

# Awake!

August 8, 1999

Does  
**Fate**  
Control  
Your  
Life?



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Does some unseen force govern your life? Or are you responsible for making your own choices?

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# Is It Fate or Mere Chance?

**F**ATE took the lives of many and spared others," declared the *International Herald Tribune*. Last year, terrorist attacks on American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania killed almost 200 people and injured hundreds. However, "timing blessed the embassy's most senior diplomats," noted the newspaper.



These were spared because they were attending a meeting in an area of the building away from the blast. But a high embassy official, who would normally have attended but did not, was in an area closer to the explosion and was killed.

"Fate also dealt cruelly with Arlene Kirk," stated the newspaper. When returning to Kenya from vacation, Arlene volunteered to give up her seat on the overbooked flight. Other passengers, however, volunteered their seats before her, allowing her to board the plane. As a result, she returned to work at the embassy the day of the blast and was killed.

Man is no stranger to calamity. Yet, explaining tragedy is never easy. Regularly, in accidents and catastrophes all over the world, some die while others survive. It is not just in times of disaster, however, that some wonder, 'Why me?' Even when it comes to the good things in life, some seem to have better chances than others. While for many life is a constant struggle, for others things seem to fit into place easily. Thus, you may ask, 'Could it be that this was all somehow planned? Does fate control my life?'

## Looking for Explanations

Some 3,000 years ago, a wise king observed unexpected happenings around him. He offered the following explana-

tion for these events: "Time and unforeseen occurrence befall them all." (*Ecclesiastes 9:11*) Sometimes the unexpected happens. There is just no way of predicting it. Remarkable events, both good and bad, often come down to a matter of timing.

However, you may share the view of those who instead of explaining things as the product of chance see the hand of another force at work—fate. Belief in fate or destiny is one of the oldest and most widespread of man's religious beliefs.\* Professor François Jouan, director of the Center for Mythological Research at the University of Paris, says: "There is not an age or civilization that has not believed in some divine master of destinies . . . to explain all that is inexplicable in our existence." That is why it is common to hear people say: "It was not his time to die" or, "That's the way it was meant to be." But what is fate?

## Defining Fate

The English word "fate" comes from the Latin *fatum*, meaning "a prophetic declaration, an oracle, a divine determination." While sometimes a random force is thought to determine the future in an unavoidable and inexplicable way, more often than not, this force is thought to be a god.

\* So pervasive is the notion of fate that when a death is spoken of, often in many languages the word "fate" or "fatal" is used.

Historian of religion Helmer Ringgren explains: "An essential element in the religious attitude is the feeling that human destiny is not meaningless or fortuitous, but has its cause in a power to which will and intention may be attributed." While some measure of intervention is often thought possible, many people see humans as relatively powerless pawns in a game beyond their control. Thus they 'meet their fate.'

Theologians and philosophers have long grappled to explain fate. *The Encyclopedia of Religion* says: "The notion of fate, in whatever variation, language, or shade of meaning it occurs, always retains a basic element of mystery." One thread running through the labyrinth of ideas, though, is the notion of a higher power controlling and directing man's affairs. This force is thought to shape the lives of individuals and nations in advance, making the future just as inevitable as the past.

### A Determining Factor

Does it make any difference whether you believe in fate? "The circumstances of men's lives do much to determine their philosophy, but, conversely, their philosophy does much to determine their circumstances," wrote English philosopher Bertrand Russell.

Indeed, belief in fate—whether or not there is such a thing—can determine how we act. Believing it to be the will of the gods, many passively accept their situation—however unjust or oppressive—as though it were

their unchangeable lot in life. Thus, belief in fate undermines the notion of personal responsibility.

On the other hand, belief in destiny has motivated others in the opposite direction. For example, historians trace the growth of capitalism and the industrial revolution to a number of factors. Among them was the belief in predestination. Some Protestant religions taught that God predestines individuals for salvation. German sociologist Max Weber says: "The question, Am I one of the elect? must sooner or later have arisen for every believer." Individuals sought to find out whether they had God's blessing and were thus destined for salvation. Weber argued that they did this through their "worldly activity." Success in business and the accumulation of wealth were seen as signs of God's favor.

Belief in fate pushes some to take radical action. In the second world war, Japanese suicide pilots believed in kamikaze, or "divine wind." The idea that the gods had a purpose and that it was possible to play a role in it added religious overtones to a grisly death. In the past decade, suicide bombers in the Middle East have often made headlines with their horrific attacks. Fatalism plays an important part in these "religiously inspired suicidal attacks," notes one encyclopedia.

But why is belief in fate so widespread? A brief look at its origins will provide the answer.

### Awake!

**Why Awake! Is Published** *Awake!* is for the enlightenment of the entire family. It shows how to cope with today's problems. It reports the news, tells about people in many lands, examines religion and science. But it does more. It probes beneath the surface and points to the real meaning behind current events, yet it always stays politically neutral and does not exalt one race above another. Most important, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure new world that is about to replace the present wicked, lawless system of things.

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# In Search of MAN'S DESTINY

WHY is belief in fate so widespread? Throughout the ages, man has sought to unravel life's mysteries and to find some purpose in unfolding events. "It is here that the categories 'god', 'destiny', and 'chance' enter the scene, depending on whether the events are derived from a personal power, an impersonal order, or no order at all," explains historian Helmer Ringgren. History is replete with beliefs, legends, and myths relating to fate and destiny.

Assyriologist Jean Bottéro says: "We are largely formed in all aspects of our culture by the Mesopotamian civilization," adding that it is in ancient Mesopotamia or Babylonia that we find "the oldest perceptible reactions and reflections of mankind on the supernatural, the oldest identifiable religious structure." It is also here that we find the origins of fate.

## Fate's Ancient Roots

Among the ancient ruins of Mesopotamia, in what is now Iraq, archaeologists have discovered some of the oldest writings known to man. Thousands of tablets written in cuneiform give us a clear pic-



A Babylonian  
astrological calendar, 1000 B.C.E.  
Musée du Louvre, Paris

ture of life in the ancient civilizations of Sumer and Akkad and in the famous city of Babylon. According to archaeologist Samuel N. Kramer, the Sumerians "were troubled by the problem of human suffering, particularly relative to its rather enigmatic causes." Their quest for answers led them to the idea of fate.

In her book *Babylon*, archaeologist Joan Oates says that "each Babylonian had his own personal god or goddess." The Babylonians believed that gods "shaped the destinies of all mankind, individually and collectively." According to Kramer, the Sumerians believed that "the gods in control of the cosmos planned and instituted evil, falsehood and violence as part and parcel of civilization." Belief in fate was widespread, and it was held in high esteem.

The Babylonians thought that it was possible to find out the gods' plans through divination—"a technique of communication with the gods." Divination involved trying to foretell the future by observing, deciphering, and interpreting items and events. Typically, dreams, animal behavior, and entrails were

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examined. (Compare Ezekiel 21:21; Daniel 2:1-4.) Unexpected or unusual happenings that were said to reveal the future were recorded on clay tablets.

According to French scholar of ancient civilizations Édouard Dhorme, “as far as we go back in Mesopotamian history, we find the soothsayer and the idea of divination.” Divination was an integral feature of life. Indeed, Professor Bottéro says that “everything could be considered as the possible object for examination and divinatory deduction . . . The entire material universe was taken as the evidence from which the future could in some way be extracted after a careful study.” The Mesopotamians were thus fervent practitioners of astrology as a means to predict the future.—Compare Isaiah 47:13.

In addition, the Babylonians used dice or lots in divination. In her book *Randomness*, Deborah Bennett explains that these were to “eliminate the possibility of human manipulation and thereby to give the gods a clear channel through which to express their divine will.” However, the decisions of the gods were not considered to be inexorable. Help to avoid an evil fate could be had through an appeal to the gods.

### Fate in Ancient Egypt

In the 15th century B.C.E., there was extensive contact between Babylonia and Egypt. Religious practices connected with fate were included in the cultural exchange that ensued. Why did the Egyptians accept belief in fate? According to John R. Baines, professor of Egyptology at the University of Oxford, “much of [Egyptian] religion concerned attempts to comprehend and respond to the unpredictable and the unfortunate.”

Among the many Egyptian gods, Isis was described as the “mistress of life, ruler of fate and destiny.” The Egyptians also practiced divination and astrology. (Compare Isaiah 19:3.) One historian says: “Their ingenuity in questioning the gods was without limit.”

Egypt, though, was not the only civilization to borrow from Babylon.

### Greece and Rome

When it comes to religious matters, “ancient Greece did not escape the far-reaching but intense radiance of Babylonia,” notes Jean Bottéro. Professor Peter Green explains why belief in destiny was so popular in Greece: “In an uncertain world, where men were increasingly loath to be responsible for their own decisions, and indeed often felt themselves mere puppets, jerked from point to point by the requirements of a Fate as inscrutable as it was inflexible, divine oracular fiat [fate determined by the gods] was one way of having the future mapped out on the individual’s behalf. What was fixed by Fate could, given especial skills or insights, be predicted. It might not be what one wanted to hear; but forewarned at least was forearmed.”

In addition to reassuring individuals of the future, belief in fate also served more sinister purposes. The idea of fate helped to subdue the masses, and for that reason, according to historian F. H. Sandbach, “the belief that the world was entirely ruled by Providence would have an appeal to the ruling class of a ruling people.”

Why? Professor Green explains that this belief “was a built-in justification—moral, theological, semantic—for the social and political fixed order: it was the most powerful and subtle instrument of self-perpetuation that the Hellenistic ruling class ever conceived. The mere fact of anything happening meant that it had been fated to happen; and since nature was providentially disposed toward mankind, what was fated could not fail to be all for the best.” In reality, it provided “justification of ruthless self-interest.”

That fate was commonly accepted becomes evident from Greek literature. Among the ancient literary styles were the epic, the legend, and the tragedy—in which fate played a key part. In Greek mythology, man’s destiny



**The Greeks and the Romans believed that man's destiny was fixed by three goddesses**  
Musée du Louvre, Paris

**Egypt's Isis, the "ruler of fate and destiny"**

Musée du Louvre, Paris

was represented by three goddesses called the Moirai. Clotho was the spinner of the thread of life, Lachesis determined how long life was to be, and Atropos cut off life when the allocated time had expired. The Romans had a similar triad of gods whom they called the Parcae.

The Romans and the Greeks were eager to know what their supposed destiny was to be. Thus, they borrowed astrology and divination from Babylon and developed them further.

The Romans called the events used to predict

the future *portenta*, or signs. The messages these signs gave were called *omina*. By the third century B.C.E., astrology had become popular in Greece, and in 62 B.C.E., the earliest-known Greek horoscope appeared. So interested were the Greeks in astrology that according to Professor Gilbert Murray, astrology "fell upon the Hellenistic mind as a new disease falls upon some remote island people."



In an attempt to know the future, the Greeks and the Romans used oracles or mediums widely. Through these the gods supposedly communicated with humans. (Compare Acts 16:16-19.) What was the effect of these beliefs? Philosopher Bertrand Russell said: "Fear took the place of hope; the purpose of life was rather to escape misfortune than to achieve any positive good." Similar themes became the subject of controversy in Christendom.

#### **"Christian" Debates About Fate**

The early Christians lived in a culture strongly influenced by Greek and Roman ideas of destiny and fate. The so-called Church Fathers, for example, drew heavily upon the works of such Greek philosophers as Aristotle and Plato. One problem they tried to resolve was, How could an all-knowing, all-powerful God, "the One telling from the beginning the finale," be reconciled with a God of love? (Isaiah 46:10; 1 John 4:8) If God knew the end from the beginning, they reasoned, then surely he foreknew man's fall into sin and the disastrous consequences this would bring.

Origen, one of the most prolific of the early Christian writers, argued that one of the important elements to keep in mind was the

notion of free will. "There are, indeed, innumerable passages in the Scriptures which establish with exceeding clearness the existence of freedom of will," he wrote.

Origen said that ascribing to some exterior force the responsibility for our acts "is neither true nor in conformity with reason, but is the statement of him who wishes to destroy the conception of free will." Origen argued that while God can foreknow events chronologically, this does not mean that he causes an event or that any necessity is placed upon it to happen. However, not all agreed.

An influential Church Father, Augustine (354-430 C.E.), complicated the argument by reducing the part that free will plays in events. Augustine gave predestination its theological basis in Christendom. His works, primarily *De libero arbitrio*, were central to discussions in the Middle Ages. The debate eventually reached a climax in the Reformation, with Christendom deeply divided over the issue of predestination.\*

\* See our companion magazine, *The Watchtower*, of February 15, 1995, pages 3-4.



**Earliest Chinese writings on tortoiseshells were used in divination**

Institute of History and Philology,  
Academia Sinica, Taipei

**Signs of the zodiac appear on this Persian box**



Photograph taken by courtesy  
of the British Museum

### A Widespread Belief

Ideas about fate, though, are by no means limited to the Western world. Revealing their belief in destiny, many Muslims say "*mek-toub*"—it is written—when faced with disaster. While it is true that many Oriental religions emphasize the role of the individual in personal destiny, there are, nevertheless, notes of fatalism in their teachings.

Karma in Hinduism and Buddhism, for example, is the inescapable destiny resulting from acts in a previous life. In China the earliest writings discovered are on tortoise-shells that were used in divination. Fate also formed part of the beliefs of indigenous peoples in the Americas. The Aztecs, for instance, devised divinatory calendars used to show the destiny of individuals. Fatalistic beliefs are also common in Africa.

The widespread acceptance of the concept of fate actually shows that man has a fundamental need to believe in a superior power. John B. Noss, in his book *Man's Religions*, acknowledges: "All religions say in one way or another that man does not, and cannot, stand alone. He is vitally related with and even dependent on powers in Nature and Society external to himself. Dimly or clearly, he knows that he is not an independent center of force capable of standing apart from the world."

In addition to the need to believe in God, we also have a fundamental need to understand what is happening around us. There is a difference, though, between recognizing an all-powerful Creator and believing that he immutably fixes our destiny. Just what role do we play in shaping our destiny? What role does God play?

# You Can Choose YOUR FUTURE

**W**HILE divination was considered "a major intellectual achievement throughout the ancient world," it was "an art derided by the Hebrew prophets," notes archaeologist Joan Oates. Why?

Despite being surrounded by nations with a fatalistic view of life, the ancient Israelites rejected the idea of a blind force shaping their lives. In the instructions given to the nation, God had said to them: "There should not be found in you . . . anyone who employs divination, a practicer of magic or anyone who looks for omens or a sorcerer, or . . . a professional foreteller of events."

—Deuteronomy 18:10, 11.

Without the idea of fate or the use of fortunetellers, the Israelites could have confidence about the future. Explaining the reason for this, the French Catholic encyclopedia *Théo* states that the nation believed that "man and the world were not the prey of some blind force. God had a purpose for man." What was this purpose?

## Destiny and Free Will

God promised the Israelites peace and prosperity if they were obedient to his laws. (Leviticus 26:3-6) In addition, they looked to a Messiah who would establish righteous conditions on the earth. (Isaiah, chapter 11) However, the fact that God promised these things did not mean that individuals could just sit back and let things happen. On the contrary, they were told: "All that your hand finds to do, do with your very power."—Ecclesiastes 9:10.



Central to this was the idea of free will. The Israelites were free to serve God and shape their future. God promised them: "It must occur that if you will without fail obey my commandments that I am commanding you today so as to love Jehovah your God and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul, I also shall certainly give rain for your land at its appointed time, autumn rain and spring rain, and you will indeed gather your grain and your sweet wine and your oil." (Deuteronomy 11:13, 14) God's blessings came to Israel when they were obedient.

Just before they entered the land that he had promised them, God presented the nation of Israel with a choice:

"See, I do put before you today life and good, and death and bad." (Deuteronomy 30:15)

Each person's future was dependent on his own actions and decisions. Serving God meant life and blessings, whereas refusal to do so meant hardship. But what about today?

## Cause and Effect

We are bound by a number of natural laws that have been put in place for our good. One of these is the law of cause and effect, or, as the Bible expresses it, "Whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap." (Galatians 6:7) Once we recognize this principle, it is possible to consider the probability of certain future events.

If we drive recklessly at high speed, we are more likely to have an accident than if we drive cautiously. If we smoke, it is more likely

that we will develop cancer than if we don't smoke. Granted, events like the terrorist attacks mentioned in the opening article of this series seem unlikely to happen to us, and calculating their probability would be pointless. However, resorting to the idea of fate will get us nowhere. It does not illuminate the present or the future. Belief in a falsehood provides no real reassurance for the future. Neither does seeing God's hand in every event.

### **What Will Your Future Be?**

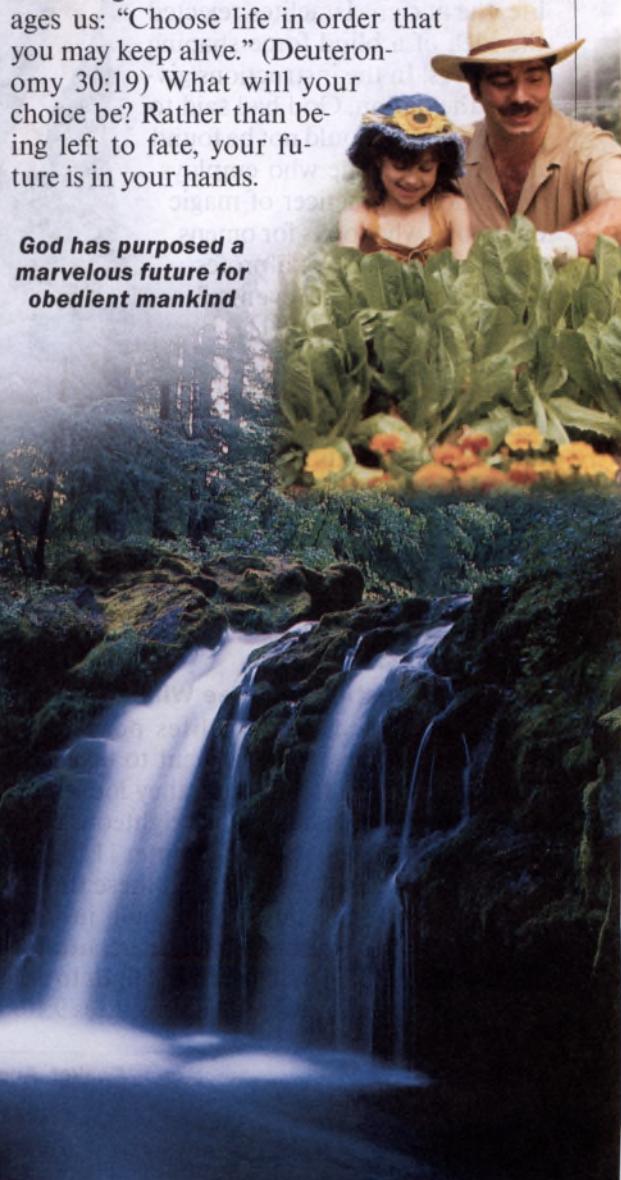
Our future has not been written down in advance but is shaped by the present. Even though life is a gift from God, the Bible clearly indicates that we have a key role to play in deciding our present and our future. The fact that we have the choice either to make God happy or, on the contrary, to make him sad shows that God has given us a measure of control over our lives.—Genesis 6:6; Psalm 78:40; Proverbs 27:11.

Additionally, the Holy Scriptures repeatedly emphasize that our future is linked to our endurance and our life course, which would have little meaning if things were already predestined. (Matthew 24:13; Luke 10:25-28)

If, then, we choose to be obedient and faithful to God, what future can we expect?

The Bible reveals that mankind has a very bright future. The earth will be transformed into a paradise where peace and security will reign. (Psalm 37:9-11; 46:8, 9) That future is certain because the almighty Creator will fulfill his promises. (Isaiah 55:11) But our being blessed with life in Paradise does not depend on fate; it is to be enjoyed as a result of our obediently doing God's will at this time. (2 Thessalonians 1:6-8; Revelation 7:14, 15) God has given us free will and encourages us: "Choose life in order that you may keep alive." (Deuteronomy 30:19) What will your choice be? Rather than being left to fate, your future is in your hands.

***God has purposed a marvelous future for obedient mankind***



I WAS born in 1941 on the Caribbean island of Puerto Rico, where the common language is Spanish. My humble parents were Roman Catholic, but neither they nor my sisters and brother (who died when he was a child) nor I was ever given any religious instruction, and we rarely went to church.

The family left Puerto Rico for the United States in 1949. We settled in New York City in East Harlem, known as El Barrio. We remained there until 1953. It was hard for me to adjust to the English language. This barrier gave me feelings of inadequacy.

#### **Wayward Influences**

Then our family moved to the Prospect Heights area of Brooklyn. It was during this period that I was influenced by my peers to become part of a street gang. Later I was named its warlord. After that I became the leader of another gang, which was involved in stealing cars. I also became a runner (a collector of illegal gambling debts) for the neighborhood bookmakers. From that, I moved on to burglaries and was arrested several times before I was 15. By then I had quit school.

When I was 16, the authorities exiled me to Puerto Rico for five years as part of a plea bargain. I was sent to my grandfather and his family. He was a well-known and respected retired police officer. However, one year later my grandfather sent me back to Brooklyn because of my engaging in drunken brawls, associating with undesirable people, and committing burglaries.

#### **Father's Role In My Life**

When I returned to New York City from Puerto Rico, I found that my father had begun studying the Bible with Jehovah's Wit-

# *From a* **ROARING LION** *to a* **MEEK LAMB**

**AS TOLD BY ENRIQUE TORRES, JR.**

nesses. However, my life was headed in the opposite direction. I persisted in leading a godless life and got involved in drug and alcohol abuse. I became a member of a burglary and stickup gang, which led to my arrest in 1960. I was convicted and sentenced to three years in prison.

In 1963, I was released on parole. But soon I was again arrested for burglary, and I served two years in prison on Rikers Island, in New York City. I was released in 1965. Yet, that very year, I was arrested for murder. What a ferocious, lionlike disposition I had developed!

The court sentenced me to 20 years at Dannemora, in upstate New York. There I became involved in the prison subculture.

However, as previously mentioned, my father was studying the Scriptures with Jehovah's Witnesses. He was later baptized and served as an elder in a congregation in

Harlem. He visited me often during my incarceration and would always talk to me about God, His name, and His purpose.

While in prison at Dannemora, though, I became part of a group of loan sharks, who made loans at excessive interest rates. During this time, in 1971, a riot erupted at another prison in New York State, the Attica Correctional Facility. This riot made headlines in many newspapers and received worldwide radio and television coverage. After this riot, to prevent the same thing from happening at Dannemora, the warden felt that he had to select the inmates who might be a bad influence on other prisoners. These he isolated in special housing units.

Out of 2,200 prisoners, about 200 of us were isolated. Further screening resulted in some being selected for severe beatings. In addition, as part of what was labeled "behavior modification treatment," drugs were introduced into the food.

This was not the first time that I had gone to the isolation unit for unruly behavior. However, this was the first time that I was a victim of such cruelty, and it affected me deeply. I was handcuffed, my legs were shackled, and I was severely beaten at various times by guards. I also had to endure constant racial insults because of my nationality. Because of the humiliation and beatings, I went on a limited hunger strike for the duration of my stay in isolation, which lasted about three months. This resulted in my losing nearly 50 pounds.

Inquiries by my father concerning my dete-

riorating health were ignored by prison officials. This left me feeling hopeless, and I turned to writing to politicians for assistance regarding the unjust treatment.

My father repeatedly went to newspapers about the beatings, the humiliation, and the introduction of drugs into the food of the inmates in the special housing unit. Only one newspaper, the *Amsterdam News*, responded

with an article about the deplorable conditions. My father also went to the Commissioner of Corrections, in Albany, New York, on various occasions and was always told that I was in a regular housing unit. My report to politicians about prison conditions fell on deaf ears. I became more despondent than ever, as I seemingly had nowhere else to turn for help.

It was then that I remembered some of the things my father had talked to me about. I decided to pray to God for help.

#### **Turning to God**

Before praying, I recalled my father's persistent encouragement for me to pray not to Jesus but to Jesus' Father, whose name is Jehovah. I prostrated myself on the floor of the cell and expressed deep regret over the life course that I had chosen, which had resulted in my spending over half my life in prison. I earnestly supplicated Jehovah to help me get out of this situation because I now realized that he alone had the power to deliver me out of this predicament.

I do not know how long I prayed, but I reviewed my past and repently petitioned Jehovah for forgiveness. I promised that I

would try to learn more about him. Not long after, I was released from that dungeonlike solitary confinement into the general prison population. This ended my hunger strike.

In keeping with my promise to learn more about Jehovah, I began to read the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. One of the things that interested me about this translation of the Bible was its green-colored cover. This appealed to me because the prison clothes, cells, walls, and corridors were all gray, a depressing gray. Later, to my amazement, the color of all these things was changed to forest green. This color was adopted by the Department of Corrections after the uprising at the Attica prison.

I also began to read articles in the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines, which my father had arranged to have delivered to me. Reading the experiences of so many of Jehovah's Witnesses who had been in prison for holding fast to their faith and who had gone through more than I had made a deep impression on me. Here were people who had committed no crime but who had suffered unjustly for being faithful to God. I, on the other hand, had suffered what I deserved. Upon reading these experiences, my heart was touched, and I was encouraged to learn more about Jehovah and his people.

Finally, one year later, I went before the parole board. My case was reviewed, including my ordeal at the special housing unit. I was happy to learn that I was to be released on parole in 1972.

Two weeks after my release, I attended the local Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, in Spanish Harlem. But I still felt unworthy to be associating with Jehovah's people. And I still had a lot to learn about Jehovah, his organization, and his people. I also needed time to readjust to society after spending so much time in prison.

Sadly, I was unable to discard my old ways.



*The day I was baptized*

I turned to drugs, crime, and an ungodly way of life once again. This eventually resulted in my receiving an additional prison sentence of 15 years. Yet, I feel that Jehovah must have seen some good in my heart, as he never gave up on me. I can only say to you that whether you are in prison or not, Jehovah never abandons or gives up on those who are inclined toward learning about him.

#### **Studying the Bible In Jail**

This time, back in prison at Dannemora, I took advantage of the availability of a weekly Bible study with a minister of Jehovah's Witnesses. Later, I was transferred to Mid-Orange Correctional Facility, a medium security prison in upstate New York. This was a change from the maximum security prison at Dannemora.

After two years at the Mid-Orange Correctional Facility, I began to participate actively

in a Bible study that a fellow inmate was having, which was approved by prison authorities. His mother, who was one of Jehovah's Witnesses, had arranged for him to have this study. Finally, by continuing to take in knowledge, I began to apply Bible principles, which eventually led to spiritual progress.

After having been denied parole seven times, I was reluctantly paroled the eighth time. The reason given for my previous parole denials was my "propensity for criminality." I was released after having served 8 years of the 15-year sentence.

#### **Final Release From Darkness**

Upon my release, I was again distracted, and I briefly succumbed to taking drugs. I was also living with a woman in a common-law marriage. This had begun in 1972. However, in 1983, I resumed my study of the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. This time, I began to attend Christian meetings regularly. However, before studying and attending the meetings, I ceased taking drugs and stopped smoking.

Nevertheless, contrary to God's laws on marriage, I was still living with my common-law wife. This bothered my conscience, so I tried to get her to accept a Bible study and legalize our relationship by getting married. But she said that the Bible was a man's book designed by men to subjugate women and that marriage was not necessary.

I realized that I could not continue living in an immoral relationship with a woman who did not respect God's laws on marriage. Thus, I ended our relationship and moved to Brooklyn. I knew that I could not talk to others about God and his purpose if my own affairs were not in harmony with his laws.

Being free from all unscriptural entanglements and having studied the Bible for three years, with a clean conscience I dedicated my life to the doing of God's will and symbolized it by being baptized at a convention of Je-

hovah's Witnesses. The promise that I had made to get to know the God whose name my father always mentioned is something I have never regretted. And my promise to Jehovah in the dungeons of the prison at Dannemora is one that I will work hard to keep until he brings forth the many blessings he has promised in his Word.

#### **Looking Forward to Paradise**

I very much look forward to the time when Jehovah will transform this entire earth into a beautiful paradise. (Psalm 37:11, 29; Luke 23:43) And I also look forward to another promise of God—the resurrection of the dead to an opportunity to live forever on earth. (John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15) What a marvelous time that will be when I can welcome back from the grave my dead loved ones, including my father, my little brother, and others I knew who died prematurely! I often reflect on this hope, and it fills me with joy. Another joy I now have is that my two sisters and some of their children have dedicated their lives to Jehovah and have been baptized.

Now, as I express my faith to others and share my life experience, I cannot help but be gratified to let them know the comforting words of the psalmist, recorded at Psalm 72:12-14: "He will deliver the poor one crying for help, also the afflicted one and whoever has no helper. He will feel sorry for the lowly one and the poor one, and the souls of the poor ones he will save. From oppression and from violence he will redeem their soul, and their blood will be precious in his eyes."

Jehovah's patience with me has warmed my heart and has enabled me to learn and practice the traits that he wants his people to have—not ferocious lionlike ones, but the peaceful, kind, and mild-tempered qualities that a lamb has. This is necessary, for as God's Word states, "to the meek ones he will show favor."—Proverbs 3:34.



# The Bird That Kisses FLOWERS

## Rufous hummingbird

THE HUMMINGBIRD  
SOCIETY / Newark Delaware USA

**B**RAZILIANS call it *beija-flor*—the bird that kisses flowers. That name well fits the role of hummingbirds among blossoms. Other observers, noting the birds' vivid plumage, call these tiny creatures "living jewels" or "lovely fragments of the rainbow" and give various species exquisite names, such as ruby-topaz, glittering-bellied emerald, or bronze-tailed comet.

The spectacular coloring is mostly visible on the special feathers around the throat area and crown of male hummers. Their feathers have layers of cells filled with air, and these cells refract light waves into a rainbow of color somewhat like millions of tiny soap bubbles can.

A beautiful description of a cinnamon-colored rufous hummingbird, common to western North America, is found in the book *Creature Comforts*, by Joan Ward-Harris: "His jewel lies on his throat—the gorget . . .

It extends below his cheeks and under his chin to his throat and chest, like a baby's bib. The effect of the flared gorget is breathtaking—the bird looks twice its usual size and seems literally on fire." As the rufous streaks away, his gorget may flash violet, emerald, or even all the colors of the spectrum. But let him turn from the light, and the gorget suddenly becomes a deep, velvety black.

## Aerobic Wonder

Hummingbirds are known for aerobatics par excellence. For a moment, one will hover at a flower, drinking its nectar, with its humming wings a misty blur. Then, with a start, this mighty mite darts forward, backward, sideways, or even upside down with 50 to 70—some say 80—wingbeats per second! Reportedly, it can reach speeds of 30 to 60 miles per hour and then come to an abrupt stop. What makes the hummingbird capable of such amazing feats?

The secret lies in the hummer's marvelously designed body parts. Well-developed muscles, fastened to a prominent breastbone, make up 25 to 30 percent of its body weight. Its wings, rigid from shoulder to wingtip, allow for power in both upward and downward beats, rather than just in the downstroke, which is true of other birds. Thus, both strokes provide lift and propulsion, while the shoulder joint allows 180-degree rotation. Little wonder that the bird's aerobatics can enthrall you!

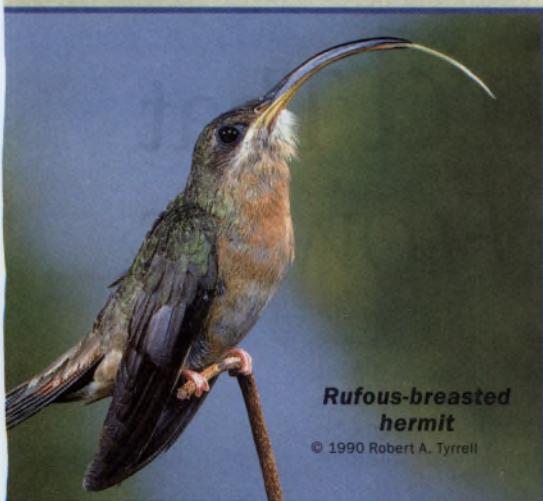
## Antillean mango

© 1990 Robert A. Tyrrell



## Bee hummingbird (enlarged)

© 1990 Robert A. Tyrrell



**Rufous-breasted  
hermit**

© 1990 Robert A. Tyrell

Would the hummers pass an endurance test? Most assuredly. For example, each year some rufous hummingbirds migrate more than two thousand miles from their winter home in Mexico to as far north as Alaska. The perils of high mountain passes, open water, and bad weather do not faze them.

### Voracious Eater

The love affair that hummingbirds have with the flowers they visit serves a useful purpose—cross-pollination. However, the real attraction for them is nectar. To fuel its tremendous energy, the hummer needs to eat about half (some say twice) its weight in carbohydrate-rich nectar each day. Can you imagine a proportionate requirement of food for a human?

Unlike most birds, hummingbirds rarely walk. They feed on the wing. With bills varying in length and shape according to species, they choose blossoms that particularly suit them. They supplement their nectar diet by catching fruit flies and plucking aphids off vegetation. How does the bird get nectar from the flowers it kisses?

The hummer's feeding tool is its tongue. Joan Ward-Harris writes: "A hummingbird's tongue is long, narrow, forked and slightly hairy at the tip; two curled furrows divide it, creating tiny troughs along which nectar is carried by capillary action until it is swallowed."

### **Anna's (enlarged)**

Patricia Meacham/Cornell  
Laboratory of  
Ornithology

If you attract hummingbirds to a feeder near your window, you will never tire of the entertainment these fascinating bundles of energy will give you. However, only feed them if you are prepared to care for them through an entire season, since they will depend on your food source as they raise their family in a nearby nest.

### Courtship Rites

Some hummingbird species in Central and South America attract their ladyloves by means of their singing. The wine-throated hummingbird, of Guatemala, is most musical in its cadences. And the white-eared hummingbird's song sounds like "the chiming of a small, sweet-toned silver bell." Most, though, are not known as songsters. They simply repeat a few monotonous, metallic notes over and over again or at other times hum with beaks closed and gorget swelled out.



### Giant (life-size)

© C. H. Greenewalt/VIREO

Some hummers put on a dazzling display of aerobatics in their courtship ritual. This is true of the rufous, a fiery streak that plummets from a great height to a point just above the watching female and then—just in time—swoops upward to describe the letter J. To and fro he maneuvers on the base of the J until returning to the high point again or flying off with his new mate. His wingbeats during this showy display may reach two hundred per second!

### Dainty Homes

The hummingbird's nest is "one of the daintiest structures in the world," claims one observer. Joan Ward-Harris showed an *Awake!* reporter a nest she had found. It was one and three quarters inches across and about three eighths of an inch deep, constructed in such a way that as the bumblebee-size babies grew, their cozy home would expand to accommodate them. To have a nest in the palm of your hand is a thrill—a little doll's cup of soft plant materials. Nests are also made of fine feathers woven together with cobwebs. In it are laid two or three pure-white eggs, "like evenly matched pearls."

In feeding her babies, the mother inserts her beak far into their tiny throats, regurgitating the needed nourishment. Usually after just three weeks, the fledglings instinctively take off on their own, feeding and growing until their internal clock sends them on their long migration toward milder winter weather.

### Fearless

A surprising characteristic of the hummingbird is its fearless nature. You can see a display of this when tempers seemingly flare over feeding stations or territory. In South America two velvet-purple coronets were observed darting courageously at an eagle that invaded their nesting area, showing their willingness to take on a Goliath when necessary. But hummingbirds sometimes lose their lives to other enemies, such as snakes, frogs, spiderwebs, prickly flowers, and human collectors.

Yet, many humans befriend them and eagerly await the hummingbirds' return each season to resume their purposeful life-style. To study these sparkling gems of creation more closely will surely enhance your delight in them—if they choose to kiss the flowers in your garden.

### Ruby-throated female and young

## HUMMINGBIRD FACTS

- With 320 species, hummingbirds make up the second-largest bird family in the Western Hemisphere
- They are the minikin of the bird world: The bee hummingbird of Cuba measures 2.25 inches from the tip of its tail to the tip of its bill
- The largest hummingbird is 8.5 inches in overall length and is found in western South America from Ecuador to Chile
- Their main habitat includes the equatorial zone across South America from sea level to more than 15,000 feet and some islands of the Caribbean and the Pacific
- During summer months they are found as far north as Alaska and as far south as Tierra del Fuego
- At one time, millions were slaughtered to provide decorations for the European millinery trade, likely exterminating some species

### Bee hummingbird (life-size)

© 1990 Robert A. Tyrell



# Religious Unity in Marriage —Why Important

**A**FAMILY sits down to have an evening meal. As the father says a prayer, the mother prays silently to another god. In another family the wife worships at a church, but her husband attends a synagogue. There are families in which one parent teaches the children about Santa Claus, while the other tells them about Hanukkah.

According to recent studies, such scenes have become common as more people are marrying outside their religion. One survey shows that in the United States, 21 percent of Catholics now marry outside their faith; among Mormons the figure is 30 percent; for Muslims, 40 percent; and for Jews, more than 50 percent. In view of centuries of religious animosity, some regard interfaith marriage as a victory over intolerance. A newspaper columnist wrote: "Mixed marriages of most any kind are to be celebrated." Is this the Bible's view?

It should be noted that the Bible does not support racial or ethnic prejudices. God's Word promotes racial impartiality. The apostle Peter spoke clearly on this point: "For a certainty I perceive that God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:34, 35) At the same time, the Bible does teach that true

worshippers of Jehovah should marry "only in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7:39) Why?

## The Purpose of Marriage

God intended marriage to be an especially close bond. (Genesis 2:24) In establishing the marriage arrangement, God had in mind more than companionship. When Jehovah assigned the first couple the task of rearing children and caring for their earthly home, he showed that they were to work closely together in accomplishing his will. (Genesis 1:28) By cooperating in serving God in this respect, man and woman would enjoy, not simply companionship, but a close and lasting partnership.—Compare Malachi 2:14.

Jesus alluded to this partnership when he said the well-known words: "They are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has yoked together let no man put apart." (Matthew 19:6) Jesus used meta-

phoric language to compare the marriage union to a yoke that holds two draft animals together to pull or move a common load. Imagine the strain on two yoked animals pulling in opposite directions! Similarly, those who marry outside the true faith may find themselves straining to live according to Bible principles while the mate resists. Appropriately, the Bible states:



"Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers."—2 Corinthians 6:14.

### A Better Marriage

Unity in true worship can greatly strengthen a marriage. One writer commented: "Worshiping together is one of the major characteristics of healthy, happy families." Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10 says: "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their hard work. For if one of them should fall, the other one can raise his partner up."

When they center their lives on their worship, a Christian couple are united not only physically but also spiritually. As they pray together, study God's Word together, congregate with fellow Christians, and share their faith with others, they forge a spiritual bond that greatly enhances the closeness of their marriage. A Christian woman commented: "True worship is a way of life. I can't imagine choosing to marry someone who doesn't share the basis for who and what I am."—Compare Mark 3:35.

Those who marry "in the Lord" can expect their mates to imitate Jesus' conduct. Christian husbands are to treat their wives as Jesus lovingly treated the congregation. Christian wives are to treat their husbands with respect. (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:25, 29, 33) Christians do this out of a desire not simply to please their mates but to please God, who holds married couples accountable for the way they treat each other.—Malachi 2:13, 14; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

Adhering to a common set of beliefs also helps Christian couples resolve differences peacefully. The Bible advises Christians to keep focused, "not in personal interest upon just [their] own matters, but also in personal interest upon those of the others." (Philippians 2:4) Regardless of personal preferences, mates who are united in faith look to God's Word as a common authority for settling any disagreements. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) In this way they follow the Bible's counsel for Chris-

tians to be of "the same mind."—1 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:2.

### Attraction and Common Values

Admittedly, there is more to a relationship than sharing the same faith. Mutual attraction is also a factor. (Song of Solomon 3:5; 4:7, 9; 5:10) But for a marriage to endure, common values are crucial. According to the book *Are You the One for Me?* "couples who share similar values have a much greater chance of creating a happy, harmonious, and lasting relationship."

Unfortunately, people who are attracted to each other may not address serious differences until after marriage. By comparison, imagine buying a house primarily because you like the way it looks. Only after moving in, however, do you learn that the foundation is unstable. With a shaky foundation, all the attractive features of the house become meaningless. Similarly, one may be attracted to a person of a different faith who seems compatible—but after marriage the relationship may turn out to be seriously flawed.

Consider some difficult issues that may surface later in interreligious marriages: Where will the family worship? What religious training will the children receive? Which faith will the family support financially? Will one mate insist on sharing in certain religious customs and holidays that the other considers pagan? (Isaiah 52:11) Every marriage requires each partner to make reasonable adjustments;

### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

#### Is the Nuclear Threat Over?

#### Serving God in the Face of Death

#### Peanut Butter—African Style

however, compromising Bible principles—even to preserve a marriage—is unacceptable to God.—Compare Deuteronomy 7:3, 4; Nehemiah 13:26, 27.

To maintain marital peace, some couples in religiously divided marriages practice their faiths independently. Sadly, though, worshiping independently creates a spiritual void in the marriage. One Christian woman married to a man who did not share her faith related: “Although we were married for 40 years, my husband didn’t really know me.” Conversely, a marriage in which both partners worship “with spirit and truth” has God at its center. As the Bible poetically states, “a threefold cord cannot quickly be torn in two.”—John 4:23, 24; Ecclesiastes 4:12.

### What About the Children?

Some contemplating an interfaith marriage may feel that they can expose their children to both faiths and allow the children to choose. True, both parents have the legal and moral right to offer religious training, and ultimately, the children do make their own decision.\*

The Bible instructs children to obey both parents “in union with the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:1) Proverbs 6:20 puts it this way: “Observe, O my son, the commandment of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother.” Instead of being exposed to different doctrines, children raised by two parents who are of common belief are united in what the Bible calls “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”—Ephesians 4:5; Deuteronomy 11:19.

### Truly “In the Lord”

If sharing common values is a key to a successful marriage, would it be wise to marry just anyone who professes to be a Christian? The Bible answers: “He that says he

\* See the article “The Bible’s Viewpoint: Should Children Choose Their Own Religion?” in *Awake!* of March 8, 1997, pages 26-7. Also, see pages 24-5 of *Jehovah’s Witnesses and Education*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 1995.

### Help for Religiously Divided Families

For various reasons many married couples today are religiously divided. Some individuals may have chosen a mate who belongs to a different religion. But many couples started out sharing a common faith and later became religiously divided when one mate adopted another form of worship. There may be other circumstances that bring about religious division in the family. Notwithstanding the causes, however, the marriage vows are not to be broken or belittled simply because mates disagree on the choice of religion. The Bible honors the sanctity and permanence of marriage, even when the mates are not united in worship. (1 Peter 3:1, 2) The apostle Paul wrote: “If any brother has an unbelieving wife, and yet she is agreeable to dwelling with him, let him not leave her.” (1 Corinthians 7:12) If applied, the principles found in the Bible can help any married couple to enjoy peace in a loving and respectful relationship.—Ephesians 5:28-33; Colossians 3:12-14; Titus 2:4, 5; 1 Peter 3:7-9.

remains in union with [Jesus] is under obligation himself also to go on walking just as that one walked.” (1 John 2:6) Thus, a Christian contemplating marriage would seek a fellow Christian who truly strives to follow Jesus. Such a prospective mate would have dedicated his life to God and been baptized. He would imitate Jesus’ loving personality and his zealous preaching of God’s Kingdom. As was true of Jesus, he would center his life around doing God’s will.—Matthew 6:33; 16:24; Luke 8:1; John 18:37.

By patiently waiting for a suitable partner within God’s family of worshipers, those contemplating marriage set a pattern of putting God’s will first in their lives. Such a pattern will ultimately contribute to a happier, more satisfying marriage.—Ecclesiastes 7:8; Isaiah 48:17, 18.

# CROSSWORD PUZZLE

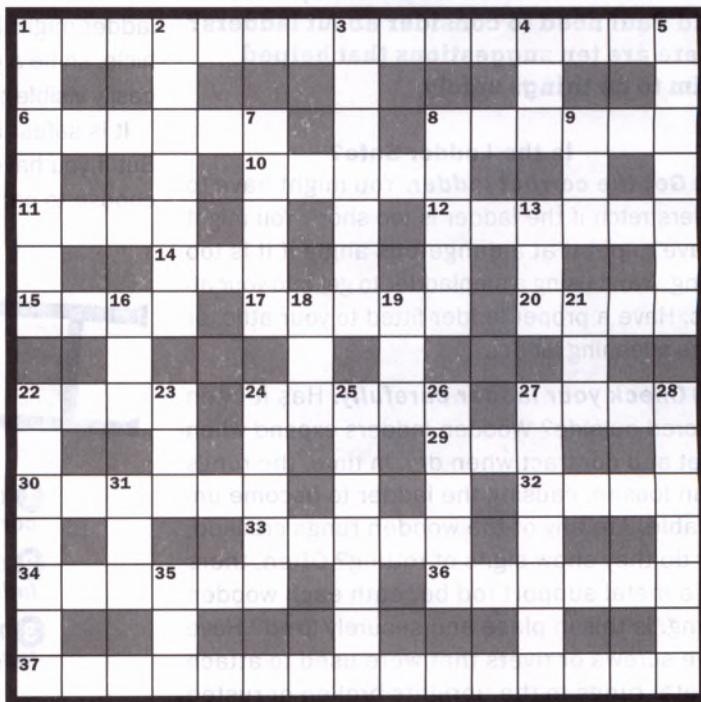
## Clues Across

- What Jesus did to teach his apostles a lesson in humility and willingness to serve without partiality [3 words] (John 13:12)
- A city at the extremity of southern Judah (Joshua 15:23)
- His sons—Nethinim temple slaves—returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:51)
- The expressions of love by the Shulamite's shepherd companion are likened to the pleasant shade of this tree (Song of Solomon 2:3)
- A sheikh of Edom (Genesis 36:43)
- James says that if a man does not do this to his tongue, his "form of worship is futile" (James 1:26)
- The last of God's earthly creative works to be reported (Genesis 2:22; 3:20)
- He incited the city of Shechem to revolt against Abimelech, resulting in the destruction of the city (Judges 9:28)
- The Amorite name for Mount Hermon (Deuteronomy 3:9)
- Growing tired of manna, the Israelites cried out for this in the wilderness (Numbers 11:4)
- The port city at which Paul transferred from one boat to another while being taken as a prisoner from Caesarea to Rome (Acts 27:5)
- By worshiping the sun with these toward the temple, the 25 men in Ezekiel's vision showed contempt for true worship of God (Ezekiel 8:16)
- Parts of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream image that were made of silver (Daniel 2:32)
- What Jesus did when Jewish leaders at the temple tried to stone him (John 8:59)
- A city assigned to Gad (Joshua 13:27)
- What Moses wore when his face shone so brilliantly that the Israelites could not look at it (Exodus 34:35)
- Moses' father (Numbers 26:59)
- One of the five daughters of Zelophehad, who, having no brothers, received their father's land inheritance at Jehovah's direction (Numbers 27:1-8)
- The father of Jeribai and Joshaviah, two of David's mighty men (1 Chronicles 11:46)
- Nazarene neighbors identified them as "James and Joseph and Judas and Simon" [3 words] (Mark 6:3)

## Clues Down

- To do this himself was unusual for Paul (Philemon 19)
- Jeremiah bought a field from him at the time that the Babylonians were laying siege to Jerusalem (Jeremiah 32:9)
- Jehovah said that the skin of Leviathan would resist penetration by this (See Job 41:7.)
- Much (Galatians 1:14)
- What a demon begged that Jesus not do to him (Luke 8:28-31)
- What Adam gave to all the animals (Genesis 2:20)
- His wife, Jael, acted courageously and put Sisera to death (Judges 4:21)
- A son of Zophah from the tribe of Asher (1 Chronicles 7:37)
- A city in southern Judah (Joshua 15:29)
- Demeanor (Job 36:9)
- Seventh letter of the Greek alphabet
- The Corinthians were called "a letter," though not inscribed with this (2 Corinthians 3:3)
- An outwardly beautiful woman who is not sensible is compared to a gold nose ring in the snout of this animal (Proverbs 11:22)
- Jesus mentioned the wife of this man when warning us not to return to the things behind (Luke 17:31, 32)

## Crossword Solutions Page 27



# USING LADDERS

## Do You Make These Safety Checks?

By Awake! correspondent in Ireland

**P**AUL needed to change a bulb in an outside light fixture of his house. He also needed to clean the outside upstairs windows—his wife had mentioned this several times. But Paul kept postponing these jobs. Why? Because he had to use a ladder.

His apprehension was reasonable. He knew that accidents involving ladders can cause serious, even fatal, injuries. These often happen because the worker has not thought enough about how to use a ladder correctly.

Before he tackled these tasks, what did Paul need to consider about ladders? Here are ten suggestions that helped him to do things safely.

### Is the Ladder Safe?

**1 Get the correct ladder.** You might have to overstretch if the ladder is too short. You might have to put it at a dangerous angle if it is too long. Avoid using a stepladder to get into your attic. Have a proper ladder fitted to your attic, or use a leaning ladder.

**2 Check your ladder carefully.** Has it been stored outside? Wooden ladders expand when wet and contract when dry. In time, the rungs can loosen, causing the ladder to become unstable. Are any of the wooden rungs cracked, or do they show signs of rotting? Often, there is a metal support rod beneath each wooden rung. Is this in place and securely fixed? Have the screws or rivets that were used to attach metal rungs to the uprights broken or rusted

away? Larger extension ladders may have pulleys and ropes. Do the pulleys operate smoothly? Does the rope show signs of wear, and is it still long enough? Make all repairs or replacements promptly.

Rungs often have antislip grooves shaped into them. Be sure to remove any dirt that may have accumulated in the grooves. All ladders should have antislip pads on the feet. Check that they are there and are not excessively worn.

**3 Transport ladders safely.** On a vehicle, secure the ladder to a proper ladder rack, or fasten it to a trailer on at least two points. A long ladder might hang out over the back of the vehicle, so tie a warning flag on the end to make it easily visible to someone following.

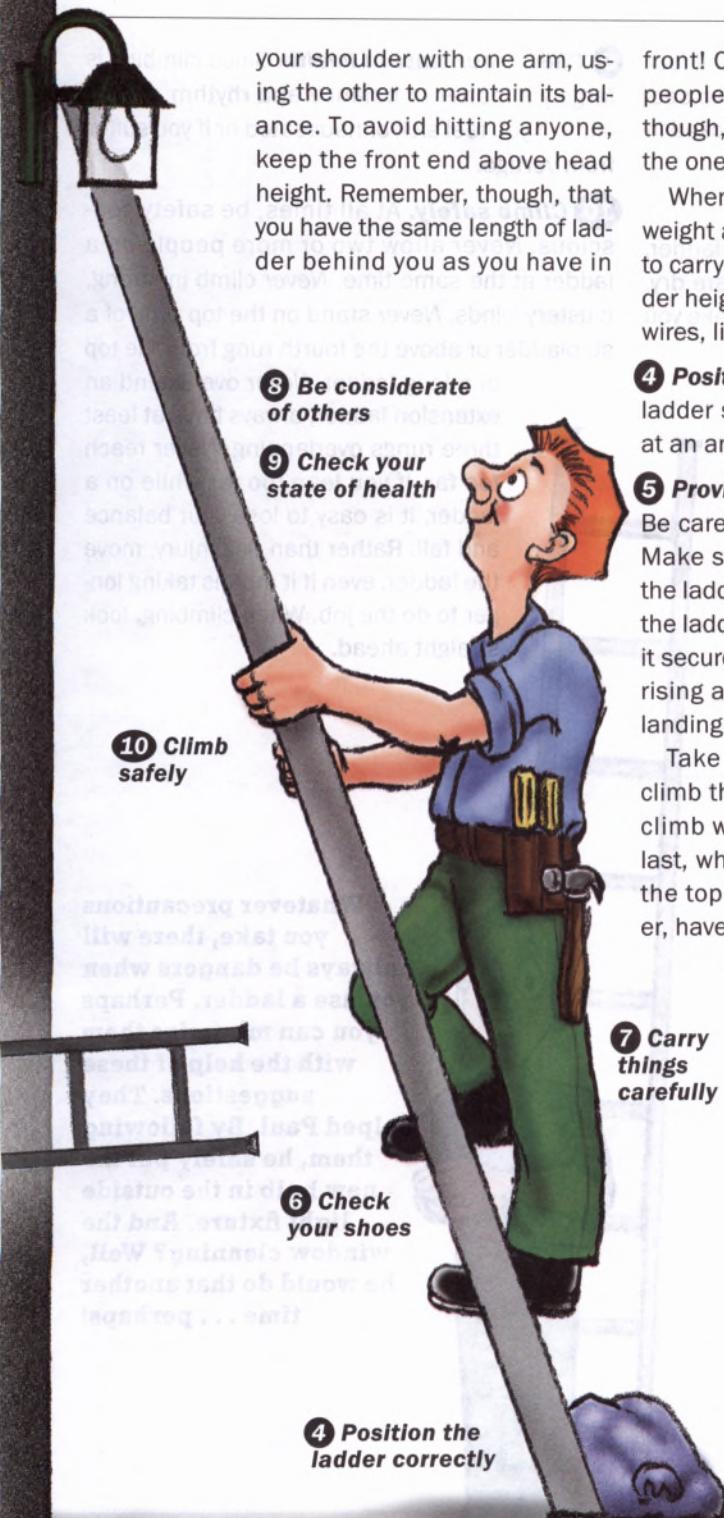
It is safest if two people carry a long ladder. But if you have to carry one unassisted and you choose to carry it horizontally, hold it firmly on



**1 Get the correct ladder**

**2 Check your ladder carefully**

**3 Transport ladders safely**



**10 Climb safely**

**6 Check your shoes**

**4 Position the ladder correctly**

**8 Be considerate of others**

**9 Check your state of health**

your shoulder with one arm, using the other to maintain its balance. To avoid hitting anyone, keep the front end above head height. Remember, though, that you have the same length of ladder behind you as you have in front! Comedies make it seem amusing when people are hit by a ladder. In the real world, though, this is never funny—especially if you are the one hurt.

When you carry the ladder vertically, take the weight against your upper body, using one hand to carry it and the other hand, held above shoulder height, to balance it. Watch out for overhead wires, light fixtures, and signs!

**4 Position the ladder correctly.** For safety, the ladder should not lean sideways and must rest at an angle of 75 degrees from the floor.

**5 Provide support at the top and at the base.**

Be careful where you put the top of the ladder. Make sure that the top surface against which the ladder rests is stable and nonslip. Never rest the ladder on glass or plastic. When possible, tie it securely to a fixture, with the top of the ladder rising about three feet beyond the top point of landing.

Take particular care that when you initially climb the ladder, you tie it at the top. That first climb will not be secure, and neither will the last, when you climb down after untying it from the top. To make the first and last climbs safer, have an assistant hold the ladder at its base

while you climb. However, this is only effective when the ladder is not longer than about 15 feet.

If the ground slopes away from the building, place something heavy at the base of the ladder or tie a lower rung to a fixture. If the ground is uneven but solid, use a wedge to get a level base. Provide a wooden board or something similar to make a firm base if the ground is soft or of loose material.

**5 Provide support at the top and at the base**

If you use a stepladder, make sure that all four feet are firmly on the ground, with the two sections fully apart and any safety catches locked in place.

### Are You Safe?

**6 Check your shoes.** Before you climb a ladder, make sure that the soles of your shoes are dry. Remove anything, like mud, that might make you slip.

**7 Carry things carefully.** To leave both hands free for climbing, if possible, carry tools in a holder that is attached to a belt. Try to find alternative methods of lifting awkward objects, but if you must use a ladder, keep your free hand in contact with the ladder at all times by sliding it along the side of the ladder as you climb. Be deliberate and methodical, and do not rush.

If you use electric power tools, never use both hands to operate them. A drill, for example, may unexpectedly jam or slip, causing you to lose your balance and fall. Never lock them into an on mode; they may fall while still operating.

**8 Be considerate of others.** If you are working in a public place, make the ladder easily visible and, if possible, cordon it off. If you have to move the ladder around a corner, be aware that others will not be expecting this. Shout a friendly warning, and check to see if the way is clear.

When you have tools with you on a ladder, remember that even a small screwdriver can cause injury when dropped from a height. If you have to go away for some reason and you have been unable to tie the ladder securely, get someone to stand guard, or lay the ladder down safely until you return. Do not leave it unattended.

**9 Check your state of health.** Since climbing is largely a matter of balance and rhythm, do not climb if you feel sick or nauseated or if you suffer from vertigo.

**10 Climb safely.** At all times, be safety conscious. Never allow two or more people on a ladder at the same time. Never climb in strong, blustery winds. Never stand on the top rung of a stepladder or above the fourth rung from the top of a long ladder. Never overextend an extension ladder; always have at least three rungs overlapping. Never reach too far. If you lean too far while on a ladder, it is easy to lose your balance and fall. Rather than risk injury, move the ladder, even if it means taking longer to do the job. When climbing, look straight ahead.



Whatever precautions you take, there will always be dangers when you use a ladder. Perhaps you can minimize them with the help of these suggestions. They helped Paul. By following them, he safely put the new bulb in the outside light fixture. And the window cleaning? Well, he would do that another time . . . perhaps!



*The battlefield of Plataea, where the Persian fighting machine was destroyed*

# THE BATTLE OF PLATAEA A “BEAR” BROUGHT TO ITS KNEES

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN GREECE

**A** FEW silent temple ruins. Abandoned carved stones and gravel paths. An empty plain between rolling foothills on the banks of the Asopós River, 30 miles northwest of Athens, Greece.

Nothing betrays the fact that we are standing on the very location where one of the last acts of the Persian-Greek armed conflict was played out some 2,500 years ago. This was the scene of the largest land battle of the Persian Wars—the Battle of Plataea.

## Hints of Confrontation

Like a well-written script, Bible prophecy foretold the rise and fall of world powers centuries in advance. True to prophecy, the Medo-Persian world power, symbolized by a bear and by a ram, seized new territories in what was mainly a westerly expansionist drive. (Daniel 7:5; 8:4) In their campaign against Greece, however, Persian forces under King Darius I suffered a crushing defeat at Marathon in 490 B.C.E. Four years later, Darius died.

Daniel's prophecy spoke further of “three kings standing up for Persia” and then of a fourth Persian king, who would “rouse up everything against the kingdom of Greece.” That king evidently was Darius' son Xerxes. (Daniel 11:2) Endeavoring to retaliate for the Persian defeat at Marathon, Xerxes launched

massive forces against the Greek mainland in 480 B.C.E. Following a costly victory at Thermopylae, however, his forces finally met bitter defeat at Salamis.\*

## Mardonius—A Reluctant Fighter?

An embarrassed Xerxes hurried off to Lydia, leaving behind 300,000 of his men under the command of the seasoned campaigner Mardonius, charged with policing the conquered regions of Greece. From his winter camp in Thessaly, Mardonius sent an envoy to Athens with a proposal that offered Athens a complete pardon, the rebuilding of the burned temples, the restoration of territory, and an equal alliance as an autonomous free city. However, the Athenians spurned the proposal and turned to Sparta for military help.

Mardonius was advised by dissident Greeks sympathetic to him that he could win over the recalcitrant Greeks by bribing their leaders. But Mardonius disdained using such means. He was still trying to avoid a direct confrontation with the Greeks, and he again offered to allow the Athenians to surrender on favorable terms. However, they remained adamant in their refusal.

\* For further details, see “The Battle of Marathon—Humiliation of a World Power,” in the May 8, 1995, issue of *Awake!*, and “A Bitter Defeat for Xerxes,” in the April 8, 1999, issue of *Awake!*

### The Final Act

Hence, the final episode of the confrontation between Persia and Greece was acted out at Plataea, in August 479 B.C.E. There, about 40,000 Greek infantrymen—which included Athenians, Spartans, and forces from other Greek cities—under General Pausanius of Sparta confronted the 100,000 strong troops of Mardonius.

For three weeks the main bodies of the two armies, both dreading a head-on encounter, skirmished indecisively across the Asopós River. Legend has it that both armies had been promised victory by their respective soothsayers if they remained on the defensive. However, the Persian cavalry ha-

rassed the Greeks continually, capturing a necessary provision train and poisoning the wells that the Greeks depended on for water.

To Mardonius, the end of the war seemed imminent. But this Persian commander had underestimated the fighting ability of the opponent. The general was lured by hope of an immediate and spectacular victory. Thus, he moved his army across the river quickly and struck.

The Persians set up their wall of wicker shields and from behind it showered volleys of arrows upon their opponents. The 8,000 Athenians were assaulted by the disident Greek allies of the Persians, whereas the bulk of Mardonius' forces attacked the

**Persian archer**  
Musée du Louvre, Paris



### Medo-Persia and Greece Two Centuries of Confrontation

- 539 B.C.E.** Medo-Persia becomes the fourth world power. It seizes territory in three principal directions: north (Assyria), west (Ionia), and south (Egypt) (Daniel 7:5; 8:1-4, 20)
- 500 B.C.E.** Greeks of Ionia (Asia Minor) rebel against Persian rulers
- 490 B.C.E.** Athenians repel Persians at Marathon
- 482 B.C.E.** Xerxes 'rouses up everything against Greece' (Daniel 11:2)
- 480 B.C.E.** Costly victory of Persians at Thermopylae; Persians are routed at Salamis
- 479 B.C.E.** Athenians and Spartans triumph against Persians at Plataea
- 336 B.C.E.** Alexander becomes king of Macedonia
- 331 B.C.E.** The Persian army is crushed by Alexander the Great at Gaugamela; Greece becomes the fifth world power (Daniel 8:3-8, 20-22)

### Procession of Greek cavalry

Photograph taken by courtesy of the British Museum

### The Final Outcome of All Human Power Struggles

"In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. And the kingdom itself will not be passed on to any other people. It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite."—Daniel 2:44



11,500 Spartans. To defend themselves from the cloud of arrows, the Spartans stooped beneath their shields. But, then, as a phalanx they launched a disciplined counterattack. With their longer spears and in heavier body armor, they bore down on the Persians.

Taken aback, the Persians retreated. Meanwhile, the Athenians had overpowered the Greek traitors. Mardonius' army—with the protection of their cavalry—hurriedly returned across the river. Mardonius was knocked from his mount and slain. The Persian army, deprived of its leader, broke and ran.

At the same time, on the Ionian shore of Mycale across the sea, the Greek fleet scored a major victory over the Persian navy, which had barely managed to survive the defeat at Salamis a year earlier. The combined forces of the mighty Persian army had been dealt a decisive blow.

#### A Crippled "Bear"

Persia's military forces would never again fight on European soil. The Persian army was utterly destroyed as a fighting machine. Thereafter, according to the book *A Soaring Spirit*, "Xerxes retired to his capitals and the delights of his harem. From time to time he would rouse himself to push forwards his father's construction projects, adding palaces and monumental halls to the Persian ceremonial capital, Persepolis. But he accomplished very little else of significance."

Protected behind the safety of court life, the once ambitious conqueror let his interests narrow down to a petty circle of political maneuvering and court gossip. Even there, however, he was disappointed. In 475 B.C.E., a cabal of plotters had him murdered in his own bed.

*A Soaring Spirit* comments: "In the succession of Persian kings that followed—at least in the view of Greek writers who would be the chief source of information about the

empire in this period—none displayed the energy or brilliance of Cyrus or Darius. Under Xerxes' son, Artaxerxes I, money, not troops, became the principal instrument of Persian imperial policy. He used the coin of the realm to meddle in Greek affairs, paying first one [city-state] and then another to stir up trouble . . . The coins, gold darics, bore an image of Darius holding a bow and quiver of arrows; the Greeks referred to them derisively as 'Persian archers.'"

Conspiracy and murder would continue to tarnish the royal house of the Persian Empire with blood until its eventual demise. The empire slipped into steady decline, and the Persian dynasty began to lose its grip on power and its ability to govern.

Despite last-ditch efforts to strengthen the regime, the royal house was ready to topple by the time Alexander the Great—a man whose imperialistic vision and ambitions matched those of Cyrus—began to march through the empire's vastness in the fourth century B.C.E. Once again, Bible prophecy would be fulfilled right down to the last detail.

#### CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS

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## WATCHING THE WORLD

### Problems With Peacekeeping

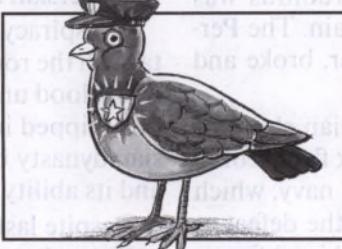
"A decade ago, UN peace missions were so highly regarded that they were collectively awarded the Nobel Peace Prize," states the Toronto newspaper *The Globe and Mail*. "Now, members of peacekeeping missions—civilians, police and soldiers—reap contempt as well as congratulations." Why the change? "A key problem is the nature of modern conflict. Many of today's wars are not fought by well-organized armies with clear goals and doctrine, but by factions and warlords employing teenaged soldiers for mercenary ends. They are fought for control of a state, not between states," says the *Globe*. As a result, the paper adds, "instead of monitoring formal ceasefires between nations," the United Nations peacekeeping forces "find themselves interposed between warring factions whose goals—sometimes even their leadership structures—are unclear, and whose desire for peace is suspect."

### New Credo Brings Violence to Sports

According to the French magazine *L'Express*, French soccer authorities handled a record 20,825 disciplinary proceedings for the 1997/98 season, and violent incidents also increased considerably in other sports. Why so much violence? According to researcher Richard Pfister, one reason is "the need to win. When money is preferred over prestige, when the result is emphasized more than the pleasure of playing, the implication is that anything goes."

Pfister says that such conduct, displayed with apparent impunity by people often viewed as role models, seems to excuse violence in the eyes of the young and encourages them to imitate it.

### Pigeon Post Still Useful



The police department in the Indian state of Orissa has a sophisticated communications network, but it is still not closing down its "pigeon wing," an 800-strong pigeon corps, reports *The Indian Express*. According to Mr. B. B. Panda, director general of the Orissa Police, the pigeons have been a lifeline during floods and cyclones for the past 50 years and are still practical when wireless communication breaks down. When floods devastated the town of Banki in 1982, for instance, the pigeons were the only link between the town and the district headquarters of Cuttack. The first Orissa unit was started in 1946, with a Belgian breed called the homer, capable of flying up to 500 miles nonstop at 50 to 55 miles an hour. The birds, which have a life span of 15 to 20 years, are at present kept in three centers under the care of 34 constables. Mr. Panda stated: "The pigeons might appear archaic in the days of cellular phones but

they continue to render yeoman service to the state."

### Children Lack Schooling

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, defined the fundamental right to education. While many commendable efforts have been made, this goal is still far from being reached. "Fifty years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there were still more than 130 million children of primary school age who did not go to classes," reports the German daily *Allgemeine Zeitung Mainz*. "This means that 20 percent of all children in the world did not get a basic education." According to Reinhard Schlagintweit, the head of United Nations Children's Fund, Germany, it would take about \$7 billion to send all children worldwide to primary school. This is much less than the money spent in Europe each year on ice cream or the amount spent yearly in the United States on cosmetics, and it is only a fraction of the world's arms expenditures.

### Disaster-Prone Asia

"Six of the world's 10 main disasters last year occurred in Asia, claiming 27,000 lives and costing US\$38 billion," notes the *South China Morning Post*. This includes devastating floods in Bangladesh and China and the Indonesian forest fires that spread haze to neighboring countries. "Asia is affected by more natural disasters than any other region in the world," says the United Nations Economic and Social

Commission for Asia and the Pacific. "In Asia in particular, risk reduction will become one of the major challenges of the 21st century."

#### Why You Can't Tickle Yourself

"A well-placed tickle will reduce even a grown adult to jelly. But the most hypersensitive victim can at least rest easy in the knowledge that he can't tickle himself," states *The Economist*. Why not? According to recent research, the answer lies in the cerebellum, the part of the brain that coordinates motor activity. Researchers believe that the cerebellum not only coordinates actions but is also involved in predicting the sensory consequences of them. Thus, when people try to tickle themselves, the cerebellum anticipates the sensation and suppresses it. When tickled by someone else, the stimulus and the cerebellum's calculations do not coincide, and the sensation is not suppressed. *The New York Times*, in a similar article, summed it up this way: "The brain can tell which tickling sensations are caused by one's own actions and gives them low priority, so that it can be more receptive to sensations from outside sources that may be more urgent."

#### Morse Code's Successor

The Morse code, invented in 1832, "has played an incalculable part in the development of trade and history itself," acknowledges Roger Cohn, of the United Nations agency that regulates world shipping. It had been an international standard used by ships in distress ever since 1912, the year the *Titanic* signaled SOS—three dots, three dashes, three dots—says *The To-*

*ronto Star*. But as of February 1, 1999, a new satellite system, introduced by the International Maritime Organization, will automatically transmit a package of data to "a network of rescue co-ordination centres around the world" when a "hot key" on a shipboard satellite terminal is pressed. In addition to a vessel's nine-digit identity number, other data sent "can include the time, ship's position and the type of distress—unspecified, or one of 12 categories that range from fire through flooding and listing to piracy," says the *Star*. It adds, nostalgically: "Morse was used to give the world some of the best news in history: It was used to broadcast the ceasefires of both World Wars."

#### Health Problems Linked to Shoes



"Medical opinion suggests that one in six people have serious foot problems, which can often be linked to shoes," reports *The Toronto Star*. Bad knees, sore hips, lower-back pain, and headaches may also be telling you to look at the shoes you wear. "The most important thing to remember is that shoes don't break in, feet do," says the *Star*. "Don't buy shoes expecting them to conform to your feet. If they don't feel comfortable in the store, don't buy them." Shop for shoes in the afternoon, since

"feet usually swell slightly over the course of a day," and "fit the shoe to the width of the ball of your foot, rather than fitting it to the heel." Women have a statistically higher rate of foot problems and deformities. It is thought that this is because 90 percent of them "wear shoes that are too small and too tight for their feet" and "high heels often lead to many of the most serious foot deformities." The paper adds: "It's also important to remember that pain occurs after damage has already been done."

#### Bible Publishing in China

"China has published more than 20 million copies of the Holy Bible in the past two decades and the Bible [has] become one of the most popular books in the country since the beginning of the 1990s," says the Xinhua News Agency. According to Professor Feng Jinyuan, of the Institute of World Religions under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Christians in China have the right to purchase two copies. Over 20 different editions have already been published, "including English editions with Chinese translations, Chinese editions in traditional and simplified characters, editions in ethnic minority languages and in both portable and desk forms." Additionally, a number of books containing Bible stories have been published and are expected to surpass Bible sales. "The Bible has ranked 32nd on the list of the most influential books in the country since the early 1990s," says the article, but "generally speaking, religion exerts less influence upon the Chinese people than on the people in the West."

## FROM OUR READERS

**Hand Washing** I am 11 and want to thank you for the article "Wash and Dry Your Hands!" (November 22, 1998) It encouraged me to wash my hands before eating and after using the toilet. In my town, infections are common, so the article was very useful.

M. F., Italy

**Simple Pleasures** Thank you for the "Watching the World" item "Children Prefer Simple Pleasures." (November 22, 1998) I live apart from my children, and I am allowed to see them only once every three months. I didn't know what to do when we spent time together, so I would do a lot of planning, fearing that they would get bored. Right before our day together arrived, I read this item. It came at exactly the right time!

M. Y., Japan

**Snakes** Thank you very much for your article "Common Fallacies About Snakes." (October 22, 1998) The seven points you brought out certainly cleared up a lot of public ignorance concerning these fascinating, yet misunderstood, animals.

R. K., United States

**Preventing Burns** I was concerned when I read the item "Precautions While Cooking," in "Watching the World." (December 8, 1998) It referred to a newsletter that suggested cooking on the front burners of the stove. However, this contradicts advice I've heard given to parents—that they should always use back burners, which children cannot reach.

M. B., England

*We appreciate this safety reminder. The advice we reported on was primarily directed to elderly ones, some of whom have had sleeves catch on fire while reaching for pots on the back burner. Mothers with young children, though, naturally keep cooking pots out of their reach.—ED.*

**What Jesus Looked Like** Many thanks for the series of articles "Jesus—What Did He Really Look Like? What Is He Now?" (December 8, 1998) Jesus is often portrayed incorrectly in churches, pictures, and films. I particularly liked reading about the part Jesus is playing now and will play in the future. He is not just a small baby in a manger.

M. W., Austria

I have never been so delighted with an article! I am convinced that this series will help many people to trust Jehovah's Witnesses and our magazines.

B. D., Yugoslavia

It was wonderful to read that Jesus was not a weakling and that he did not go about with a permanent melancholy expression on his face, as popular art has portrayed. Instead, he was a manly and robust person who imitated his Father, "the happy God."—1 Timothy 1:11.

R. O. R., Brazil

On page 8, you stated that "God transferred the life of Jesus to the womb of a Jewish virgin." Since Jesus was perfect, does this mean that no trace of Adam's genes was in him?

J. G., United States

*Prior to Jesus' conception, the angel Gabriel told Mary: "Holy spirit will come upon you, and power of the Most High will overshadow you. For that reason also what is born will be called holy, God's Son." (Luke 1:35) Evidently, God's holy spirit caused an ovum in Mary's womb to become fertile, transferring the life of God's firstborn Son from the spirit realm to earth. The holy spirit no doubt saw to it that this Son's perfect male life force canceled out any Adamic imperfection in Mary's ovum, while retaining certain genetic traits. Likely, Jesus resembled Mary.—ED.*

# Religion's SLIDE in Britain

BY AWAKE!  
CORRESPONDENT  
IN BRITAIN

**T**HE SUNDAY TIMES of London reported that 1,500 Britons are abandoning mainstream churches every week. The Roman Catholic Church has lost some 600,000 attenders since 1980, and the Church of England—still “hemorrhaging” 600 each week—has fewer than one million at its services, less than half the attenders of 50 years ago. Following the 1992 General Synod decision to ordain women, about 500 Church of England clergymen have left.

Many who have left the churches often feel angry and disappointed that nobody tried to stop them from leaving or followed through to see what could be done to help them once they had gone, reported *The Times*. Some “said that the Church failed to connect with their life,” the paper observed.

British society is living off “a dwindling supply of spiritual and moral capital,” asserted cardinal Basil Hume, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Westminster. What has caused this drain? “A Famine of the Word of God,” headlined the *Catholic Herald*. It stated: “At Mass we are read extracts from the Old and New Testaments, but are rarely, if ever, given their context. . . . Lives of the saints and various books of spiritual reflection are fine, but they are not adequate as a key to unlock

the Scriptures.” This article concluded that a “modern, biblical presentation with a pastoral goal” is lacking.

In a letter to the Lincolnshire *Boston Target*, a reader said: “People are losing their faith in religions . . . What do these church minis-

ters do all day? They certainly do not go out like Christ did and meet the people . . . The only religion that seems to care are the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who go out and meet people and are genuinely involved in preaching the truth—they invite you to come to their services, they talk about and do something about environmental matters. I am not a JW, but I do respect these people and I listen to them.”

Have you ever attended meetings at the local Kingdom Hall? There you will find instruction that is both stimulating and helpful. Would you like to have your Bible questions answered? Last year, in 233 lands, Jehovah’s Witnesses devoted more than one billion hours of their time free of charge to helping people understand the Bible, conducting more than four million home Bible studies. Jehovah’s Witnesses view this Bible educational activity as the most important work being done at this time. We invite you to find out why.—Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20.



# A PUBLICATION WITH A PURPOSE

**A** MANAGER of a public library in Prague, Czech Republic, put a two-page evaluation of *Awake!* on an information board in the library. Among the things he wrote were the following:

"I am not one of Jehovah's Witnesses. I am neither a devoted supporter nor a deep-rooted opposer of the Watch Tower Society. Nevertheless, I cannot but warmly recommend the *Awake!* magazine, which I have been reading for a while. Just reading its title once a day would greatly benefit you. However, not only the title but the very contents of this magazine are a fine supplement to commercial magazines . . ."

*Awake!* has a well-thought-out concept. It offers articles on topics that other magazines are reluctant to publish for various reasons. It points to implications, educates in global consciousness . . . *Awake!* does not judge. It offers facts and the views of authorities, shows pros and cons, confronts current problems with Bible quotations, and leaves the reader to judge for himself. Moreover, *Awake!* asks—and teaches the readers to ask—questions."

On page 4 of each magazine, the section "Why *Awake!* Is Published" explains: "Most important, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure new world that is about to replace the present wicked, lawless system of things."

W<sup>hat</sup>—*Witnesses* also? We invite you to find out more about our magazine. It is the most important news periodical in the world. It is the official publication of the Watch Tower Society, a non-profit organization that is dedicated to spreading the good news of God's Kingdom throughout the world.