
she mourned for him and when that was done
she married David, bore him a son.

¹ II Samuel 11:11 commentary. Disobedience to the king made him liable to the death penalty.

² Author's image.

David's deed was evil in God's sight!
 On his character a blight.
 After one year God sent Nathan¹ with a parable to present
 so David would his deed comprehend and would repent.
 Nathan to David this story told:
 There were two men; one was rich and had much gold;
 the other poor and quite obscure.
 The rich man owned many cattle and sheep –
 hundreds of them were in his keep.
 The poor man had but one little ewe
 that he had reared, and treasured too.
 The little ewe ate of his bread, slept by his head;
 it drank from his cup, shared what he supped.
 When it wished to rest, it lay against his chest.
 It was like another daughter.
 One day a traveller came the rich man's way;
 the rich man wished to give his guest the very best,
 but reluctant was to slay his own
 So he took the poor man's only one,
 slew the poor man's only little ewe.
 And gave it to his guest to eat.
 No more would the poor man hear it bleat
 or see it running on its pretty feet,
 nor feel its touch so sweet.
 It was forever gone from his home
 and he was quite alone.

David – indignant at this rich man, said to Nathan:
 a man like that deserves to die!
 Naught can his behaviour justify.
 He must pay fourfold² for the ewe he slew!
 He had no pity in his rotten soul
 for the poor man, and for the ewe he stole.

¹ Nathan was a prophet.

² II Samuel 12:6, commentary. The payment of four sheep for the one stolen accords with Exodus 21:37. There is no death penalty for theft; David's "death sentence" was a figurative condemnation of the rich man's depravity.

Nathan's voice, cold and loud
covered David like a shroud.
You are that man! You are he, and you will hear the Lord's decree!
Thus saith the Lord:
You slew Uriah with an Ammonite sword –
despite all I've given you,
despite all I've done for you –
you have sinned – done what was evil in My Eyes,
done what I despise.
You had Uriah killed, you had his blood spilled;
stole his wife, his only one, to be your own.
And now – your house will know no peace!
The sword within will never cease.
You have scorned me, ignored what I decree.
You took his spouse out of Uriah's house –
a wife whom he had wed, a wife he had not shed.
So – the Lord God declared –
behold! I shall raise up evil against you
among those who are near and dear.
I shall give away your wives before your very eyes.
Although you sinned in secrecy
all Israel will this see.

David, very contrite, aware now of his plight
confessed to Nathan in great distress:
I have sinned against the Lord,
and He will smite me with His sword;
Indeed I do repent! I am penitent! I am in torment!

Nathan made his reply:
David – you will not die;
for God has commuted your sin against Him.
But your sin will bring you suffering.
Your new-born son will surely die
and many eyes will not be dry.

Then God struck the tiny baby boy,
pale and frail.
He became very ill, his strength began to fail;
he didn't thrive, was barely alive;

not even strong enough to cry –
he began to die.
David, devastated, began a total fast;
he prayed for his baby son, that its life be spared;
he wept and wept in his despair;
he slept upon the floor,
in anguish he did God implore –
to no avail – on the seventh day the baby passed away.
Bathsheba, broken-hearted, cried and cried,
but David arose, bathed and changed his clothes,
at last broke his fast,
no longer wept, for God's Will he did now accept.
He went to Bathsheba, his most beloved wife,
the true love of his life,
and she conceived and bore another son
whom they named Solomon.¹

*To David's family came much more pain-
evil reigned, children slain.
As predicted by the Lord
the family was struck by sword.*

Amnon and Tamar

Amnon,² one of David's sons, born in Hebron,
fell in love with Tamar³ from afar.
His lust was intense, extreme,
fulfilment of it was a dream.
She was his half-sister, from another mother
and full sister to some of his brothers.
Beautiful Tamar, virginal, innocent and chaste,
long auburn hair cascading to her waist;⁴
graceful, petite, still danced around on little feet,
her pretty face smiling, sweet,

¹ His second name was Jedidiah, for he was beloved by the Lord.

² II Samuel 3:2. Born to Ahinoam.

³ Tamar, David's daughter, born to Maacah, was half-sister to Amnon and full sister to Absalom.

⁴ Author's image.

her person scented, clean and neat;
soft gentle eyes of lovely green;
and barely a teen.

Beautiful Tamar – demure and pure –
yet with much allure.

Amnon was powerful as a bull,¹
with ways that were crude, behaviour that was rude,
a mind that was shrewd, thoughts that were lewd.

Easily peeved, easily aggrieved,
he cared not if he deceived
as long as he had his way
and had no price to pay.

Ruthless to excess, with Tamar obsessed,
driven to possess, he must attain success.

By lust frustrated, very agitated,
he asked a friend how to gain his end.
They dreamed up a monstrous scheme!
Knowing Tamar was naive, easy to deceive,
he pretended to be ill, took to his bed,
told David he needed to be fed,
that Tamar should prepare a tasty treat
especially for him to eat,
and serve him with her own hands –
those were his demands.

David told Tamar, and she agreed to Amnon's plea,
completely unaware of his intent,
without the least presentiment.

When Tamar, the innocent and good
came to his room to serve his food,
the lout sent his servants out,
and from where he lay he seized his prey.
Come to me, he said, don't try to flee!
His heart filled with fire,
his voice hoarse with desire.

Tamar – in shock, stunned at what Amnon had begun
screamed in fright, aware now of her plight.

¹ Author's image

O! NO! she cried – please let me go!
Don't do this vile and dreadful thing!
It can only evil bring!
Do not me violate, it's a despicable act
that will only tragedy attract.
If you wish to marry me, beseech the king,
for he would allow such a thing.¹
Despite how she did entreat
Tamar soon knew defeat.
He refused to hear her pleading voice –
he had made his evil choice.
He overpowered her and had his way,
then quickly tried to send her out, away.
His love had turned to hate²
and now he did Tamar abominate.
Get lost! He shouted, get out of here,
don't come near
I don't want you anymore
I loathe and hate you to the core.

Tamar wept bitter tears at his cruel sneers,
and tried to express her inmost fears:
Do not now abandon me; don't make me flee!
Don't throw me out to be alone, on my own!
I'll be shamed, even blamed,
my good name defamed!
But Amnon did not budge,
he was consumed by his unjust grudge.
He said to his attendant:
Put her out and lock the door,
she can't come here anymore.

Tamar, in her grief and her distress,
tore her many-coloured maiden's dress,
threw dirt upon her head,

¹ II Samuel 13:1, commentary. Tamar and (her full brother) Absalom were children of Macaah, a captive of war. She was conceived before her mother was converted, and therefore not considered to be a sister of her blood siblings. Hence there was no incest.

²Author's comment. Perhaps some vestige of good in Amnon caused him to hate what he had done, and he projected that hate onto Tamar, the object of his villainy.

and crying as she went, she fled.
She ran to the home of her brother Absalom.
In despair she shared.
He tried to comfort, to make light
about her tragedy and her plight.
'Twas not an outsider, just her brother, said he
trying to reduce her agony.
But Amnon's deed was evil in his eyes
and now he plotted his demise –
to take revenge; to Tamar avenge.
David too was in a rage that nothing could assuage.
Absalom spoke no longer to Amnon,
that relationship was dead and gone.

*In two years time –
Absalom invited all of David's sons
including Amnon
to visit him in Ephraim¹.*
*He had worked out a plan to eliminate Amnon
that he was confident he could implement;
this would be his revenge; his settlement;
that none could prevent.*
When his guests had come to dine
to enjoy the food and wine,
he instructed his servants:
When we have dined and Amnon is giddy with wine,
I will say "Strike down Amnon" as my sign –
then you approach and make your kill;
do not fear, this is my will;
do as I command, it's in your hands;
be brave and strong, you do no wrong.
The servants did as Absalom had bid.
Amnon was now dead. His other brothers fled in dread –
quickly rode away
for fear he would them also slay.
Then Absalom also fled – fled for his own life,
away from possible strife.

¹ II Samuel 13:23. In the Plain of Hazor, where they were shearing sheep for him.

Absalom, Treacherous Son

David mourned for Amnon
as he cared deeply for all his sons,
but then his heart turned back to his Absalom.
His Absalom – the most beautiful of men!¹
With David's perfect face²
with David's wondrous grace
with David's radiant smile
with David's charming style.
He was tall, well-built but slim,
with a pure and perfect skin³ –
clear, unblemished, glowing from within.
Two shining hazel eyes could others hypnotize.
And his hair! Hair so rare –
heavy, thick and black, and very strong;⁴
and he wore it very long.⁵
'Twas cut but once a year, held by him very dear.
He was a man who could excite –
a most inspiring sight!

David and he had been estranged,⁶
but now a meeting was arranged;
they were reunited, and both men were delighted.

But that didn't last!
Absalom was a rebellious son and an ambitious man.
He wanted the crown, to rule the land,
to have it all at his command.
His ambition grew –
in his way he was ruthless too.
So he had a treacherous and clever plan.
It began this way –

¹ II Samuel 14:25.

² Author's image.

³ II Samuel 14:25.

⁴ Author's image.

⁵ II Samuel 14:26.

⁶ II Samuel 13:29. Because Absalom had murdered Amnon.

He sat at the city gate, and did cleverly manipulate!
All Israel came for David's royal judgment,
but Absalom intervened, and spoke in tones eloquent;
as judge, he said, he'd make just settlement;
he would always understand the issues in the land;
he would give support and sympathy,
would always deliver the most fair decree –
that was an absolute important guarantee!
If they prostrated on the ground,
he raised them up, threw loving arms around¹
and even bestowed a kiss before he them dismissed.

*As the years went by, and he continued with deceit and lies
with criticism of David thereby implied,
as his own abilities he magnified
and David's name and reputation falsified,
his following grew –
a following of men whom he did woo,
who to David were untrue,
so that his goal he could pursue,
so that he could make his coup.
Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel!*

After many years, Absalom returned to Hebron.
With him went two hundred men from David's Jerusalem;
who knew not of his intent, of why he went.
He sent out spies to all the tribes:
they said: When you hear the trumpets blow,
you should know –
Absalom is the king of Hebron!

Many joined his powerful conspiracy, so his following increased
while his father David's almost ceased.
When David understood the situation in his nation
he took his men and fled from Jerusalem.
Arise, let us flee, before Absalom catches up to me,
lest he bring evil on us all – lest we fall,
before he does this city smite with his unjust might.

¹ II Samuel 15:5, commentary . By showing lavish affection, agreeing with their grievances and not letting them bow to him, Absalom slyly gained the trust and love of the masses.

Many to David came, their loyalty proclaimed –
to be on his side, to help provide.

*In the war that ensued between father and son
between David and Absalom
the mighty David won.*

Absalom had crossed the Jordan with every possible man,
while David had arrived at Mahanaim,
with every Israelite who would fight with him.

David's strategy was a success.

He gave a strict command which all did understand:

Be gentle with my Absalom, my beloved son!

For my sake, revenge don't take.

His purpose was chastisement to forestall,
and he was clearly heard by all!

The two great armies clashed for war,
corps against corps,

in the forest of Ephraim –

fighting toe to toe, head to head, limb to limb.

The casualties were heavy on that tragic day;

twenty thousand with their lives did pay.

The battle spread throughout the forest, through the land;

and under David's brilliant command

his army won, and Absalom's did succumb.

In the forest, thick and dense,

against low hung branches riders had no defence,

could not prevent many tragic accidents.

Absalom was riding on a mule, trying to flee,

when he passed beneath a great elm tree.

By unhappy chance, his long hair became entangled in a branch.

He hung there, suspended by his thick strong hair,

while his mule moved on and then was gone.

'Tween heaven and earth he was thus caught.

He became desperate and distraught

and struggled to break free

from the branches of that tree –

but in vain – he could not his freedom gain.

Joab, told of Absalom's accident, of his predicament
went to see, and found him struggling in the tree.
Despite David's firm request
that they not Absalom harm or molest,
Joab cruelly thrust three staves¹ through Absalom's breast.
Absalom screamed in agony, but still could not break free,
in pain, but still not slain.
Then ten soldiers beat the hapless one as his body swung,
as to life it clung.
Until, mercifully, they struck him dead and his life fled.
They cut his body down and threw it in a pit
and erected there a mound of stones
so his grave would be known.

Absalom paid in the extreme for his patricidal scheme!

When David learned that Absalom his son was dead,
that his blood was shed,
that his precious life had fled,
he trembled and he wept, crying out at every step
in torment, in deep lament:
O! my son! Absalom my son, my son!
Absalom! If only I could have died in your place!
Absalom, my son, my son.
*His heart was torn in twain as he learned how his son was slain.
There flowed a torrent of grief without relief.
His pain was almost more than he could bear;
he remembered the beauty rare, the wondrous hair,
his handsome face, his elegance and grace.
A loving father mourned his son.
The foul deed was done, Absalom was forever gone.*

Joab came in, having heard of David's lament
of his grief and torment.
David did not mourn alone
he was joined by those whom Absalom had known.
Joab, concerned by what he saw, seeing a flaw,
said to David:

¹ II Samuel 18:14.

Those who love you, you humiliate
by showing love for one who did you hate.
You would rather that Absalom lived
and the rest of us were dead instead.
So David arose, sat at the city gate,
so all could see his love for them was great.

Joab he replaced, because he slew his son, his Absalom.

After more wars, David did the Philistines defeat,
causing their permanent retreat.
To his Lord, he sang a song of gratitude¹
ablaze with praise for Him in every phrase.

David's Song of Gratitude²

God is my Rock, upon whom I depend;
He is my Fortress, my Rescuer and Friend.
He is my Saviour, He is my Salvation,
He saves me from evil and from damnation.
He is my Refuge, He is my Shield,
with His support, I never yield,
with Him beside, my enemies subside,
He is my Tower where I am safe,
He is my power against all those depraved.
He defended me against my enemies,
comforted me, gave me release and ease.
When ungodly men made me afraid
He was always there to give support and aid.
When the pains of death encircled me –
when the snares of death surrounded me –
in my distress I called upon the Lord
and He heard me and He raised His sword.
My Lord spake –

¹ II Samuel 22:1-57, commentary. This song, which David sang after his deliverance from his enemies, appears with minor differences as the eighteenth psalm.

² The following is based on verses 1-51 of II Samuel 22.

and the earth did quake, the foundations of Heaven did shake,
 and my Lord went forth from on high
 and my enemies did terrify.
 He arose and saved me from my mighty foes.
 He is my Strength against violence
 He is my Defence, my Providence.
 He delivered me, He set me free,
 and His love encompasses me.
 I did no evil in His sight,
 nor did I fail to be upright;
 I did not depart from Him, nor did I sin;
 from His ways I never strayed,
 nor did I transgress, nor from Him digress,
 so He did me bless,
 repaid me for my righteousness.
 He made me ruler over populations,
 over friends and foes He gave me domination,
 and I ruled Israel, my own beloved nation
 with His guidance and illumination.
 You show mercy to the merciful,
 bring down the haughty and the powerful.
 The afflicted you do save
 but not the evil and depraved.
 You are just, my Lord, in you I trust.
 O Lord, you are the lamp that lights up the dark
 with Your Divine and Sacred Spark.
 The Lord lives! – Blessed is my rock!
 You are perfection, You are the everything
 and over all that is, You are the Lord and King.
 My gratitude and thanks to You I extend,
 to You my Lord who does this world transcend.
 I sing my praises in Your Name,
 and to all nations You proclaim.
 So – let all praises ring
 for the Lord and King.

David's Last Words

*David had ruled for forty years,
 was always to his people dear.
 Now, 'twas the last time David heard*

and spoke God's Word –

*These words eloquent, God's own testament,
by God were sent, for man's wisdom meant.
For David, the anointed king,
who beautiful songs did sing,
who great victories did bring;
David, once a shepherd, taken now up high,
once again did prophesy and teach
as peoples minds he tried to reach.*

The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me¹
through me He spoke His great decrees;
His Holy Words sat upon my tongue
for to all people did those words belong.
Rule with righteousness, and the Lord God will bless;
rule in fear of God, who reigns from heaven above;
like the morning light after a rainy night,
like a cloudless sky meeting the happy eye,
when the sun comes out to shine,
by God's divine design
the fertile earth gives birth –
then do grasses grow,
flowers their colours show,
all nature blooms, perfumed from its womb.

My house was in accord with my Holy Lord;
He granted me a covenant, perpetual and secure,
that forever will endure,
fulfilling my desire, my salvation
granting me the kingship of my nation.

No other realms will He allow to sprout –
they will be rooted out!
Godless men,² swept aside, nowhere to hide,
nowhere to reside.
Like wind-blown thistles that one cannot touch or clutch
except with shaft of spear,
for its sting one must fear,
only a fool would touch without an iron tool –

these poisonous thistles must be obliterated
no matter where they are,

¹ Adapted from II Samuel 23:1-7.

² Enemies.

no matter near or far,
they must be discerned, must be completely burned.

*Then David spoke of all his mighty warriors,
with memory intact,
remembering each heroic act,
He spoke of each by name, telling of their fame.
Altogether there were thirty-seven men
and David honoured each in his heartfelt speech.*

So spoke David – great warrior-poet-king.

David's Last Days

*David is getting old -
His hair is thinned and white,¹
his eyes now dim, no longer bright,
his skin now dry and pale,
his body thin and frail;
fine lines engrave his handsome face,
he moves at a slower pace.
David the king is growing old
and though his many robes enfold,
he's always cold.
He sleeps alone, chilled to the bone.*

A virginal maid is brought to aid.
She is Abishag the Shunammite,
who glows with a pure and radiant light.
She comes to her king attend,
her warmth to lend,
care to extend, but only as a friend.
She is a beautiful girl -
as rare and lovely as a pearl;
sweet and kind, she is the best that they could find,
for they searched far and wide

¹ Author's image.

the right maid to provide.

Adonijah, David's son, born in Hebron,¹
coveted the throne.

He said to himself:

the other three are gone into oblivion;
and I'm the fourth, I am the next in line,
so the throne is surely mine.

Besides, father never criticized,
nor ever me chastised.

And I'm as handsome as they come,
so I should the king become.

He decided on a scheme
to fulfill his dream.

First- to proclaim himself as the crown prince
by saying loudly: I shall reign,
I shall be king of this domain.

Second- to arrange a feast, a treat
for his brothers and some others.

Third- some not to invite, to slight
namely, Nathan the prophet, the mighty men,
and his brother Solomon, Bathsheba's son!

As soon as Nathan learned of Adonijah's plan
he quickly to Bathsheba ran.

Have you heard, said he, panting with every word -
Adonijah has claimed the throne as his very own!

He has proclaimed himself as king!

And David knows nothing of this thing.

You must quickly run, before the deed is done
before the king succumbs.

Go - tell him what he must know;

Say - you have sworn that Solomon would have your throne;
you swore to me that you would so decree,
so explain -

why does Adonijah proclaim his future reign?

And, said Nathan, I will enter after you
and have my interview,

and there I'll support your claim
and urge that Solomon should reign.

¹ I Kings 1:6 commentary. Adonijah (son of Haggith) is the oldest surviving son, after Amnon,(II Samuel 13:32), Chileah, and Absalom (II Samuel 18:15).

And so it came to be!

David heard and kept his word.
He proclaimed Solomon the future king.
The people shouted very loud:
Long live King Solomon!
and rejoiced at David's choice.

At the feast, Adonijah's guests became of this aware,
and feeling they were in a snare,
alarmed that they might be harmed,
in dismay they quickly ran away.
Adonijah, fearing Solomon would him slay, also ran away.
He sought sanctuary at the altar,¹ a holy place.
But Solomon spoke with mercy and with grace:
If he is loyal to the royal throne
I will let him go back home;
but if there is evil in his heart
within the soul of that upstart,
then he will die!
That was Solomon's reply.

* * * * *

King David's death draws near;
he softly speaks for Solomon to hear:
My son, be loyal to God, you must Him revere,
you must Him love, and you must Him fear.
Walk in His ways for all your days -
observing all commandments that He sent,
obeying His statutes, ordinances, and decrees,
and your success as king is guaranteed.
David haltingly spoke on to young Solomon, his heir:
Solomon listened carefully, with patience² and with care.
These precious moments, soon to be past,
would be long remembered, and would have to last.

My son, whispered David, become a man,

¹ I Kings 1:5; Adonijah took hold of the horns of the altar.

² Author's image.

do your part in God's great plan;
be strong, you are where you belong,
soon you will sit upon the throne
from which you must rule alone.
You are wise, and I know that you will rise,¹
and that many nations will your wisdom prize.²

Then David, by God blest,
passed on and was laid to rest.
He had reigned for forty years -³
a monarch great, to his people dear.

David's Epilogue

*David, beloved king -
so much you did to your nation bring.
You were spiritual in your heart,
rarely did from God depart,
kept your nation to the Book of Laws,
deviated not from God's holy cause.*

*Your wondrous psalms give birth to faith and balm,
showing a path to God's domain,
bringing comfort to all those in pain;
people still rejoice to hear your precious voice
which time and space can not erase.
What a legacy you left
to those in need, to those bereft!
Your dynasty has gone down in history
for you carried out your God -sent destiny.
You made your nation great,
did it consolidate;
and you won your wars - a great conqueror.
Now that you are gone,
know that your memory will live on,
for God had chosen you to show
the path that other souls should go.
Farewell for now,
beloved David, beloved king!*

¹ Author's image..

² Author's image.

³ I Kings 2:11; Seven years in Hebron, thirty-three in Jerusalem

Solomon's Reign

Although a youth when his reign began,
for not yet was he a grown man,
he took the Pharaoh's daughter as his bride,
a good alliance to provide.
For Egypt was a land of affluence
with much foreign influence;
and besides –
protection to the south it did provide.

One night in Gibeon, he had a holy dream
in which the Lord God appeared to him.
In this dream, God spoke to him:
Request what I should give to you!

Solomon, in the dream, answered Him:
David my father was just and fair beyond compare;
he was upright, did what was right in Your Holy Sight;
he walked in truth and in righteousness,
You gave him many kindnesses,
You gave him great success,
and You did him bless.

Now You've crowned me in his place,
but father I cannot replace,
for I am just a lad, know not yet how to lead,
know not how correctly to proceed.
So I request a heart that understands
all things, all peoples of all lands.
I ask my judgements all be just,
deserving of Your Holy trust;
that I may justice show
and know friend from foe;
that I know evil from what's good
so that I may the truth conclude.

God was pleased with his request,
and decided it be blest.
God said to him:

Because you have not asked for a life that's long,
nor to be very strong,
nor for riches, nor for fame, nor for acclaim
nor that your enemies be slain.
You ask to understand, to justice bring
now that you're king.
I shall act in accordance with your words
all of which I've listened to and heard.
I've given you a heart that's understanding, very wise.
Truthfulness you will prize, and you won't compromise.
You'll be unique among the kings – another like you has never reigned,
nor will while you as king remain.

Furthermore, even though you did not ask in your request
I've granted you more of the very best.
You will be honoured, have wealth unparalleled,
in everything you will excel.
If you walk in all My ways,
I shall prolong your days.

Solomon awoke, remembered what God spoke!
Behold, it had been a dream –
but so very real did seem!.

When he returned to Jerusalem
he reverently stood before the Ark
with its divine and holy Spark,
and humbly made offerings before the Lord
for all that he would award.

King Solomon in His Prime

*Solomon – majestic, handsome, brilliant king;
hair as black as a raven's wing;¹
mind incredibly wise and swift,
from God a precious wondrous gift.
Dignified, serene, tall and lean with sun-tanned skin,*

¹ Author's image.

passionate and masculine.¹
Eyes brown and grave;
his character strong and brave;
a charming style, a gracious smile.
His wealth was unparalleled,
and in all things he excelled.
Possessions fabulous and grand,
he ruled a great prosperous and peaceful land.
So much accomplishment –
buildings magnificent,² cities a wonderment.
His words profound and eloquent, spoken for enlightenment,³
and to the Lord God reverent.
His judgements, heaven-sent, were famous everywhere
as brilliant , creative, wise and fair.
King Solomon – unique and wise
honoured, respected, loved and prized.

The Judgement

This is the room⁴ where petitioners are sent
for hearings, justice, and to hear judgements.
The furnishings are opulent –
rich carpets spread throughout,
and gilded chairs are set about.
At one end a throne, standing alone.
King Solomon, wearing a jewel-studded golden crown
is sitting down.
He wears a purple robe, all trimmed with shining gold,
that falls in graceful folds.
As he awaits his case he prays to God to send him grace.
Courtiers stand around,
between the king and the respectful throng.

As two petitioners approach
each does the other noisily reproach.

¹ Song of Solomon.

² The Holy Temple and his palace.

³ The Book of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, his knowledge of nature.

⁴ Author's image

These are two keepers of an inn¹
who stand now before him.
They are dressed in their very best,²
heavy necklaces resting on their chests.
They wear coloured scarves upon their heads,
their lips are coloured red.

One woman is in distress
as she waits to the king address.
The other plays a role, attempts the king to cajole.
The first one weeps, her eyes upon the ground,
the other stands stolidly, looking all around.

One woman speaks:
Please, my lord, there is an inn where only we two dwell;
'tis there I gave birth to a son, my only one.
Three days later, she who stands over there
also gave birth to a son and heir.
Her son died because she lay on him when the light was dim.
Seeing her plight she arose in the night
and, said the first as she wept, while I slept
she took my son away, put him to her breast,
and rested her dead son, against my chest.
When I awoke to nurse, behold – I found a curse,
for the babe I held was dead!
I studied well his little head
in the light of morn
and saw 'twas *not* the son I'd borne.

But the other woman loudly cried:
How you would me deprive!
It's my son who's alive!
He lives and thrives.
It's your son who is dead;
it's your son who died in your bed.
She spoke with force, her voice coarse.

The first one spoke again in greater pain:

¹Harlots were also known as innkeepers. See Joshua 2:1

² Author's image.

My lord, it is not so!
It's her son who is dead,
'tis his life that has fled.
My son is the one who lives
and I will never her forgive!
She does you, my lord, mislead,
she did an evil deed.
Please believe, she does you deceive.
It went back and forth this way,
each having her say.

The king had listened carefully, and now he said:
One claims the living babe is hers;
the other, the reverse.
Then he roared: Fetch a sword!
Bring the living child, in my view cut it in two,
when it's split, give each one half of it.
Then of this problem we'll be quit.

The true mother, terror stricken for her son
quickly cried out in alarm:
NO! NO! Do him no harm!
Don't put him to death!
Let him be, let him draw his breath.
I withdraw. She is his mother, it is her son,
give her the living one.
The other woman stood before the throne
with a face of stone.
She coldly said: neither yours nor mine shall he be –
to the cutting I agree;
so cut!

Then spoke Solomon the wise,
his emotions well disguised:
The first woman is the mother,
definitely not the other.
The first spoke from her loving heart,¹

¹ Author's image.

willing from her babe to part,
willing to herself deprive,
that her newborn stay alive.

The second cared not if I slew;
all that she said was not true.
She told me only lies,
and no tears stood within her eyes.
The child is not to die;
his mother now can dry her eye.
Give to her the newborn boy –
and to her, relief and joy.

All Israel heard of the king's judgement,
and saw the wisdom that God had sent.
They looked upon the king with awe
and saw no flaw.
And King Solomon reigned over all of Israel! ¹

* * * * *

Solomon formed a large and wise administration
to run the affairs of his enormous nation.
Eleven ministers, twelve regional commissioners
were in charge of everything
and all reported to the king.
There was prosperity and security
on every farm, and in each village, town and city.

His kingdom stretched from Egypt north to Syria,
from Gaza east to Mesopotamia.
This was a blessed time of peace
and prosperity that did not cease.
Vast wisdom, breadth of heart did God for him decree –
limitless as the sands that lie upon the shore beside the rolling sea.
He was wiser than any man who'd ever lived –
the most impressive, the most perceptive,

the most intuitive and imaginative,

¹ Author's comment. The fame of this judgement was instrumental in unifying the tribes under Solomon's rule. See I Kings 4:1.

His fame spread to nations all around –
and did all astound.

He was profound; he was unique –
three thousand proverbs could he speak.
His songs numbered one thousand and five.
He knew all of nature, of things alive,
of animals and trees, of fish and fowl
and of the creatures that did crawl.

Everywhere they heard of his fame
and they came –
because of all the things that they'd heard,
about his wisdom and his treasured words.

The Holy Temple

He created a Temple in God's Holy Name
that brought to him even greater fame.
He built it at God's request, and he built the very best.
'Twas built to his own design, over a span of seven years,
at a cost very dear.
It would be a sacred place,
for there would rest the Ark and God's presence and His Grace.
His design, his greatest accomplishment, was magnificent.
The Temple was enormous in size,
conceived by his mind, innovative, brilliant, wise.
He used cedar and cypress trees brought to him from Lebanon;
armies toiled to carve the huge blocks of special quarried stone.
Inside, in this marvellous House of Prayer
gold overlay was everywhere;
with carvings of golden cherubim within,
and unique floral gold designs, exquisite and fine.
All a wonder to behold!
the Altar, the Table, the candelabra, everything
was made of gold, for Solomon the king.

David's dream had now come to fruition –
a holy Temple for his beloved nation.

His vast store of artifacts had by him been sanctified –
those artifacts, the silver and the gold, were now put inside.
Gathered in the past, they were now home at last –
David’s legacy of love, dedicated to Lord God above!
God’s Holy House, at last complete!

*The site of this splendid sight,
to God a reverent testament,
was not by chance; it had spiritual significance!
It was a threshing floor that David bought¹ –
a very holy spot² –
by the Lord selected, where His future House would be erected!*

There was a sacred dedication
made by Solomon and all the nation.
In attendance were all elders, heads of tribes,
all the leaders and the scribes.
The Ark was brought from Zion and emplaced;
inside it only the two tablets of stone that Moses had placed.
Solomon declared to the Lord:
I have built a House for You,
its foundation forever true.
Then he blessed the congregation,
the entire Israelite nation.
And he stood before the splendid altar of gold
in God’s Sacred stronghold.
Then he knelt, his hands outspread to heaven above
and prayed unto his living God:
Lord of Israel, there is none like You
in heaven or on earth.
There is only You, who to this universe gave birth.
You preserve Your covenants
with us who are Your loving true servants.
We beg of You to keep the House of David
safe and secure, righteous and pure.

¹ II Samuel 24:24. It was Araunah’s threshing floor that Gad the prophet had told David to buy. He paid 55 shekels of silver for it.

² II Samuel 24:16, commentary . On Mount Moriah, the site of Abraham’s intended sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22:2).

If there is pestilence or famine in the land,
or an enemy raises against us his hand,
do not us reprimand
but let us the plague withstand,
make the enemy disband.
When needed, send us rain in Your Holy Name;
recompense each according to his heart
and justice won't depart.
Vindicate the righteous, reverse our defeats,
forgive us our sins
and help us to our battles win.
Answer our prayers, please do us spare.
Also hear the Gentiles pleas to You¹
when their faith is true.
This is Your people, this Your heritage!
Then Solomon blessed the entire congregation:
May God be with us, not forsake, nor cast us away.
We must walk in all His Ways for all our days;
observe all that He did us command
and we'll remain within His Holy Hand.
All will know that He is God!

Then Solomon once again ordered a long celebration
for the entire nation.
All were full of joy and blessed their king
for all the goodness he did bring.

God again appeared to Solomon in a dream
and again He spoke to him:²

“I have heard your prayer and supplication
that you supplicated before Me.
I have sanctified this temple that you have built,
to place My name there forever,
and My eyes and My heart shall be there all the days.
And as for you – if you walk before Me as your father David walked,
with wholeheartedness and with uprightness,
to do in accordance with all that I have commanded you,

¹ I Kings 8:41.

² I Kings 9:2-9.

and you will observe My decrees and My statutes;
then I shall uphold the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever,
as I spoke about your father David, saying
'No man of yours will be cut off from upon the throne of Israel.'
**But if you and your children turn away from Me
and will not observe My commandments,
My decrees that I have placed before you,
and you go and worship the gods of others
and prostrate yourself to them,
then I shall cut off Israel from upon the face of the land I gave them,
and the Temple that I have sanctified for My Name
I shall dismiss from My Presence,
and Israel shall become a parable
and a conversation piece among all the nations.**
And this Temple, which should be so exalted –
all who pass by it will be appalled and will whistle,
and they will say, 'Why did God do such a thing
to this land and to this Temple?'
And they will say, 'Because they forsook the Lord, their God,
Who brought their forefathers out of the land of Egypt,
and they grasped the gods of others, and prostrated themselves
to them and worshiped them;
therefore God brought all this evil upon them.' ”

*Thus spake the Lord God of Israel
to King Solomon!*

Solomon's Palace

“The House of the Cedars of Lebanon” was its given name;
it spoke of its owners wealth and gave its owner fame.
It was a vast, complex, magnificent place,
designed with genius, inspired by grace.
'Twas designed by Solomon to serve as his home
but not for that alone –
for there was a separate hall in which there sat a throne;

a Hall of Judgement where justice would be shown,
but also a hall for his Egyptian bride
where she could live in privacy, where she could live in pride.
Three splendid halls in all did Solomon install.
All elegant, all opulent, for Israel a famous ornament.
It was built with cedar trees, sent by King Hiram of Tyre, from Lebanon,
used great blocks of valuable quarried stone.
Copper work by Hiram,¹ a famous artisan –
work exquisite and fine, in artistic designs,
done with the greatest care, used in the palace everywhere,
graced this costly, splendid, lavish place.
It took thirteen years to build
with labour skilled;
it was beyond compare;
more grand than any palace anywhere!
People came from everywhere to see and stare.

His throne, built later, was magnificent,
and did the palace complement.
'Twas made of ivory, overlaid with gold,
fabulous to behold.
Beside each arm a lifelike lion rose
head up in a regal pose.²
On each step, of which there were six,
another pair of lions was affixed.
Twelve lions in all upon the stairs,
a sight never to be seen elsewhere.

Solomon's Later Years

Solomon continued still to build –
everywhere in his domain;
'twas a focus of his reign.
Cities sprang up from the ground –
storage cities, chariot cities, cavalry cities,
and other cities.
The few pagan groups³ that still remained

¹ I Kings 7:13. A coppersmith from Tyre, not to be confused with the King.

² Author's image.

³ I Kings 9:20. Of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, the Jebusites.

at the beginning of his reign
for labour he retained,
conscripted them as indentured slaves
till they were in their graves!
But his own people were his men of war,
his commanders, his commissioners.
He taxed his people to the hilt,
to pay for all that he had built!

* * * * *

He built a palace for his queen,
another edifice supreme of his regime.

* * * * *

He built a fleet upon the Sea of Reeds
to bring him gold according to his needs.

The Queen of Sheba

She had heard of Solomon's fame,
how his wisdom came to him in the Lord God's Name;
fascinated, she journeyed and she came,
to test with riddles was her aim.

The queen arrived with a very large entourage,
bringing gold and precious stones from home,
bringing large amounts of spice –
all worth an enormous price,
all set before the golden lion-throne
of the wise and wonderful King Solomon.

Sheba was beautiful¹, of Ethiopian descent,
wise and intelligent,
and dressed in resplendent robes, enriched with ornaments of gold,
wearing precious jewels, wondrous to behold.
She wore a golden circlet crown with elegance and grace,
that set off her lovely face.

¹ Author's image.

This youthful queen, slender, tall, her regal head held high,
dazzled every eye.

She saw everything belonging to this king.
She looked around at Solomon's lavish place
took in the service, the food, the vast and richly furnished space,
and was mightily impressed by all that he possessed –
and with the wisdom with which he'd been blessed!

She shared all that lay within her heart,
all her thoughts and feelings did she impart.
He answered everything she asked,
and in his brilliance she did bask
as she herself unmasked.
She heard and understood his words,
learned that for which she'd yearned.

With his wealth beyond compare,
his wisdom the greatest anywhere,
she was overwhelmed by Solomon and by his astounding realm.

She said to him:

I was told of your wisdom and your fame
and of the goodness of your name,
but I had not believed what you've achieved;
now I see –

not even half of what there is was told to me.

Your goodness and your wisdom have surpassed
all that I heard of you in the past.

In God's everlasting love for Israel, he has set you as its king
justice to bring,
to set a righteous stamp upon this land.

Then she gave the king much gold,¹
masses of precious stones she owned,
and spice in such a large amount
that it did surmount
that given to him at any time in his whole lifetime!
He answered all that she desired –

¹ I King 10:10. One hundred and twenty talents of gold. (A talent is approximately 64 pounds).

so that much wisdom she acquired
and achieved what she aspired.
He gave her from his generous heart
before the day when she'd depart
to her own grand and wealthy land,
much wiser than she came,
leaving with her mind and heart aflame.¹

The whole world heard of Solomon,
of his unparalleled wealth, of horses and chariots that he owned,
of his golden lion-throne,
of the wisdom God put in his heart,
that he did to all impart –
streams of people came him to acclaim
bringing presents of magnificence –
articles of silver, articles of gold,
clothing splendid to behold,
spices, horses, weapons too,
they brought in their retinues-
all for the king unique, King Solomon,
the amazing phenomenon.

*Beneath his calm and strong exterior
his wisdom infallible, his mind superior,
there burned a flame
which brought him disgrace and shame.*

He loved many women from foreign lands
most of them noble and grand –
the Pharaoh's daughter of lovely mien,
he married to become his queen.
He married too from pagan tribes²
that God had in the past proscribed,
God had said "They would sway your heart.",
persuading from Him to depart;
He said: "They will have you go unto their gods.",
which in His Eyes were seen to be unclean, to be obscene.

Solomon clung to his wives for love,

¹ Author's image.

² I Kings 11:1. Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Hittites and Sidonians.

turning less to his own God above.
He had seven hundred noble wives, three hundred concubines,
each with her design
each trying him to entwine.
He was swayed by his idolatrous wives
allowing their pagan faiths to stay alive.
When he grew old, wives
made pressure more intense, had more influence,
Then Solomon followed the foreign gods¹ of the pagan tribes,
all of which God had proscribed.
He built on the Mount of Olives a high place² facing Jerusalem;
to God an insult to condemn!
To these graven idols his wives made sacrifice and burned incense,
against the Lord a great offence.

God became angry with Solomon
that he had strayed from Him,
committed this great sin,
despite that He had twice come to him in dreams,
commanded him not to stray, not to blaspheme
by following gods strange and obscene.

Since Solomon had not obeyed
but had gone his sinful way,
God said to him:
I'll surely tear your crown away from you,
yet that will not just yet ensue,
for David heard My words
that his son would stay –
so I'll not take it all away.
Ten tribes will leave and to another cleave.
One tribe I'll leave with your son,
for David's sake and for Jerusalem.

Then God stirred up antagonists,³ whose enmity already did exist.
They were the evil Hadad, of the royal blood of Edom,
the Syrian Rezon, and also Jereboam,

an Ephraimite of the Israelites,

¹ I Kings 11:5. Foreign gods called Ashtoreth, goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh of Moab, Milcom of the Ammonites, Molech of the children of Ammon.

² On a height, containing an altar.

³ I Kings 11:23

who had been told by the prophet Ahijash the Shilonite,
that he would one day reign o'er Israel's domain.

If he did not sin, God promised him
he would receive the same as David did –
but only if he obeyed what God him bid.

Solomon vowed Jereboam should die
and sought for him low and high.
But Jereboam fled; to Egypt sped,
and there remained till Solomon was dead.

Solomon was king for forty years.
When his time had passed
and he was laid to rest at last.
Rehoboam his son ruled in his stead.
His father's path he did not tread –
a different time now lay ahead.

Solomon's Epilogue

*His reign began in splendour and in fame
but ended in disgrace, and sin, and shame.*

*Unique and splendid, a special king,
he was blessed by God with everything –
with greatest wisdom, with unparalleled wealth,
with handsome looks and robust health;
with genius in design that did all outshine;
with inspiration from the Lord Divine
to write in words that would forever shine,
for all time in scriptures be enshrined-
this brilliant king whose life was charmed,
kept safe from war and harm,
this king Solomon, having been given all –
ended in a tragic fall.*

*Though he had been blessed,
he had become obsessed.
In his drive to build and build,
not caring how they felt and lived
he exploited helpless pagan slaves,
worked them into their graves.
Like Ramses, Egyptian Pharaoh of old
he thought only of building and of gold.*

*His Hebrew subjects suffered too
as their yoke of taxes grew.
People used, people abused!*

*He built an empire vast and great
but in the end, brought misery and hate.
Where he had been reverent,
using well the gifts God sent,
in his later days he strayed –
by wives idolatrous was swayed to lean to their pagan ways.
Given every luxury, they practiced their idolatry,
with Solomon's permission
against God's prohibition!
Solomon put his need for earthly female love
over his love for his Lord above!*

*His accomplishments – what became of them?
The material things are long gone
but his spiritual legacy lives on.
His cities, buildings, built at such enormous cost
have crumbled into dust, are lost.
Gone the wealth and power, by aggression and time devoured.
But his spiritual legacy is still alive,
his wisdom has through time survived,
with God's Will it has thrived.
The Books of Proverbs and of Ecclesiastes,
read still for wisdom and the soul to please;
the Song of Solomon, to love a testament,
its words beautiful, still a wonderment;
this legacy from Solomon lives on!*

King Solomon; monument to his place and time!

CHAPTER FOUR

After Solomon

*When God appeared to Solomon in his second dream,
He had said to him:¹
If you observe My commandments and decrees
then I shall keep your throne for your dynasty alone,*

*but if you and yours turn away from Me,
do not observe My statutes and decrees;
if you worship other Gods, and prostrate yourself to them
then I shall you condemn;
I shall cut off Israel from this land.
From the Temple I'll remove My Presence
and Israel shall become a parable
and a conversation piece among the nations.*

And so it came to pass!

Israel in two was cleft²
as ten tribes rebelled and left -
the northern nation they became
with *Israel* as its name.
Judah and Benjamin remained,
the name of *Judah* it retained;
this southern nation loyal, stayed with the family royal -
with the Davidic dynasty, as was their foretold destiny.

'Tween North and South was war for many years,³
a tragedy of fears and tears;
then peace for a time, and war for many more.

The North was ruled by twenty kings,
most of whom did evil things.
Idolatry⁴ swept through the land
while sinful kings were in command.
Altars were raised to worship Baal

¹ Adapted from the Biblical text.

² I Kings 11:31,36 After Solomon's death the kingdom was split into two. The ten Northern tribes rebelled against the oppressive rule of Rehoboam, Solomon's heir. Two tribes remained loyal to Rehoboam.

³ II Kings 13-25.

⁴ Isaiah 2:8

and for Ashtoreth were groves¹ installed..
The people sinned - abandoned Him -
left their Holy God
and His Paths that they had trod.
God spoke through prophets² with warnings dire,
that the nation would expire.

*In ecstasy and joy,
in misery and woe,
marched prophets of old Israel,
magnificent and spiritual.
Like thunderbolts and lightning came
the messages in God's great Name.*

*The finest vessels of their Lord,
their strident voices were their swords.
Hollow reeds they were
God's message to confer.
They gave guidance-they gave hope
they helped the people learn to cope.*

*They could see
which events would come to be.
They struggled to prevent
Israel's descent and punishment.
They spoke of tragedies and sin,
exhorted to believe in Him,
said: follow in His sacred Way,
from His statutes do not stray.
They were eloquent and vehement,
often angry, dissident.*

*Relinquish evil! was their cry
or God's torment you will buy!
To God you must be reverent
was their oft-said testament.
For your sins be penitent!
They spoke as God's instrument -
repent, repent! Their message went
for your God will not relent.*

Although admonished by these holy seers

¹ Pagan sites for sensual pleasures.

² The great Elijah , Elisha, Amos and Hosea.

over many years,
these courageous holy men who warned them
again and again
the people failed to change their ways,
continued Lord God to betray,
continued Him to disobey,
and fell into spiritual decay!

The Dispersion

After two hundred years the Assyrians appeared, ¹
a vicious, cruel and terrible race,
they attacked, they displaced.
They acquired land through deportation,
causing devastation, causing terror, desperation.
The ten tribes of the North, of the Israeli nation
were dispersed to many destinations,
taken we know not where,
in misery and despair.
Ten tribes - scattered and gone -
tragically, only their memory lives on.

Judah too had twenty kings, but of the Davidic dynasty, ²
as God had decreed.
Although a few were good, still much evil reigned
and wickedness was not restrained.
God's laws were much disdained,
and His Name was much profaned.
The nation in descent, prophets from God were sent ³
to deliver chastisement, ⁴
to warn of coming punishment. ⁵
These powerful and holy instruments
warned the people to be penitent
to be reverent.
But their voices were unheard
their words derided, called absurd.

They predicted the dispersion if there was no conversion

¹ II Kings 15:29; Jeremiah 50:17

² Over a period of 393 years,

³ Nathan, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, Joel, Zephaniah

⁴ Isaiah 1:4 - 9.

⁵ Isaiah 1:19,20,24,25.

back to the faith that God had sent, for the Lord would not relent.

The Babylonian Exile

Many years after the loss of the North,¹
the cruel Babylonians attacked the South.
Judah was overrun; they destroyed Jerusalem;
the holy Temple² was burned to the ground!
Princes were captured and in chains were bound;
common people were left in their land³
their poverty to withstand.
But after captivity of seventy years
there was new hope and cheer.
Cyrus of Persia,⁴ captor of Babylon
allowed Judah to go home.
The golden Temple artifacts taken after the attack were soon sent back.

Slowly the exiles drifted home
and new seeds were sown.
The Temple was rebuilt, Jerusalem reborn.

* * * * *

*Later, the Romans legions came,
and the Israelites who still remained
were once more vanquished, scattered far and wide,
with only scriptures for their guide.*

* * * * *

*But later on there came the Ottoman;
the land won by them in war,
they opened up the door.⁵
From Europe came many with Jewish name -
those whose hearts yearned to return*

to where Hebrew seeds were sown of old,

¹ 133 years after the Assyrians conquered Israel.

² Jeremiah 52:13

³ II Kings 24:14 and 25:12..

⁴ II Chronicles 36:22; Cyrus the Great of Persia captures Babylon, returns sacred objects taken from the Temple, and allows the Hebrews to begin returning to Jerusalem.

⁵ There was a large emigration of European Jews to Palestine at the end of the 19th century, when the land was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire.

*to their ancestral home, foretold.¹
In them burned a flame
their promised land to claim.
In 1948,² that land became a state!
And claimed the name of Israel again!
The ingathering came in a flood, called by ties of blood.*

Modern Return to The Promised Land

Israel !

*Conceived in need, born in pain,
a beloved domain, a land humane,
for refugees who had no home
and would no longer need to roam.*

*Jews came from countries dispersed
from backgrounds diverse.
Most sabras³ in Israel did remain,
from other lands the olim¹ came -
again needing only Jewish name:
from Europe, South America, United States, South Africa,
Morocco, Yemen, Ethiopia, Mexico and Canada,
Ashkenazi and Sephardic, many healthy and some sick
by voyages slow and quick.
Spoke French and Spanish, English, German,
Russian, Yiddish, and Romanian;
diversity of language from dispersal
gave way to Hebrew universal.
Colour ranges black to fair - none is rare.
Came every vocation to build a Hebrew nation.
They came from city, village, farm,
leaving hate, oppression, harm,
and religious prejudice, to build a Jewish edifice.*

⁵ Deuteronomy 34: 4 "And the Lord said unto him, This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed..."

² May 15

³ Israelis born in Israel.

*They pioneered the land,
in Kibbutzim¹ some did band;
there equality ruled, all resources pooled.
The desert made to bloom, industry created soon;
moshavim² and ulpanim,³ synagogues and yeshivas.⁴
Apartments, daycare, nurseries,
schools and universities,
religious ones and secular,
an intellectual reservoir;
communities of every kind, available for every mind.
Roads and sewers, cities sprung,
songs of Israel joyfully sung.
Up the ladder, rung by rung.*

*They had to strive in order to survive;
although war they did deplore,
when they fought they won -
never did succumb.*

Israel the nation lives again!

*Still, the need for safety is not met;
always there is war and threat.
Black clouds swirl around
as threats of Jewish genocide resound.*

*Strife erupted in the land,
where in safety could one stand?
Carnage waits in car or street,
perhaps the stranger that you meet
will ignite the bomb or wield the knife
or shoot the gun that takes a life.*

*Still determined to survive,
and that their precious land shall thrive,*

¹ Community settlement

² Cooperative farm community.

³ Hebrew language school for immigrants.

⁴ Hebrew religious educational institution.

*they plan and they prepare
a future for themselves and heir -
that Israel not again be lost
no matter what the bitter cost.*

ISRAEL AND JUDAH



TRIBES OF ISRAEL

