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Appendix I: Legal Proceedings in the Old Testament

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APPENDIX 1

LEGAL PROCEEDINGS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT



Laban's Confrontation against Jacob (Genesis 31:25–55)

25 Laban caught up with Jacob as he was camped in the hill country of Gilead, and Laban set up his camp not far from Jacob's. 26 And Laban came and said to Jacob, "Why did you slip away secretly and carry off my daughters—the heart of me!—like you were taking prisoners of war? 27 Why did you not tell me you were leaving? I would have made a great feast for you, sending you off with harp and tambourine music! 28 This is all your fault, you fool! You did not even let me kiss my daughters and grandchildren good-bye! 29 I have the means to harm you—even to kill you—but I will not, because your father's God appeared to me last night and warned me not to say anything, good or bad, to you. 30 I understand why you left—you are homesick and long to see your father's home again—but why did you steal my gods?"

31 And Jacob answered and said to Laban, "I left in such a hurry because I was afraid that you would take your daughters from me by force if you knew. 32 If anyone in my camp is found with your gods, that person will die for stealing them. And if you find anything else that belongs to you, point it out in the presence of these relatives of ours and you can have it back." (Jacob said this because he did not know that it was Rachel who had stolen her father's gods.)

33 So Laban went searching, first in Jacob's tent, then in Leah's tent and the tent of the two slave girls, but he did not find his gods, or anything else. Finally, he searched Rachel's tent. 34 Before he arrived, though, Rachel had taken the images and put them in her camel saddle and was now sitting on them. Laban searched everything in the tent but did not find what he was looking for. 35 While Laban was searching, Rachel said to him, "I am sorry,

The English version of these texts has been created with the collaboration of John Nielsen, drawing upon several Bible translations and rephrasing them with legal connotations in mind.

Father, that I cannot stand up for you, but I am on my monthly period.” For all his searching, Laban could not find his household gods.

36 Jacob now became angry and began to dispute again with Laban, answering Laban’s accusations, saying, “What is my crime? What have I done to justify you to come after me in hot pursuit as if I were a common criminal, or to hunt me down like a thieving animal? 37 You have rummaged through everything I own—did you find anything? If you have, please point it out! Set it here before our relatives—let them judge between us! 38 In all my twenty years in your house, not once did your ewes and she-goats miscarry! Not once did I eat any animal from your flock! 39 Not once did I bring you an animal carcass that was mangled by wild animals! I bore the loss of it myself because you required me to; it did not even matter whether something was taken in broad daylight or in the dark of night! 40 I worked for you through the scorching heat of day and through cold and sleepless nights! 41 I worked like a slave in your house for twenty years—fourteen for your daughters, six more for your flock—and yet you changed my wages ten times! 42 If the God of my father, the fearsome God of Abraham and of Isaac, had not been with me, you would have sent me away empty-handed. But, thankfully, God has seen all my hard work and rebuked you last night.”

43 Now Laban answered Jacob, “These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle; in fact, everything that you see is mine. But what can I do now about my daughters and their children? 44 So come, let us make a covenant—something to witness our commitment to each other.”

45 And so Jacob took a stone and set it upright as a sacred pillar, a monument to their agreement. 46 Then Jacob said to his relatives, “Gather up some stones,” which they did, piling them in a heap. Jacob and Laban then sat next to the sacred monument they had made and ate a covenant meal together. 47 Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha, and Jacob called it Galeed, both of which mean “witness pile,” the first in Aramaic, the second in Hebrew. 48 These names came from something Laban had said: “This heap is a witness between us today.” 49 However, it was also called Mizpah, which means “watchtower,” because Laban also said, “May the Lord watch between us to make sure we keep this covenant when we are apart from each other. 50 If you mistreat any of my daughters, or if you take other wives besides them, God will see it, even if no one else does, because he is our witness of this covenant.”

51 And Laban said to Jacob, “Look at this heap and this pillar that I have set up between us. 52 This heap and pillar—this monument—is also

a witness that neither of us will pass by here with the intent to harm the other. 53 I call on the God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, to judge between us.”

And Jacob swore by the fearsome God of his father Isaac to respect the boundary that they had set up. 54 Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the hill and invited everyone to a covenant feast. 55 Early the next morning, Laban got up, kissed and blessed his daughters and grandchildren, and left, returning to his home.

The Trial of the Blasphemer (Leviticus 24:10–23)

10 One day, a man who was the son of an Israelite mother and an Egyptian father came out of his tent and got into a fight with a man of pure Israelite descent. 11 During the brawl, the son of the Egyptian man blasphemed the holy name of the Lord by using it as a curse word. So those who heard it brought the blasphemer to Moses 12 and kept him in custody until the Lord’s will on the matter was made clear. 13 The Lord then spoke to Moses, 14 “Take the man who blasphemed out of the camp, and tell all that heard him curse to lay their hands on his head. Then let the whole community stone him to death. 15 Afterwards, say to the Israelites, ‘Anyone who curses God will bear his sin. 16 Anyone who blasphemes the Lord’s name, Israelite or foreigner, must be stoned to death by the whole community of Israel. 17 Anyone who murders any man must also be put to death. 18 Anyone who kills his neighbor’s animal shall restore a live animal for the one that he killed. 19 And if a man injures and disfigures another, he must bear the same: 20 bone fracture for bone fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. Whatever anyone does to injure another person will be done to him in kind. 21 Whoever kills an animal, he will have to restore it. Whoever murders a man shall be put to death. 22 The same standard applies to both native Israelites and the foreigners among you, for I am the Lord your God.” 23 Moses gave these instructions to the Israelites, and they took the blasphemer out of the camp and stoned him to death, as the Lord commanded Moses.

The Trial of the Sabbath-Day Wood Gatherer (Numbers 15:32–36)

32 During the time that the Israelites were in the desert, they found a man gathering wood on the Sabbath day. 33 Those who caught him in the act brought him before Moses and Aaron and all the community. 34 They kept him in custody because it was not clearly known what should be done with him. 35 And the Lord said to Moses, “This man must be put to death. The whole community must stone him outside the camp.” 36 So the whole

community took him outside the camp and all stoned him to death, as the Lord commanded Moses.

A Ruling on the Inheritance of the Daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27:1–11)

1 A claim was presented by the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, who belonged to the tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph. Their names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. 2 They appeared at the entrance of the tabernacle in front of Moses, Eleazar the priest, the rulers of the Israelites, and all the community and said: 3 “Our father died in the wilderness. He was not one of Korah’s followers who organized a rebellion against the Lord, but rather died because of his own sins. He had no sons, 4 but is it right that our father’s name should disappear from his tribe just because he did not have a son? We, his daughters, should receive his property on the same footing with other survivors of our father’s family.” 5 And Moses brought their cause before the Lord.

6 And the Lord spoke unto Moses, 7 “The daughters of Zelophehad have a legitimate claim: you must give them a portion of land as to the other members of their father’s surviving family. Assign them the property that would have gone to their father. 8 Then tell the children of Israel that if a man dies and has no son, then you must give his inheritance to his daughter or daughters. 9 And if he does not have a daughter, then you must give his inheritance to his surviving family. 10 And if he has no surviving family, then ye shall give his inheritance to his father’s surviving family. 11 And if his father have no surviving family, then ye shall give his inheritance to his next of kin, and he will inherit it. This will be the legally required procedure in matters of inheritance for the Israelites, as the Lord commanded Moses.”

A Ruling on the Marriages of the Daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 36:1–13)

1 And the leaders of the Gilead clans (who were descendants of Machir, son of Manasseh, who was one of the sons of Joseph) approached Moses and the other Israelite leaders with a petition. 2 And they said, “Sir, the Lord commanded you to divide up this land to the Israelite tribes by lot, but he also commanded you to give Zelophehad’s grant of land to his daughters. 3 Now, if any of them marry an Israelite from another tribe, then their portion of land will be taken from our clan and go with them to the tribe into which they marry. Our clan and tribe will lose that land

forever 4 because when the fifty-year jubilee comes around, it will go to the tribe they married into.”

5 So Moses, instructed by the Lord, gave the Israelites this ruling: “The tribe of the sons of Joseph is right; they have a legitimate claim. 6 This is the Lord’s command regarding the daughters of Zelophehad: ‘They may marry whom they will, but they must marry within their tribe.’ 7 In this way, the land grants to the tribes will be preserved and not shift around, because the land given to each tribe must remain as the Lord allotted. 8 Whenever an Israelite woman is in line to inherit her father’s land, she must marry within her tribe so that all the tribes will retain their ancestral land grants. 9 No land grants may pass from one tribe to another; each tribe of Israel must keep its allotted portion of land.”

10 Just as the Lord had commanded Moses, the daughters of Zelophehad 11 (Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah) all married men from their own tribe, 12 men who were descendants of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their property remained in their tribe. 13 These are the commandments, regulations, and decrees that the Lord gave the Israelites through Moses while they were camped on the plains of Moab beside the Jordan River, across from Jericho.

The Case of Achan (Joshua 7:1–26)

1 But the Israelites defied the ban placed on things dedicated to the Lord. A man named Achan (who was the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah) took some of the things set apart for the Lord, and the Lord became very angry with the Israelites.

2 Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai (which is located near Beth-aven, to the east of Beth-el) and ordered them: “Go up and spy on that land,” which they did.

3 When they returned, they said to Joshua, “There is no need for the whole Israelite army to go attack Ai; two or three thousand men should be plenty because there are so few of them.” 4 So three thousand Israelite warriors went up to attack Ai, but they were soundly defeated; 5 the men of Ai killed some thirty-six of them and chased them all the way to the stone quarries as far as the city gate.

Because of this, the Israelites’ courage melted away and they were paralyzed with fear. 6 Joshua and the other leaders tore their clothes in dismay, threw dust on their heads, and prostrated themselves in front of the ark of the Lord until the evening came. 7 And Joshua cried out, “O Lord God, why did you ever bring us across the Jordan River, only to have the Amorites kill us? If only we had been content to settle on the other

side of the river! 8 O Lord, what can I say now that we Israelites have been routed by our enemies? 9 What will happen when the Canaanites and other native people of the land hear of this? They will come swarming around us and wipe us out! And what will then become of your great name?"

10 And the Lord said to Joshua, "Stand up. Why are you lying on your face like that? 11 Israel sinned and broke my covenant. They took what was set apart to me. Not only that, but they have hid it among their own things and lied to cover it up! 12 This is why the Israelite army was so soundly defeated by their enemies. Unless they destroy every forbidden thing, I will no longer be with them as a people. 13 Get up, and command the people to purify themselves. Tell them that the Lord says: 'You have forbidden things hidden among you, Israelites. Until you rid yourselves of all of them, you will never defeat your enemies.' 14 Then in the morning, assemble yourselves by tribe, and the Lord will point out the tribe to which the guilty man belongs. Then that tribe will assemble by family clan, and the Lord will point out the guilty clan. Finally, that family must come forward one by one. 15 The one who stole the forbidden things will be burned, together with all he owns, because he has broken the Lord's covenant and done a disgraceful outrage in Israel."

16 So Joshua arose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was singled out. 17 And he brought the family clans of Judah, and the Zarhite clan was singled out. And he brought the Zarhite clan one by one, and the Zabdi family was singled out. 18 And he brought his family man by man; and Achan (who was the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah) was singled out. 19 And Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I implore you, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and confess to him. Tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me!"

20 And Achan answered Joshua, "It is true! I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel. Here is what I did: 21 I saw among the plunder a very fine piece of clothing, a mantle from Babylon, two hundred shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels. I coveted them and took them. You will find it all buried under my tent, with the silver buried deepest."

22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent and found all these things, with the silver buried deepest. 23 And they brought them to Joshua, and unto all the Israelites, and spread them out in front of the Lord. 24 And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan, Zerah's son—and the silver, the clothing, the bar of gold, his sons and his daughters, his oxen, his donkey, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had—and brought them unto the valley of Achor. 25 And Joshua said, "As you brought disaster on us, the

Lord will bring disaster on you.” Then all the Israelites stoned Achan and his family to death and burned their bodies. 26 They then put a pile of stones over Achan’s corpse, which is still there today. The Lord’s anger was abated that day, which is why the place is called the Valley of Achor.

Boaz v. Kinsman of Naomi (Ruth 4:1–12)

1 Now Boaz went to the gate of the city and sat down there. Just then, the family redeemer, or next of kin, he had mentioned passed by, so Boaz called out to him by name, saying, “Here, come over here and sit down! I want to talk with you.” The man came and sat down. 2 Then Boaz stopped ten elders of the town and asked them to sit as witnesses, which they did. 3 Boaz said to the family redeemer, “You remember the piece of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech? Naomi has returned from Moabite country and is selling it. 4 I thought I should make you aware of it so you can redeem it if you wish. If you are going to do your duty as next of kin, then buy the land here, in the presence of these witnesses; but if you do not want it, then let me know right away, because I am next in line to redeem it after you.”

The man replied, “All right, I will redeem it.”

5 Then Boaz responded, “Well, just remember that if you buy Naomi’s land, you are required to marry Ruth, the Moabite widow, so that she can have children in order to carry on her husband’s name and keep the land in the family.”

6 And the man said, “In that case, I cannot redeem the land, because I do not want to endanger my own estate. You redeem it. I cannot do it.”

7 Now in those days it was customary in Israel for anyone selling land to take off his sandal and hand it to the purchasing party. This served to validate the transaction, making it legally binding. 8 So the family redeemer took off his sandal as he said to Boaz, “You buy the land and redeem it as next of kin.”

9 And Boaz said to the witnesses and everyone else present, “You are all witnesses today that I have bought all that belonged to Elimelech, Chilion, and Mahlon, as it belonged to Naomi. 10 With the land I have acquired Ruth, a Moabite widow of Mahlon, to be my wife. This way she can have a son to carry on the family name of her dead husband and to inherit the family property here in his hometown. You are all witnesses of this today.”

11 And all the people that were present, including the formal witnesses, said, “We are witnesses. May the Lord make this woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and like Leah, the two from whom all of

Israel descends. May you prosper greatly in Ephratah and be famous in Beth-lehem. 12 And may the Lord give you descendants through this young woman also, who will be like those of Pharez, the son of Tamar and Judah.”

Saul v. Ahimelech (1 Samuel 22:6–23)

6 The news of David’s return to Judah reached Saul as he sat beneath a tamarisk tree in Gibeah with a spear in his hand, surrounded by his officers. 7 “Listen here, Benjamites,” Saul said to his officers when he heard the news. “Has David promised to give you all lands and vineyards and to make you high-ranking officers in his army? 8 Is that why all of you have conspired against me? Not one of you told me when my own son made a pact with him—you did not even give it a thought!—yet my son has encouraged David to lie in wait and kill me! Even as we speak, he plans to do it!”

9 Then Doeg the Edomite, who was standing there with Saul’s men, spoke up: “When I was at Nob, I saw David talking to the priest Ahimelech, son of Ahitub. 10 Ahimelech consulted the Lord on his behalf and then gave him provisions and the sword of Goliath the Philistine.”

11 Then Saul immediately sent for Ahimelech and all his family (who served as priests at Nob). They all came. 12 As soon as they arrived, Saul said to Ahimelech, “Listen here, son of Ahitub!”

And he answered, “What is it, my king?”

13 And Saul said to him, “Why have you conspired against me—you and David? Why did you give him provisions and a sword and consult God for him? Why have you encouraged him to kill me, which he plans to do, even as I speak?”

14 Then Ahimelech answered the king, “Who among all your servants has been as loyal as your son-in-law David? He is appointed to your staff, the captain of your bodyguard, and a highly honored member of your household—he does whatever you ask him to do. 15 Was I the first one to consult the Lord for him? No, I was not. I know nothing about any plot against you, small or great, my king; neither me nor my family. I trust that you will not accuse us in this matter.”

16 And the king said, “You will certainly die, Ahimelech, you and all your family.” 17 And the king ordered the footmen who stood next to him, “Turn around, and kill the priests of the Lord because they are allies and co-conspirators with David—they knew he was a fugitive but did not tell me.” But Saul’s men refused to kill the Lord’s priests. 18 And the king said to Doeg, “You do it, then!” And Doeg the Edomite turned around and faced the priests. He attacked them and killed eighty-five of them, even

though they were still wearing their priestly clothing. 19 Then he attacked their city, Nob, and killed every living thing: men and women, children and nursing babies, cattle, donkeys, sheep, and goats. 20 Only Abiathar, one of the sons of Ahimelech, escaped and joined David. 21 He told David how Saul had killed the Lord's priests.

22 And David said to Abiathar, "I knew it! When I saw Doeg the Edomite there that day, I knew he was sure to tell Saul. I am responsible for the death of your entire family! 23 Stay here with me, and do not be afraid. The same man seeks to kill us both, but you will be safe with me."

The False Petition of the Woman of Tekoah (2 Samuel 14:4–11)

4 And when the woman from Tekoah spoke to the king, she prostrated herself before him as a sign of deep respect and said, "Help me, O your majesty!"

5 And the king said to her, "What is the matter?"

And she answered, "I am a widow; my husband is dead. 6 I had two sons, and they got into a fight in the field. Because no one was there to separate them, one of them struck the other and killed him! 7 Now, Sir, the rest of the family has demanded that I hand him over. They said to me, 'Hand over the brother that smote and killed his brother, so that we may execute him for his murder! We will also kill his heir!' If they do this, then they will extinguish the last ember of my husband's name, and he will have no one to carry on his name in the earth!"

8 And the king said to the woman, "Go to your home, and I will issue an order for you, and see to it that no one touches your son."

9 And the woman of Tekoah said to the king, "My lord, O king, may the guilt for this fall on me and my family, and not on your throne, for you will be innocent of this!"

10 And the king said, "If anyone objects, then bring him to me. I can assure you he will never complain again."

11 Then the woman said, "Swear to me by the Lord your God that you will not allow anyone to take vengeance on my son."

And the king said, "As surely as the Lord lives, not a hair of your son's head will fall to the ground."

The Petition of the Two Harlots before Solomon (1 Kings 3:16–28)

16 Now two women, who were prostitutes, stood in front of the king to present their dispute to him. 17 And one woman said, "Please, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house. While she still lived with me, I had a baby. 18 Three days after my baby was born, this woman also had a baby. It was just us in the house; we were alone. 19 Her son died because

she rolled over on him at night as she slept. 20 In the middle of the night, she got up and took my son from my side while I was asleep. She laid down with my child in her arms and put her dead baby in my arms. 21 When I got up the next morning to nurse my baby, I found him dead. But when I looked closer in the morning light, I saw that it was not my son at all!”

22 Then the other woman interrupted and said, “That’s not true! The living son is mine, and the dead son is yours!”

And the other said, “No! Your son is dead, and my son is alive!” So they argued back and forth in front of the king.

23 Then the king said, “Let us get the matter straight: one of you says, ‘This is my son that is alive, and your son is dead’; the other says, ‘No! Your son is dead, and my son is alive!’” 24 Then the king said, “Bring me a sword.” So they brought him a sword. 25 And the king said, “Cut the living child in half, and give one half to each woman.”

26 Then the mother of the living child, moved with love for her son, said, “O my lord, give her the living child—whatever you do, do not kill him!”

But the other said, “All right; it will belong to neither of us; go ahead and divide it.”

27 Then the king answered and said, “Give the living child to the woman who wants him alive, for she is the real mother!” 28 When all Israel heard about the king’s verdict, they were in awe of him because they saw that God’s wisdom was in him and that he would administer justice.

The Trial of Naboth (1 Kings 21:1–16)

1 Naboth from Jezreel owned a vineyard in Jezreel, right next to the palace of Ahab, king of Samaria. 2 One day, Ahab said to Naboth, “Your vineyard is so close to my palace—let me have it for a garden; I will give you an even better vineyard in return. If you prefer, I will pay you for it instead.”

3 And Naboth said to Ahab, “Far be it from me to disobey the Lord’s word. He forbids me from parting with my ancestral land.”

4 So Ahab went home angry and sullen because Naboth had said, “I will not give you my ancestral land!” And Ahab lay down on his bed, covered his face, and refused to eat.

5 But Jezebel his wife came to him and said, “What is the matter? Why are you so upset that you refuse to eat?”

6 And he said to her, “Because I spoke unto Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, ‘Sell me your vineyard, or, if you like, trade it to me for another.’ And he answered, ‘I will not give you my vineyard.’ He refused me!”

7 And his wife Jezebel said to him, “Are you or are you not king of Israel? Get up and eat! Cheer up! I will get Naboth’s vineyard for you.”
8 So she wrote letters in Ahab’s name, sealed them with his royal seal, and sent the letters to the elders and nobles living in the city. 9 And she wrote in the letters, “Call everyone in town together for fasting and prayer, and give Naboth the seat of honor. 10 But seat two scoundrels opposite him who will testify against him, accusing him of cursing God and the king. Then take him outside of town and stone him to death!”

11 So the elders and nobles of the city did just as Jezebel directed them in the letters that she sent them. 12 They called everyone together for public fasting and prayer and gave Naboth the seat of honor. 13 And they seated two scoundrels opposite him, who testified against him, accusing him in the presence of the people of blasphemy, saying, “Naboth cursed God and the king!” Then the people carried him outside of town and stoned him to death.

14 Then they sent word to Jezebel, saying, “Naboth is dead; we stoned him.” 15 As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned to death, she said to Ahab, “Get up and take possession of Naboth’s vineyard, which he refused to sell to you. Naboth is dead!” 16 As soon as Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up and went down to take possession of Naboth’s vineyard.

The Trial of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 26:1–24)

The Precedent of Micah (Jeremiah 26:18–19)

The Precedent of Urijah ben Shemaiah (Jeremiah 26:20–23)

1 In the early days of the reign of Jehoiakim (who was the son of Josiah, king of Judah), Jeremiah received this message from the Lord:
2 “This is what the Lord says: ‘Go stand in the courtyard of my house, the temple, and speak to the people who have come here from all over Judah to worship there—tell them everything I say, not leaving out a single word.
3 Perhaps they will listen to you and turn from their evil ways so that I can revoke the disaster I am planning to bring on them because of their evil deeds. 4 And you will say unto them, “This is what the Lord says: ‘If you will not listen to me, to follow my law, which I have set before you, 5 and listen to the words of my servants the prophets—whom I took great pains to send to you, but you never listened— 6 then I will destroy this temple as I destroyed Shiloh, and will make Jerusalem an object of ridicule to all the nations of the earth.’””” 7 So the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the temple.

8 Now, as Jeremiah finished speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak, the priests and the prophets and all the people grabbed him and said, “You must die! 9 Why have you prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, ‘This temple will be destroyed like Shiloh, and Jerusalem will be a desolate, uninhabited waste?’” And all the people crowded around Jeremiah in the temple. 10 When the royal officials of Judah heard what was happening, they came up from the royal palace to the temple and took their places at the new temple gate, sitting down in the entry to hold court. 11 Then the priests and the prophets said to the royal officials and to all the people, “This man must die! You have heard yourselves that he is a traitor—he prophesied against Jerusalem!”

12 Then Jeremiah said to all the royal officials and all the people, “The Lord sent me to prophesy against this temple and against Jerusalem—he gave me every word. 13 If you will change your ways and obey the voice of the Lord your God, then the Lord will change his mind about this disaster that he has decreed against you. 14 As for me, look and see—I am in your hands: do with me what you will. 15 But know for certain, that if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood on yourselves, and on this city, and on every soul that lives here, because the Lord has truly sent me to you to speak all these words to you.”

16 Then the royal officials and all the people said to the priests and to the prophets, “This man must not die, because he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God.”

17 Then some of the wise old men stood up and said to all the people assembled there, 18 “In the time of Hezekiah, king of Judah, Micah the Morasthite prophesied to all the people of Judah, ‘This is what the Lord of heaven’s armies says: “Zion will be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem will be reduced to ruins, and a thicket will grow on the heights where the temple now stands!”’ 19 But did Hezekiah and the people put him at all to death for saying this? Did not Hezekiah fear the Lord, and seek after him, so that the Lord relented and changed his mind about the destruction that he had decreed against them? Now we are the ones bringing such calamity on ourselves!

20 “And there was also another man that prophesied in the name of the Lord, Urijah the son of Shemaiah, who came from Kirjath-jearim. He prophesied against Jerusalem and against this land of Judah, just like Jeremiah has done. 21 Now, when Jehoiakim the king and all his officers royal officials heard his words, the king sought to put him to death. But when Urijah heard about their plan, he feared for his life and escaped to Egypt. 22 Jehoiakim the king sent men to Egypt to hunt Urijah down, such as

Elnathan the son of Achbor, and others like him. 23 And they took Urijah prisoner, brought him out of Egypt, and delivered him to Jehoiakim the king. The king then had him killed with a sword, and threw his dead body into the graves of the common people.”

24 But Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, stood up for Jeremiah and used his influence to persuade the court not to turn him over to the mob to be killed.

The Trial of Susanna (Daniel 13:1–62)¹

1 Now there was a man that lived in Babylon, and his name was Joakim. 2 He married a woman named Susanna, the daughter of Helcias. She was a very beautiful woman, and one that feared God. . . . 4 Now Joakim was very rich and had an orchard near his house: the Jews often came to him to resolve disputes because he was the most honorable man among them. 5 And there were two of the elders of the people appointed as judges that year. . . . 6 These men, however, often went to the house of Joakim, and they learned much about righteous judgment there. 7 And when the people left at noon, Susanna went in and walked in her husband’s orchard. 8 And the elders saw her going in every day and walking around and were inflamed with lust towards her: 9 this lust turned their eyes and minds from judging righteously. . . .

15 One day as they watched, she went in the orchard at the agreed time, as she had the previous two days, with two servant girls. She wanted to wash herself in the orchard because the weather was very hot. 16 She and the two men who had hidden themselves and were watching her were the only ones there. 17 So she said to the servant girls, “Bring me oil and soap, and shut the doors of the orchard so I can wash myself.” 18 The servant girls did as she asked, shutting the doors of the orchard and going out by a back door to get what she had commanded them. They did not know that the two men were hidden inside.

19 Now when the servant girls left, the two men got up and ran to her, and said: 20 “Look, the orchard doors are shut—nobody can see us! We are both in love with you! Please agree to have sex with us! 21 If you do not, we will testify against you and say that you sent away your servant girls because you had a young man with you.”

22 Susanna sighed and said, “. . . 23 It is better for me to fall into your hands without doing it than to sin in the sight of the Lord.” 24 Then Susanna cried out loudly, and the elders also cried out, accusing her. 25 And one of them ran to the door of the orchard and opened it. 26 So

1. Text based on the LXX Apocrypha, Douay-Rheims Version.

when the servants of the house heard the cry in the orchard, they rushed in by the back door to see what was the matter. 27 But after the men had made their accusation, the servants were greatly ashamed because nothing like it had ever been said about Susanna.

And on the next day, 28 when the people came to Joakim her husband, the two elders also came full of evil intent against Susanna, desiring to put her to death. 29 And they accused her in front of everyone, saying, "Go get Susanna, daughter of Helcias, the wife of Joakim!" So they did. 30 And she came with her parents and children and all her relatives. 31 Now Susanna was a very delicate woman and beautiful to look upon. 32 But those wicked men forced her to uncover her face (which was veiled) so that at least they might please themselves with her beauty. 33 Because of this, all her friends and all her acquaintances wept.

34 But the two elders, rising up to accuse her in the middle of the people, put their hands upon her head. 35 And she, weeping, looked up to heaven because her heart trusted in the Lord. 36 And the elders said: "While we were walking in the orchard alone, this woman came in with two servant girls, shut the doors of the orchard, and then sent her servant girls away. 37 Then a young man who was hidden in the orchard came to her and had sex with her. 38 But we that were in another corner of the orchard, seeing this great sin, ran up to them, and we saw them having sex. 39 We were unable to catch and hold him, because he was stronger than us and escaped. 40 We were able to detain this woman, but when we asked who the young man was, she would not tell us. This is what we saw!"

41 The crowd of people believed them since they were prominent men, their elders and judges, and they all condemned her to die.

42 Then Susanna cried out in a loud voice, saying, "O eternal God, who knows hidden things, who knows all things before they happen, 43 you know that they have borne false witness against me, yet I am going to die. I have done none of the things that they have maliciously fabricated to accuse me of!"

44 And the Lord heard her voice. 45 And when she was led away to be put to death, the Lord raised up the holy spirit of a young boy whose name was Daniel. 46 And he cried out with a loud voice, "I am clear from the blood of this woman."

47 Then all the people turned around and faced him, and said, "What do you mean?"

48 He replied, as he stood in the middle of them all, "Are ye so foolish, you Israelites, that without examination or knowledge of the truth, you

have condemned a daughter of Israel? 49 Go back to her trial, for the two men have borne false witness against her.”

50 So all the people immediately turned around, and the old men said to him, “Come, and sit down with us, and show us righteous judgment, seeing that the Lord has made you venerable.”

51 And Daniel said to the people: “Separate these two men far from one another, and I will examine them, asking them questions.” 52 So when they were thus separated, he called one of them and said, “. . . 53 You have judged unjust judgments, oppressed the innocent, and let the guilty go free, contrary to the Lord’s word, which says, ‘The innocent and the just you shall not kill’ [Exodus 23:7]. 54 Now then, if you saw her, tell me under what tree you saw them lying together.”

The judge replied, “Under a mastic tree.”

55 And Daniel said, “Then truly you have lied against your own head, for the angel of God having received the sentence from God himself, shall cut you in two.”

56 And after he was sent away, Daniel commanded that the other should come, and he said to him, “You are a Canaanite, and not from Judah! You have been deceived by beauty and perverted by lust! 57 And you did it to Israelite girls, who only lay with you out of fear! But a daughter of Judah would not stand for your wickedness. 58 Now therefore tell me, under what tree didst thou take them lying together?”

And he answered, “Under a holm tree.”

59 And Daniel said to him, “Then truly you have also lied against your own head, for the angel of the Lord waits with a sword to cut you in two and to destroy you.”

60 With that, all the assembly cried out with a loud voice, and they blessed God, who saves them that trust in him. 61 And they rose up against the two elders (for Daniel had convicted them of false witness by their own mouth), and they did to them as they had maliciously dealt against their neighbour, 62 thus fulfilling the law given to Moses. They put them to death, and innocent blood was saved that day.