

# Awake!

FEBRUARY 8, 2003



## CHILD PROSTITUTION A Tragic Reality

# Awake!

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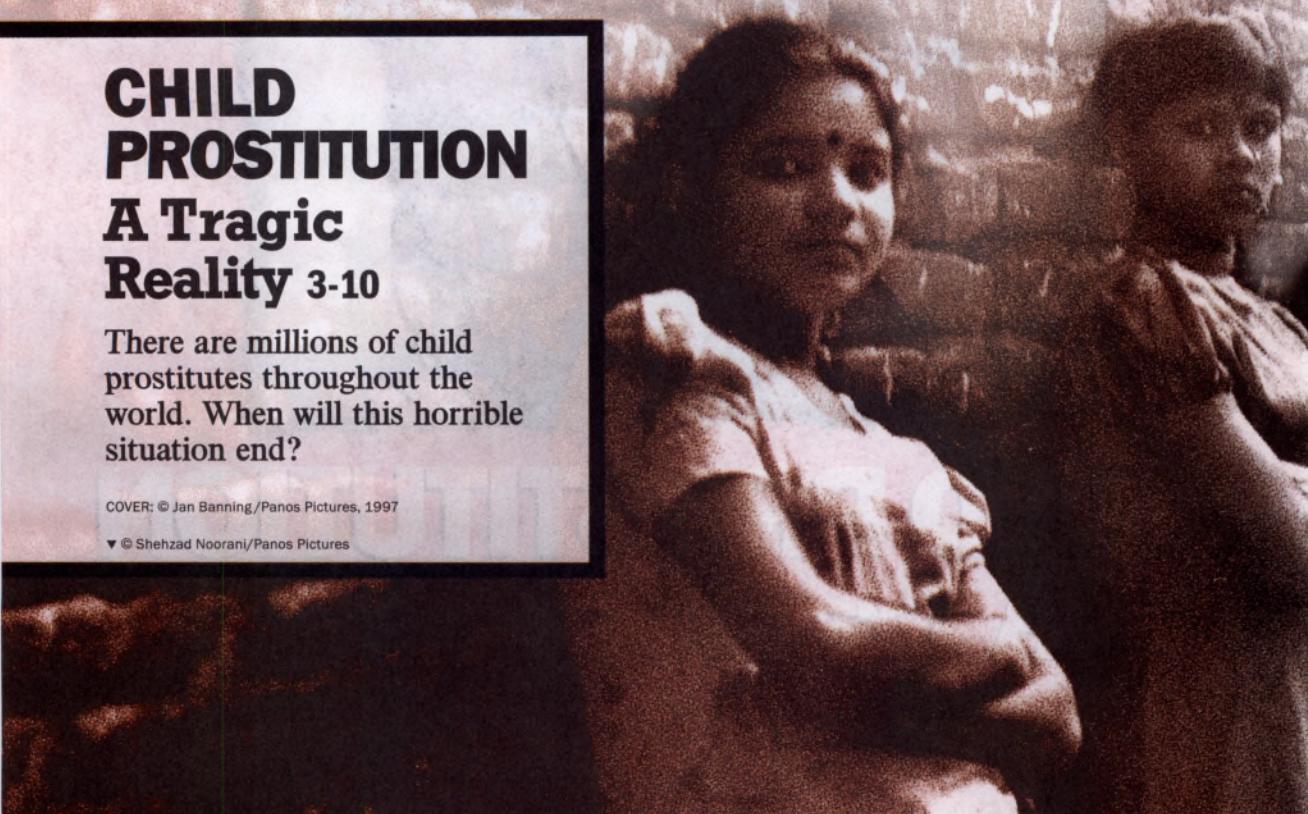
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There are millions of child prostitutes throughout the world. When will this horrible situation end?

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# "A BARBAROUS CRIME"

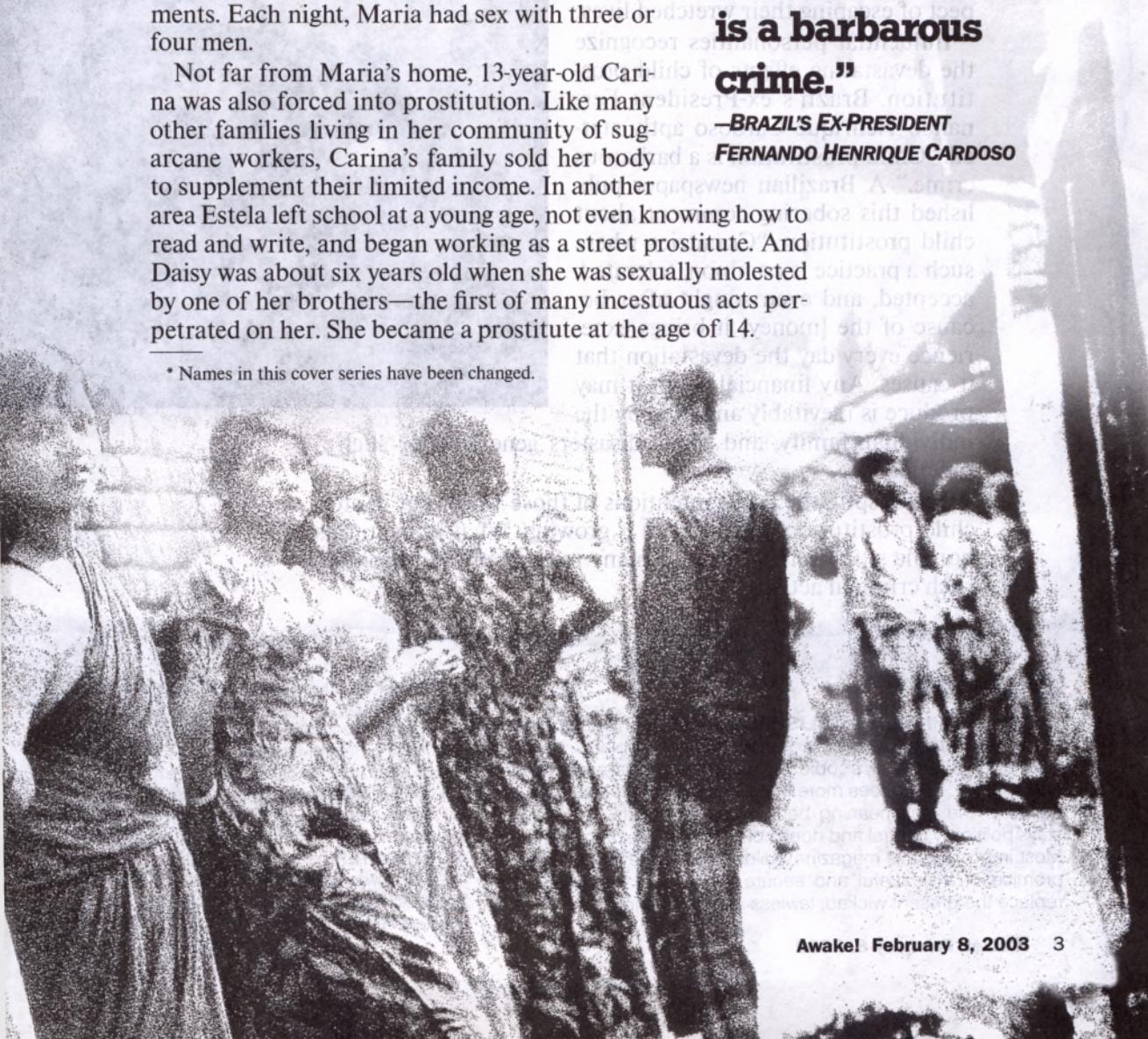
MARIA\* became a child prostitute when she was 14 years old. She adopted this horrible life-style at the insistence of her own mother, who told her that she was beautiful and that men would like her very much. Besides, she would earn a lot of money. In the evenings Maria's mother took her to a motel where they made contacts. The mother remained nearby to receive the payments. Each night, Maria had sex with three or four men.

Not far from Maria's home, 13-year-old Carina was also forced into prostitution. Like many other families living in her community of sugarcane workers, Carina's family sold her body to supplement their limited income. In another area Estela left school at a young age, not even knowing how to read and write, and began working as a street prostitute. And Daisy was about six years old when she was sexually molested by one of her brothers—the first of many incestuous acts perpetrated on her. She became a prostitute at the age of 14.

\* Names in this cover series have been changed.

**"Child prostitution  
is a barbarous  
crime."**

—BRAZIL'S EX-PRESIDENT  
**FERNANDO HENRIQUE CARDOSO**

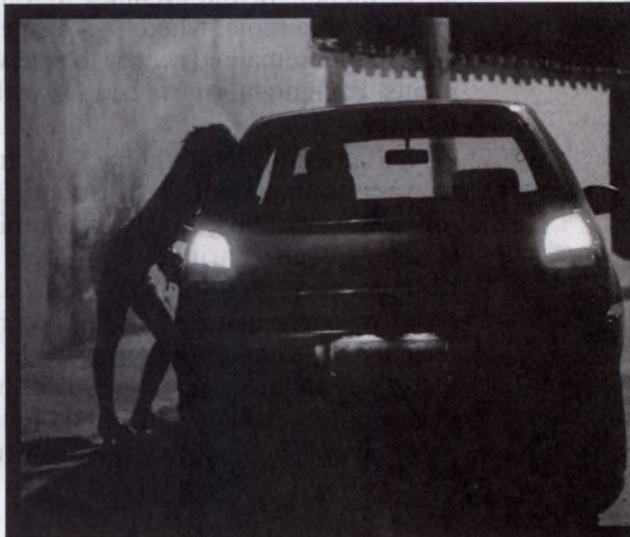


**"All forms of sexual exploitation are incompatible with human dignity, and therefore violate fundamental human rights, regardless of the age, gender, race, ethnicity or class of the victim."—UNESCO SOURCES**

In many parts of the world, the problem of child prostitution is a frightening reality. The results are tragic. Often, child prostitutes, whether occasional or full-time, also become involved in crime and drug abuse. Many of them feel frustrated and worthless, seeing little or no prospect of escaping their wretched lives.

Influential personalities recognize the devastating effects of child prostitution. Brazil's ex-President Fernando Henrique Cardoso aptly stated: "Child prostitution is a barbarous crime." A Brazilian newspaper published this sobering comment about child prostitution: "Countries where such a practice is common, tolerated, accepted, and even sought after because of the [money] it brings experience every day the devastation that it causes. Any financial profit it may produce is inevitably annulled by the individual, family, and social disasters generated by such a practice."

Yet, despite the noble intentions of those who want to stop child prostitution, the problem is growing. What leads to this horrific situation? Why do so many tolerate or even promote such criminal activity?



## Awake!®

**THIS JOURNAL IS PUBLISHED** 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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# WHY A GROWING PROBLEM?

**D**ID you know that trafficking in humans represents the world's third-largest criminal activity, surpassed only by drug and weapons trafficking? According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, there is a steady increase in all kinds of prostitution.

In one Latin-American country, a Congressional Committee of Inquiry reported that there are more than 500,000 female child prostitutes, even though prostitution is illegal.

In another land, there are about 300,000 child prostitutes on the streets, especially in areas where there is drug traffic.

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**Semimonthly Languages:** Afrikaans, Albanian, Arabic, Cebuano, Croatian, Czech,<sup>#</sup>, Danish,<sup>#</sup>, Dutch, English,<sup>#</sup>, Estonian, Finnish,<sup>#</sup>, French,<sup>#</sup>, German,<sup>#</sup>, Greek, Hungarian, Iloko, Indonesian, Italian,<sup>#</sup>, Japanese,<sup>#</sup>, Korean,<sup>#</sup>, Latvian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese,<sup>#</sup>, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish,<sup>#</sup>, Swahili, Swedish,<sup>#</sup>, Tagalog, Ukrainian

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## A High Price

When she was merely six years old, Daisy was sexually molested by one of her brothers. As a result, she stayed with her older brother until at 14 years of age she began to work in a nightclub. After a few days, Daisy fell ill. When she recovered, the owners confronted her with a debt, forcing her to work as a prostitute. About a year later, she was still in debt, and it seemed that she would

never become free. However, a sailor paid the rest of her debt, taking her to another city, where he treated her like a slave. She left him, and later she lived with another man for three years, after which they married. Because of many serious marital problems, she attempted suicide three times.

Eventually, both she and her husband began to study the Bible. But Daisy felt unworthy of becoming one of Jehovah's Wit-

nesses. When she was shown from the Bible that Jehovah God accepts people who make the needed changes, she dedicated her life to him. Daisy made great efforts to do what is right, but she didn't feel that it was enough and thus had periods of depression. Happily, though, she has accepted help to overcome the traumas caused by sexual abuse and her life as a child prostitute and to achieve and maintain balance.

In Asian countries about one million young girls are reportedly used as prostitutes in conditions comparable to slavery. Some lands have the reputation of being meccas for child prostitution and sex tourism.

Because of the high incidence of sexually transmitted diseases, such as AIDS, customers are willing to pay far higher prices for children who are considered more likely to be virgins and thus less likely to be infected. "The fear of AIDS has caused men to seek ever younger girls and boys, which makes the problem even worse," explains Luíza Nagib Eluf of Brazil's Ministry of Justice. She said: "Sexual exploitation of girls and teenagers is the most serious social problem among poor women in Brazil."

### Poverty and Child Prostitution

Child prostitution thrives in an environment of misery and poverty. According to one government official, child exploitation and prostitution in her country are "clearly linked to the disintegration of the family and are fruits of misery and hunger." Some parents claim that poverty led them to sell their children into prostitution. Street children resort to prostitution because they see it as their only means of survival.

The newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo* explains that a girl may end up as a prostitute by running with a street gang. In order to get something to eat, she may steal and only occasionally sell her body. Next, she becomes a professional prostitute.

Sometimes teenagers are sent to other countries to work as prostitutes. "The money sent by emigrant prostitutes to their families

### Poverty often contributes to child prostitution

often amounts to considerable sums given the poverty of some Asian and African countries," reports *UNESCO Sources*. "Prostitution within these countries is also encouraged, with tourists from wealthy countries coming deliberately to take advantage of the 'services' provided by young people and children."

Describing the dangers that street children who are prostitutes are exposed to in a Latin-American city, *Time* magazine reports: "Some

### **Child prostitutes are often involved in drugs**

of the prostitutes are as young as 12. Frequently the products of broken homes, they sleep wherever they can find a space during the day, and cruise the discos, where the sailors hang out, at night."

Under the influence of drugs, a child prostitute may be subjected to indignities she normally would never agree to. For example, according to *Vejá* magazine, the police found 92 videotapes in which a medical doctor recorded barbarous torture sessions of more than 50 women, some of these underage.

Despite this gruesome reality, a young prostitute stated: "If I looked for work, I would not be able to earn enough to eat



## **People Can Change**

When Jesus Christ was on earth, he felt pity for afflicted, sinful people. He understood that prostitutes, regardless of their age, could change their lifestyle. Jesus even said to the religious leaders: "Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and the harlots are going ahead of you into the kingdom of God." (Matthew 21:31) Although despised because of their way of life, such righthearted ones received forgiveness by their faith in the Son of God. Repentant sinners were willing to abandon their lives of prostitution in order to receive the blessings of God's Kingdom. Thereafter, they lived in harmony with God's righteous standards. Today also, people of all kinds accept the truth from God's Word and change their way of life.

Consider what happened to Maria, Carina, and Estela, mentioned in the first article. In addition to resisting pressure from her mother to continue as a prostitute, Maria had to put up a strong fight to stop abusing drugs. She explains: "I used drugs to suffocate my feelings of worthlessness for living a life of prostitution." Maria tells how she was received by the Christian congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses: "I was impressed by the love shown by the members of the congregation. All—children and adults—treated me with respect. I observed that the married men were faithful to their wives. I am very happy to be accepted as their friend."

When she was 17 years old, Carina was visited by Jehovah's Witnesses. She began to study the Bible, although for a time she maintained her work as a prostitute. Gradually, she began

to appreciate Bible truths. So she decided to move to a distant city, and there she became one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Estela, who early in life was involved in prostitution, revelries, and heavy drinking, became interested in the Bible. She concluded, however, that God would never forgive her. In time, though, she came to understand that Jehovah God does forgive repentant ones. Now a member of the Christian congregation, married, and raising three children, Estela says: "I am very happy and thankful to Jehovah because he took me out of the mud and has accepted me in his clean organization."

These accounts support the Bible's statement that God's will is that "all sorts of men [and women] should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth."—1 Timothy 2:4.

because I have no profession. My family knows everything, and I do not want to give up this life. The body is mine, and I do as I wish with it."

Yet, these girls had never set prostitution as a goal for themselves. According to a social worker, many young prostitutes "want to marry" and dream of a "Prince Charming." While there are complex situations that lead to their taking up the life of a prostitute, one researcher claims: "The most shocking is that the majority were raped in their own homes."

#### An End to Child Prostitution?

There is hope, however, for these unfortunate children. Prostitutes of all ages have changed their course in life. (See the box "People Can Change," on page 7.) God's Word, the Bible, has helped millions of people worldwide to become good neighbors and faithful family members. Concerning peo-

ple who were formerly fornicators, adulterers, thieves, greedy persons, drunkards, we read: "That is what some of you were. But you have been washed clean, but you have been sanctified, but you have been declared righteous in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the spirit of our God."—1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

Today, as in Bible times, there are individuals who are changing their ways for the better. Still, more is needed to stem the tide of sexual exploitation. Some governments and other organizations are fighting against sex tourism and child prostitution. But, realistically, there is little that men can do to eliminate misery and poverty. Lawmakers cannot prevent the thoughts and attitudes that are at the root of immorality.

However, instead of human efforts, another means will solve all these problems—God's Kingdom. The following article will explain.

# CHILD EXPLOITATION SOON TO END!

"**I**N THE Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations has proclaimed that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance," states the preamble of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Regarding the importance of the family, it adds: "The child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding." Yet, this ideal is far from being achieved.

Just talking about a better world for children is not enough. Moral degeneration is rampant, and many people consider the situa-

tion normal. Widespread depravity and greed cannot be controlled by law enforcement. Even parents, rather than showing love and protecting their children, often contribute to the climate of permissiveness. What hope, then, do we have for an end to child prostitution?

Although this corrupt system has failed to ensure that all children are given a loving home and a secure future, our Creator will soon eliminate every kind of perversity and promiscuity, including child prostitution. Soon, surprisingly for the world, Jehovah God will intervene in human affairs by means of

## Parental Care Can Prevent Family Breakdown

- “My parents encouraged me to take advantage of my school years and to learn a profession. They did not try to impose their preferences on me, but they helped me to opt for schools that gave the course that I needed.”—Tais.
- “When my sister and I went shopping, our mother went along. Besides helping us to be economical, she also helped us to avoid clothes that were extravagant or revealing.”—Bianca.
- “When we went to parties, my parents always asked who would be present, what type of music there would be, and when the party would begin and end. At most parties we were all together as a family.”—Priscila.

- “During my infancy and adolescence, my parents and I always had excellent communication. A schoolmate noticed that and said: ‘I envy the ease with which you can talk to your parents about anything. I do not even feel free to talk with my mother, and often what I want to know I try to learn from other people.’”—Samara.

- “I was a happy adolescent. I did not see anything bad in people and was always laughing. I felt at ease with my friends and enjoyed talking about funny things with them. My parents understood that this was my personality, and they did not try to change my ways. But they kindly helped me to understand that I should be careful and proper in dealing with those of the opposite sex.”—Tais.

- “As with most other youths, I became interested in the opposite sex. My father established a certain age when I could begin courtship. I was not discontent with this. Rather, I perceived that my parents were concerned about me and wanted to protect me from future harm.”—Bianca.

- “I saw marriage as something good, especially because of the example of my parents. They always had a good relationship and maintained good communication. I remember that when I was dating, my mother gave me advice on how to act under certain circumstances and explained how this would affect my marriage.”—Priscila.



***In God's new world, no child will ever suffer mistreatment***

(Continued from page 8)

his Kingdom. Corrupters and exploiters will not escape divine judgment. Only people who love their fellowmen will survive to live in God's new world. "The upright are the ones that will reside in the earth, and the blameless are the ones that will be left over in it. As regards the wicked, they will be cut off from the very earth; and as for the treacherous, they will be torn away from it."—Proverbs 2:21, 22.

Imagine the relief when both children and adults will be able to live without degradation and sexual abuse! Even the emotional and physical harm caused by exploitation and violence will be things of the past. Former victims of sexual exploitation will be able to live without disturbing memories or afteref-

fects. "The former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart."—Isaiah 65:17.

Then, no child will be born to suffer mistreatment or sexual abuse. Happiness, love, and understanding will be no mere dream. About the inhabitants of God's new world, Isaiah 11:9 declares: "They will not do any harm or cause any ruin."

Indeed, what a joy it will be when poverty, drug abuse, unhappy families, and moral badness are no more! Peace, righteousness, and security will reign. "My people must dwell in a peaceful abiding place and in residences of full confidence and in undisturbed resting-places."—Isaiah 32:18.

# Crossword Puzzle

[www.awake.org](http://www.awake.org)

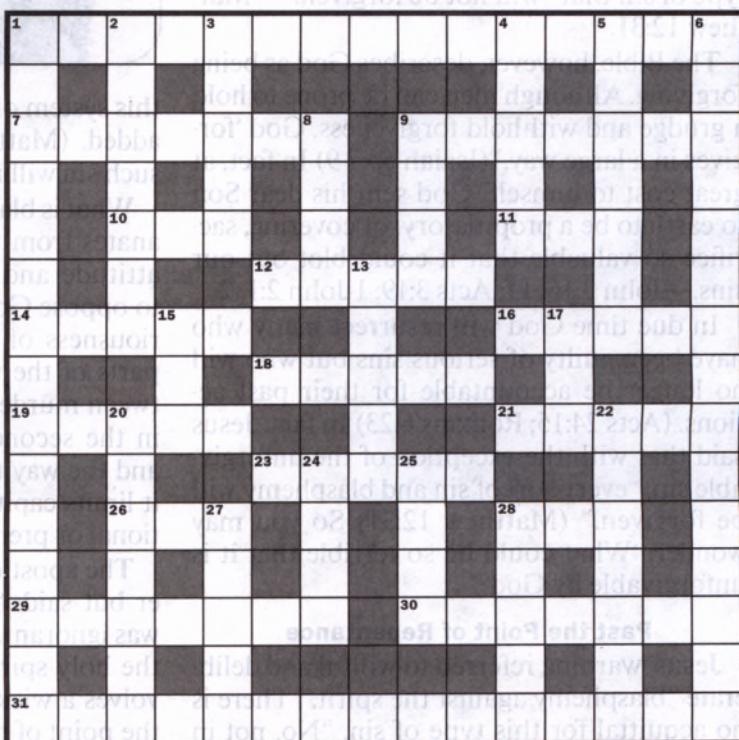
## Clues Across

1. The location where Moses and Aaron failed to sanctify Jehovah, thus losing the privilege of entering into the Promised Land [3 words] (Numbers 20:12, 13)
7. The designation of the band of raiders who stole Job's cattle and she-asses and killed his attendants (Job 1:14, 15)
9. Of Daniel's three companions, the one who was given the name Meshach while in Babylon (Daniel 1:7)
10. The fruitage of the spirit named immediately after love (Galatians 5:22)
11. Where the strong angel threw the "stone like a great millstone" to signify the rapid destruction of Babylon the Great (Revelation 18:21)
12. A Benjamite listed among the sons of Elpaal (1 Chronicles 8:17)
14. Where Gehazi took possession of the gift given to him by Naaman (2 Kings 5:24)
16. The Amorite king who refused to let the Israelites pass through his kingdom, although they promised that they would not take even a drink of water there (Numbers 21:21-23)
18. The Hittite whose son Ephron sold the cave of Machpelah to Abraham as a burial place for Sarah (Genesis 23:8, 9)
19. Proverbs says that "trembling at men" is what lays this (Proverbs 29:25)
21. The third-named fruitage of God's spirit (Galatians 5:22)
23. When Phinehas killed this Simeonite chieftain who had brought a Midianitess into his tent for the purpose of fornication, it halted the scourge that killed 24,000 Israelites (Numbers 25:6-14)
26. A constellation mentioned by Jehovah to impress on Job the wisdom and power of the Creator (Job 38:32)
28. A Gadite who lived in Bashan (1 Chronicles 5:13)
29. A bath, cab, cor, ephah, hin, homer, log, omer, and seah were all a type of this (Exodus 16:32)

30. A colonnade at a gate of the temple (1 Chronicles 26:18)
31. The apostles and older men in Jerusalem listed abstinence from blood and from fornication as part of these [2 words] (Acts 15:28, 29)

## Clues Down

1. What the queen of Sheba came to Jerusalem to see [3 words] (1 Kings 10:4)
2. One of the Levites sent out by Jehoshaphat to teach Jehovah's law in the cities of Judah (2 Chronicles 17:8)
3. Prepared (Luke 22:8)
4. Lodges (Ecclesiastes 7:9)
5. A city included by Solomon in his rebuilding program (2 Chronicles 8:6)
6. What Jehovah proclaimed the seasonal festivals of the Israelites to be [2 words] (Leviticus 23:2)
8. His son Gaddi represented the tribe of Manasseh in spying out the Promised Land (Numbers 13:11)
9. The shortest of the four Gospels
13. A son of King Rehoboam (2 Chronicles 11:19)
15. What Malchus, the slave of the high priest, lost temporarily when Peter struck him with a sword (John 18:10)
17. Frozen water (Job 37:10)
20. One of the three languages in which the Bible was originally written (Ezra 4:7)
22. They were known mostly as a wandering people, dwelling in tents and leading a pastoral life (Jeremiah 3:2)
24. Useless (1 Timothy 1:6)
25. What the Israelites were told not to do completely to the edges of their fields (Leviticus 19:9)
27. As Jesus pointed out, on the average 12 of these are of daylight (John 11:9)
28. The city where Samson was born (Judges 13:2)



Crossword Solutions Page 13

## IS THERE AN UNFORGIVABLE SIN?

**I**S THERE a punishment worse than death? Yes, death without the hope of a resurrection because one has committed an unforgivable sin. Jesus said that there is a type of sin that "will not be forgiven."—Matthew 12:31.

The Bible, however, describes God as being forgiving. Although men can be prone to hold a grudge and withhold forgiveness, God 'forgives in a large way.' (Isaiah 55:7-9) In fact, at great cost to himself, God sent his dear Son to earth to be a propitiatory, or covering, sacrifice so valuable that it could blot out our sins.—John 3:16, 17; Acts 3:19; 1 John 2:1, 2.

In due time God will resurrect many who have been guilty of serious sins but who will no longer be accountable for their past actions. (Acts 24:15; Romans 6:23) In fact, Jesus said that with the exception of the unforgivable sin, "every sort of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven." (Matthew 12:31) So you may wonder, 'What could be so terrible that it is unforgivable by God?'

### Past the Point of Repentance

Jesus' warning referred to willful and deliberate "blasphemy against the spirit." There is no acquittal for this type of sin. "No, not in



this system of things nor in that to come," he added. (Matthew 12:31, 32) Those guilty of such sin will not be resurrected.

What is blasphemy against the spirit? It emanates from the heart, revealing a malicious attitude and intent. The purposeful intent to oppose God's holy spirit intensifies the seriousness of this sin. To illustrate: In some parts of the world, the law distinguishes between murder in the first degree and murder in the second degree on the basis of intent and the way the murder was committed, and it limits capital punishment (death) to intentional or premeditated murder.

The apostle Paul was formerly a blasphemer but said: "I was shown mercy, because I was ignorant." (1 Timothy 1:13) To sin against the holy spirit is to oppose it *willfully*. It involves a wicked heart condition that reaches the point of no return.

**Some Pharisees committed  
the unforgivable sin**

Paul was evidently referring to this kind of sin when he wrote: “It is impossible as regards those who have once for all been enlightened, and who have tasted the heavenly free gift, and who have become partakers of holy spirit, and who have tasted the fine word of God and powers of the coming system of things, but who have fallen away, to revive them again to repentance.” (Hebrews 6:4-6) The apostle also said: “If we practice sin *willfully* after having received the accurate knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice for sins left.”—Hebrews 10:26.

It was the conduct of some religious leaders in his day that prompted Jesus to warn against the unforgivable sin. But they did not heed his warning. In fact, they had him killed. Later they heard undeniable evidence that the holy spirit had done something miraculous. They were told that Jesus had been brought back from the dead! It was clear that Jesus was the Christ! Still, they acted wickedly against the holy spirit by paying the Roman soldiers to lie about Jesus’ resurrection.—Matthew 28:11-15.

**Warning to True Christians**

Why do true Christians take the warning of the unforgivable sin to heart? Because although we have accurate knowledge of God and of the activity of his spirit, a wicked heart

could develop. (Hebrews 3:12) We should be careful not to think that this could never happen to us. Consider Judas Iscariot. He was once a faithful follower of Jesus. He was chosen as one of the 12 apostles, so he must have had good qualities. But at some point he began to let wicked thoughts and desires grow, and they eventually overtook him. During the period of time he was an eyewitness of Jesus’ incredible miracles, he was stealing money. Then, for money, he knowingly betrayed the Son of God.

Some people who were once faithful Christians have purposely drawn away from God, perhaps because of bitterness, pride, or greed, and are now apostate fighters against God’s spirit. They willfully oppose what the spirit is clearly accomplishing. Have these individuals committed the unforgivable sin? Jehovah is the final Judge.—Romans 14:12.

Rather than judging others, we do well personally to guard against committing secret sins that can gradually harden our hearts. (Ephesians 4:30) And we take comfort in the fact that Jehovah will forgive us in a large way, even of serious sins that we have committed, if we are repentant.—Isaiah 1:18, 19.

**Crossword Solutions**

W	A	T	E	R	S	O	F	M	E	R	I	B	A	H
S	A	B	E	A	N	S	M	I	S	H	A	E	L	
D	I	D	U	A	T	T	L	Y						
D	I	D	U	A	T	T	L	Y						
O	J	O	Y	S	R	S	E	A	C					
M	A	H	I	Z	K	I	T	O						
O	P	H	E	L	A	S	I	H	O					
S	N	A	R	E	A	P	E	A	C					
F	A	Z	O	H	A	R	C	V						
L	A	S	H	D	E	Z	I	A	T					
O	M	O	L	A	O	B								
M	E	A	S	U	R	E	P	O	R	T	I	C	O	
O	I	I	R				A	A	N					
N	E	C	E	S	S	A	R	V	T	H	I	N	G	

# A Fence That Affects the Weather

By AWAKE! WRITER IN AUSTRALIA

IT ONCE split the state of Western Australia from top to bottom. When completed in 1907, this 1,139-mile wall of wood and wire was the longest structure of its kind in the world. Its official name was the No. 1 Rabbit Proof Fence.

As its name implies, the fence was first built as a bulwark against the plague of rabbits that swarmed westward across Australia during the late 19th century. Today much of this hundred-year-old barricade is still in place. In recent years, however, it has become the focus of scientific interest for an unlikely reason. It seems that this man-made barrier is indirectly affecting local weather patterns.

Before we explore how a fence that stands little more than three feet high could have such an effect, let us learn some of the history of this remarkable construction.

## Fighting a Losing Battle

In the war against invading rabbits, up to 400 workers labored from 1901 to 1907 to build the No. 1 Rabbit Proof Fence. "Some 8,000 tonnes of materials were carried by ship and then railed to depots, before being hauled overland by horse, camel and donkey teams to the remote fence construction sites," according to the Western Australia Department of Agriculture.

On either side of the fence, workmen cleared a ten-foot-wide swath through the vegetation. Some of the felled timber was used for fence posts, and where there were no trees, metal posts were imported. On completion, the fence line served not only as a barrier to rabbits but also as a rugged road that spanned the continent.

By funneling the advancing rabbits into holding yards, where they died, the fence acted like a giant net. The rabbits, however, climbed over parts of the fence. How? As they pushed relentlessly westward, they climbed over the dead bodies of other rabbits piled high against the wire and thus swarmed across. Two additional fences

were built radiating off the first fence. The combined network of fences stretched for 2,023 miles.

## A Tribute to Human Endurance

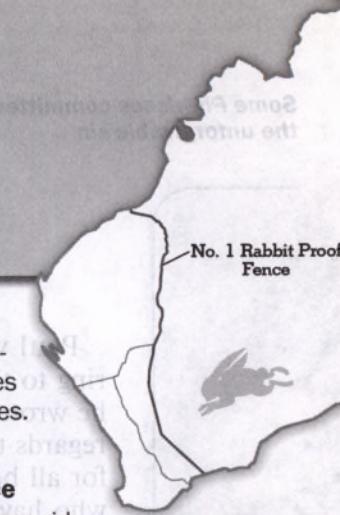
A handful of boundary riders, such as F. H. Broomhall, patrolled this massive barrier. In his book *The Longest Fence in the World*, Broomhall says: "The duties of the patrolman . . . were to keep the Fence and the track running alongside it in repair . . . , to cut scrub and timber to the required width on both sides of the Fence [and] to keep gates, which were situated roughly every 20 miles [32 kilometers] along the Fence, in good order and to empty the trap yards [of rabbits]."

The boundary rider's job must have been among the loneliest occupations in the world. With only his camels for company, each patrolman was charged with tending miles of fence line, which seemed to stretch endlessly toward the horizon. Some patrolmen lacked even the companionship of camels, since they were required to bump their way along their assigned fence line on a bicycle. Today what remains of the fence is patrolled in the relative comfort of four-wheel-drive vehicles.

## Not a Total Failure

While the fence may have failed to halt the rabbit plague, it has proved to be an effective barrier against another mischief-maker—one of Australia's native birds, the emu. In 1976 more than 100,000 of these giant flightless birds decided to migrate toward the fertile croplands west of the fence. The fence halted their progress, and although 90,000 birds had to be destroyed, much of that year's harvest was saved from disaster.

Since this crisis, 725 miles of the fence has been reinforced or realigned to protect Western Australia's vulnerable farmlands from migrating





Rabbits

Patrolling the fence,  
early 20th century

Emus



Stretching 1,139 miles, the No. 1 Rabbit Proof Fence was once the longest unbroken fence line in the world. The fence separates wilderness from farmland, thus creating a weather wall.

emus and roving packs of wild dogs.\* As a result, the fence has become a line of demarcation. To the east lies the disheveled wilderness of Australia's heartland. To the west spread the manicured fields of man-made agriculture.

#### An Unexpected Weather Wall

It is this drastic contrast in vegetation that may explain the fence's apparent effect on the weather. The science magazine *The Helix* says: "Incredible as it seems, rainfall has increased east of the fence and decreased west of the fence." Thus, the native vegetation in the east enjoys a consistent natural water supply, while farmers in the west must increasingly rely on irrigation. Providing one possible reason for these changes, the magazine explains: "The shallow-rooted crop plants in the farmed areas don't transpire as much water as the more deeply rooted native vegetation."

Commenting on another factor, Tom Lyons, a professor of atmospheric science, says: "Our thesis is that because the native vegetation is so much darker than the agricultural land, it releases more heat to the atmosphere leading to . . . turbulence which in turn assists in cloud formation."

The Rabbit Proof Fence may not have saved the farmers of Western Australia from the rabbit plague, but its apparent effect on the weather and the lessons this teaches about the need for farsighted land management may yet prove valuable.

\* This fence is now known as the State Barrier Fence.

All color pictures: Department of Agriculture, Western Australia; top center: Courtesy of Battye Library Image number 003582D



# FAITH UNDER TRIAL in Nazi Europe

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AS TOLD BY ANTON LETONJA

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**On March 12, 1938, Hitler's troops crossed the Austrian border. Radios blared marching songs and political slogans.**

**Waves of patriotism swept over my homeland, Austria.**



**A**FTER Hitler's takeover, spirits ran high in Austria. Many hoped that his "Thousand-Year Reich" would end poverty and unemployment. Even Catholic priests, caught up in the patriotic fervor gripping the nation, gave the Hitler salute.

Though only a lad of 19, I was not swayed by Hitler's promises. I did not believe that any human government could solve mankind's problems.

#### Learning Bible Truths

I was born on April 19, 1919, in Donawitz, Austria, the third and youngest child in our family. Father was a hardworking coal miner. In 1923 he took our family to France, where he obtained work in the mining town of Liévin. Because of his political convictions, he was wary of religion, but Mother was a devout Catholic. She raised us children to believe in God, and she prayed with us each night. In time, Father's mistrust of religion grew to the point that he forbade Mother to attend church.

In the late 1920's, we met Vinzenz Platajs, whom we called Vinko, a youth of Yugoslav

descent. He was in contact with the Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then known. Shortly afterward one of the Bible Students began visiting our family. Since Father had forbidden Mother to attend church, she asked Vinko if God could be worshiped at home. He pointed to Acts 17:24, which says that God "does not dwell in handmade temples," and explained that the home is a proper place to worship him. She was pleased and began attending meetings in the homes of the Bible Students.

Father demanded that she stop that nonsense, as he called it. To keep us from associating with the Bible Students, he insisted that we all attend Mass on Sundays! Since Mother staunchly refused to go, Father was determined that I serve as an altar boy. Though respecting Father's wishes in this regard, Mother continued to inculcate Bible principles in my heart and mind and take me with her to the meetings of the Bible Students.

In 1928, Vinko and my sister, Josephine—or Pepi, as we called her—symbolized their dedication to Jehovah by water baptism. Later they married. The next year their daughter,

Fini, was born in Liévin. Three years later they were invited to take up the full-time ministry in Yugoslavia, where the work of the Witnesses was under restrictions. Despite many difficulties, their joy and zeal for Jehovah's service remained undiminished. Their fine example instilled in me the desire to become a full-time minister.

### Spiritual Growth

Sadly, our parents' differences led to a divorce in 1932. I returned to Austria with Mother, while my older brother, Wilhelm (Willi), remained in France. After that, I had little contact with Father. He remained negative toward us till his dying day.

Mother and I settled in Gamlitz, a village in Austria. She regularly discussed Bible-based publications with me, since there were no nearby congregations. Happily, Eduard Wohinz cycled to our house from Graz twice a month to impart spiritual encouragement, a trip of almost 60 miles each way!

At the outset of Hitler's reign of terror in 1938, Brother Wohinz was arrested. We were grief-stricken to learn that he was gassed to death in a euthanasia institute at Linz. His remarkable faith strengthened us to continue serving Jehovah faithfully.

### 1938—A Fateful Year

The work of the Witnesses had been banned in Austria in 1935. When Hitler's troops moved into Austria in 1938, our ministry became extremely risky. The neighborhood knew that Mother and I were Jehovah's Witnesses, so we decided to keep a low profile. I even started spending the nights in a barn to make it more difficult for the Nazis to get hold of me.

By early 1938, I had completed my basic education and had begun working in a bakery. Since I refused to say "Heil Hitler" or to become a member of the Hitler Youth organi-

zation, I was dismissed from my job. But I became more determined than ever to symbolize my dedication to Jehovah God by water baptism.

Mother and I were baptized on April 8, 1938. One night, we and seven others gathered in an isolated cabin in the woods. After the baptism talk, at ten-minute intervals, one by one we walked down a narrow lane to the laundry. There we were baptized in a concrete trough.

On April 10, 1938, mock elections were held on the issue of Austria's annexation to Germany. The appeal "Yes for Hitler!" appeared on posters all over the country. Mother and I were not required to vote, since we were stateless after our long stay in France—a circumstance that saved my life later on. Franz Ganster, from Klagenfurt in southern Austria, regularly brought us copies of *The Watchtower*. We were thus able to draw spiritual strength from God's Word before World War II started raging.

### My Brother, Willi

Willi, four years older than I was, had not communicated with Mother and me since we had left France over nine years earlier. Though Mother had instructed him in the Bible in his youth, he was deluded into believing that Hitler's political program was the key to a glorious future. In May 1940, a French court

*Our family in 1930 (left to right): me, Pepi, Father, Willi, Mother, and Vinko*



sentenced Willi to two years' imprisonment for his illegal activities as a Nazi. But he was soon released, when German troops invaded France. On that occasion he sent us a card from Paris. We were happy to know that he was alive yet shocked to learn what he had become!

During the war Willi was able to visit us often because of his good standing with the SS (*Schutzstaffel*, Hitler's elite guard). He was dazzled by Hitler's military successes. Almost every attempt on my part to call his attention to our Bible-based hope ended with his saying: "Rubbish! Look at Hitler's blitzkrieg. The Germans will soon be the lords of the world!"

During one of Willi's home leaves, in February 1942, I presented him with the book *Enemies*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses. To my great surprise, he read it in one sitting. It began to dawn on him that Hitler's regime was doomed to failure. He had been supporting an inhuman system and was determined to right his wrong without delay.

#### **Willi's Stand for Bible Truth**

When Willi visited us the following month, he was a changed man. He said: "Anton, I've taken the wrong course!"

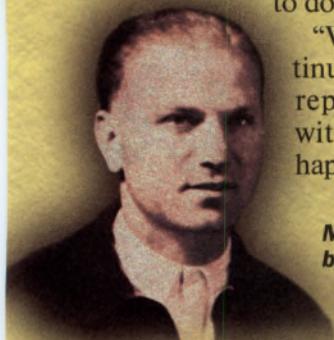
"Willi," I said, "this realization comes a bit too late."

"No," he answered, "it's not too late! The Bible says that 'you should do what you have to do as long as you are alive,' and, thank God, I'm still alive!"—Ecclesiastes 9:10.

"And what exactly do you intend to do?" I asked.

"Well, I don't intend to continue serving as a soldier," he replied. "I'm going to break with the Nazis and see what happens."

***My brother, Willi, shortly before his execution***



He immediately set off for Zagreb, Yugoslavia, to visit our sister, Pepi, once more. After attending banned meetings of the Witnesses there for a while, he was secretly baptized. At last, the prodigal son had returned!—Luke 15: 11-24.

To escape the Nazis in France, Willi attempted to cross the border into Switzerland. However, he was apprehended by the German military police. He was court-martialed in Berlin, and on July 27, 1942, he was sentenced to death for desertion. I was allowed to visit him in the Berlin-Tegel Military Prison. I was led to a small chamber, and before long Willi entered, chained to a guard. Seeing him in that state brought tears to my eyes. We were not allowed to embrace and had only 20 minutes to bid each other farewell.

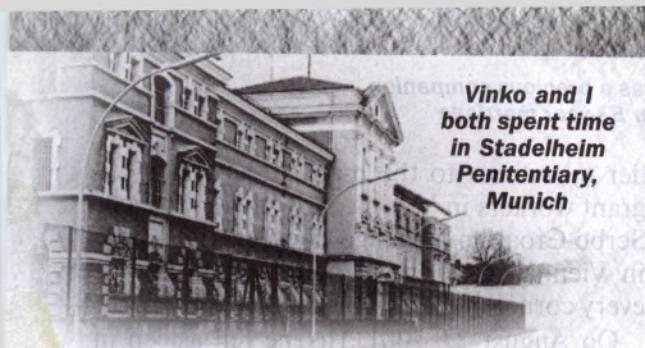
Willi noticed my tears and said: "Anton, why are you crying? You should be happy! I am so thankful to Jehovah for helping me to find the truth again! If I were to die for Hitler, I would have no hope. But dying for Jehovah means that I am sure to be resurrected and that we shall meet again!"

In his farewell letter to us, Willi wrote: "*Our dear God, whom I serve, gives me everything I need and will certainly stand by me to the end, so that I can endure and come off victorious. I repeat, be assured that I have no regrets and that I have remained steadfast in the Lord!*"

Willi was executed in Brandenburg Penitentiary, near Berlin, the following day, September 2, 1942. He was 27 years old. His example testifies to the truth of the words at Philippians 4:13: "For all things I have the strength by virtue of him who imparts power to me."

#### **Vinko's Faithfulness to Death**

The German army had marched into Yugoslavia in 1941, obliging Pepi as well as her husband, Vinko, and their 12-year-old daughter, Fini, to return home to Austria. By then most of the Witnesses in Austria had been interned in prisons or concentration camps. Being stateless—in other words, not German cit-



*Vinko and I  
both spent time  
in Stadelheim  
Penitentiary,  
Munich*

izens—they were assigned to do forced labor on a farm in southern Austria, near our home.

Later, on August 26, 1943, the Gestapo (the Nazi secret police) arrested Vinko. When Fini tried to bid her father good-bye, the chief of police hit her so hard that she went flying across the room. Vinko was often interrogated and brutally beaten by the Gestapo and was taken to the Stadelheim Penitentiary in Munich.

On October 6, 1943, the police arrested me at my place of employment, and I too was sent to the Stadelheim Penitentiary, where Vinko was. Since I could speak French fluently, I was used as a translator for French prisoners of war. During walks in the prison compound, I had opportunity to exchange news with Vinko.

Eventually Vinko was sentenced to death. He was accused of providing Witnesses with Bible literature and of giving financial help to Witness women whose husbands were in concentration camps. He was transferred to the same penitentiary near Berlin where Willi had been executed. There he was beheaded on October 9, 1944.

The last meeting Vinko had with his family was heartrending. They found him chained and battered, and it was difficult for him to embrace them on account of the chains. Fini was 14 when she last saw her father. She still remembers his final words: "Take care of your mother, Fini!"

After her father's death, Fini was snatched from her mother and placed with a Nazi family who sought to "reform" her. She was brutally beaten often. When Russian troops moved

into Austria, they shot the German family that had so mistreated her. They regarded the family as notorious Nazis.

After the war my sister continued in the full-time ministry. She served at the side of her second husband, Hans Förster, in the Swiss branch of Jehovah's Witnesses until her death in 1998. Fini has followed in her parents' footsteps and now serves the true God, Jehovah, in Switzerland.

#### **Freedom at Last!**

Early in 1945 our prison in Munich was among the buildings that were bombed. The city lay in ruins. I had already spent 18 months in prison when finally the day of my hearing before a judge came. The date was just two weeks before the war officially ended on



*Vinko's daughter, Fini, was placed with a brutal Nazi family; she remains faithful to this day*

May 8, 1945. During the hearing I was asked: "Are you willing to perform military service?"

"A prisoner is not allowed to wear a uniform or say 'Heil Hitler,'" I replied. When I was asked if I would be willing to serve in the German army, I said: "Please hand me my conscription papers, and then I will inform you of my decision!"

A few days later, the war was over, and I was told that I was free to go. Shortly afterward I moved to Graz, where a small congregation of 35 Witnesses was organized. Now eight congregations flourish in the Graz area.



*Helene was a precious companion during our 53-year marriage*

### A Loving Helper

Shortly after the war ended, I met Helene Dunst, a young schoolteacher who had been a member of the Nazi party. She was completely disillusioned with Nazism. During my initial conversation with her, she asked: "How come only you know that God's name is Jehovah and others don't?"

"Because most people don't investigate the Bible," I replied. Then I showed her God's name in the Bible.

"If the Bible says that God's name is Jehovah, then we should inform everybody of this fact!" she exclaimed. Helene began preaching Bible truths and a year later symbolized her dedication to Jehovah by water baptism. We were married on June 5, 1948.

On April 1, 1953, we became full-time ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses. Eventually we were invited to attend the 31st class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead, located near South Lansing, New York. There we enjoyed truly heartwarming association with fellow students from 64 different countries.

After our graduation we were again assigned to Austria. For a few years, our work was to visit congregations to strengthen them spiritually. Then we were invited to serve in the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Luxembourg. Later we were asked to move to the branch office in Austria, located in Vienna. In 1972, while serving there, we began learning the Serbo-Croatian language in or-

der to witness to the many Yugoslav immigrant workers in Vienna. Now there are eight Serbo-Croatian-language congregations here in Vienna, made up of people from almost every corner of Europe!

On August 27, 2001, Helene fell asleep in death. She had proved a reliable and precious helper and companion during our 53 happy years of marriage. Now the hope of the resurrection is ever dearer to my heart.

### Content in God's Love

Despite the tragedies I have experienced, I remain content with my work at the Austria branch office. A recent privilege has been to recount personal experiences in connection with the exhibition "Forgotten Victims of the Nazi Regime." Since 1997 this exhibition has toured 70 Austrian cities and towns, providing opportunity for surviving eyewitnesses of Nazi prisons and concentration camps to tell of the faith and courage that true Christians showed in the face of Nazi persecution.

I count it a privilege to have known such faithful ones personally. They serve as striking testimony to the truth of Romans 8:38, 39: "Neither death nor life nor angels nor governments nor things now here nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor any other creation will be able to separate us from God's love that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."



**Speaking at the exhibition "Forgotten Victims of the Nazi Regime"**

ILE DE NOIRMOUTIER ➤ Guérande

ILE DE RÉ ➤

# SOLAR SALT

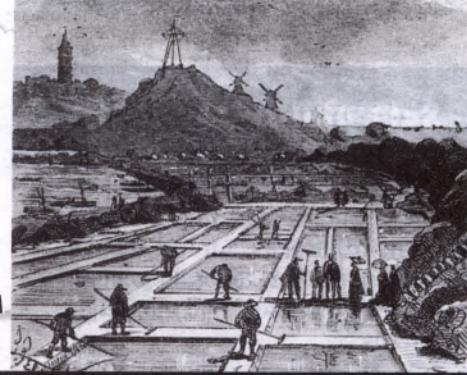
## HARVEST OF THE SUN, SEA, AND WIND

**A**T THE boundary between the sea and the land, patchworks of varying hues reflect the changing moods of the sky. Standing in a mosaic of rectangular ponds, a man known in French as a *paludier* rakes a rich harvest from the water into little white pyramids that glisten in the sunlight. Here in the marshes of Guérande and on the islands of Noirmoutier and Ré, on the Atlantic Coast, France's *paludiers* continue to use traditional methods of harvesting salt.

### "White Gold"

The use of salt pans on France's Atlantic Coast goes back to about the third century C.E. But it was not until the end of the Middle Ages that salt production really took off. Population expansion in medieval Europe vastly increased the demand for salt, since it could preserve meat and fish. To preserve four tons of herring, for example, required one ton of salt. Given that meat was a luxury for common folk, salted fish was their staple fare. Ships from all over northern Europe thus came to Brittany's shores to purchase the huge quantities of salt needed by fishermen to preserve their catch.

The fortunes being made on this "white gold" did not go unnoticed by the kings of France. In 1340 a tax on salt was established, which came to be known as the *gabelle*, from the Arabic word for tax—*qabālah*. This tax was extremely unpopular, generating bloody uprisings. What was considered most unjust was that the purchaser was obliged to pay a high price for the salt and to buy at least the minimum amount of salt stipulated, irrespective of his actual needs. What is more, privileged individuals, such as the nobility and the clergy, were exempted from the tax. Certain provinces, including Brittany, were also exempt, while others paid



only a quarter of the rate. This led to gross discrepancies in salt prices, with salt costing up to 40 times more from one province to another.

It is hardly surprising that in this context smuggling became a growth industry. Those who were caught smuggling, however, were severely punished. They could be branded, sent to the slave galleys, or even sentenced to death. At the beginning of the 18th century, about a quarter of all galley slaves were salt smugglers, the others being common criminals, army deserters, or Protestants persecuted after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.\* When the Revolution of 1789 swept through France, one of the first demands was for the abolition of this hated tax.

### Open-Air Solar Evaporators

The way that salt is extracted on France's Atlantic Coast has basically remained unchanged for centuries. How is the salt harvested? The *paludier* spends autumn through spring repairing the clay dikes and channels in the marshes and preparing his crystallizing pans. With the onset of summer, the sun, wind, and tides turn the marshes into open-air solar evaporators. At high tide, seawater enters an

\* See the August 15, 1998, issue of *The Watchtower*, pages 25-9, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

## SALT AND YOUR HEALTH

High-salt diets have been accused of causing high blood pressure, a factor in heart attacks. For this reason, health specialists generally recommend a daily intake of no more than six grams.

However, recent studies seem to suggest that eating less salt does not significantly lower blood pressure in people with high blood pressure and that it has even less effect on people with normal blood pressure. A study published in *The Lancet*, of March 14, 1998, indicated that people on a low-salt diet suffered more heart attacks than those with normal sodium intake, and the study concluded that "for a low-sodium diet, harm may outweigh benefit." An article in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (CMAJ) of May 4, 1999, declared that "restriction of salt intake for the normotensive population is not recommended at present, because of insufficient evidence demonstrating that this would lead to a reduced incidence of hypertension."

Does this mean that there is no need for concern over how much salt you eat? As with all dietary questions, the watchword is moderation. The above-mentioned CMAJ article recommends that people avoid eating too much salt, limit the amount of salt used in cooking, and try to refrain from adding salt at the table. However, if you have high blood pressure or heart problems, follow the recommendations of your doctor.

initial pond called a *vasière*, where the water settles and begins to evaporate. The water is then slowly channeled through a series of ponds, where it evaporates further. As the water becomes more and more brackish, microscopic algae proliferate, giving the brine a temporary reddish hue. On dying, they perfume the salt with a faint smell of violets. By the time the brine arrives in the crystallizing pans, it is saturated, having increased from about 35 grams of salt per quart to about 260 grams.

Because of the fragile nature of these tidal marshes, mechanized harvesting, as practiced in the Mediterranean salt marshes of Salin-de-Giraud and Aigues-Mortes, is not possible. Using a long wooden rakelike instrument, the *paludier* draws the salt onto the edge of the pan, taking care not to scrape up any clay from the bottom of the shallow basin. The salt—slightly gray because of the clay—is then left to dry. On average, a *paludier* farms about 60 pans, each of which produces approximately one and a half tons of salt a year.

Under certain conditions, a fine layer of salt crystals forms on the surface of the water like snowflakes. This *fleur de sel* (flower of salt), as it is known, makes up only a small percentage of the annual harvest, but it is much appreciated in French cuisine.

Of course, all of this depends on the whims of the weather. One former salt merchant said: "We are never protected from a bad year. In 1950, for example, it rained all summer. We didn't even harvest enough to fill a straw hat." Pascal, a *paludier* in Guérande, commented: "In 1997, I harvested 180 tons of coarse salt and 11 tons of 'flower.' This year [1999], the weather wasn't as good. I only harvested 82 tons." Ironically, extremely hot weather can also be harmful, causing the brine to overheat and not crystallize.

### Ebb and Flow

In the 19th century, industrialization turned the tide on the Atlantic marshes. Improved transportation allowed Mediterranean producers to flood markets



*Fleur de sel"*



Harvesting the "fleur de sel"



Salt marshes and pans



A "paludier" in Noirmoutier

with low-cost salt. What is more, the Mediterranean climate allows for an annual harvest that produces over 1.5 million tons of salt per year. Faced with such competition, by the 1970's, production in the Atlantic marshes was at its lowest ebb and seemed to be doomed.

But in recent years this "white gold" has recovered some of its former luster. Growing awareness of the ecological and economic value of the salt marshes has steadily turned the tide. The salt pans are part of an ecosystem that is a haven for a large variety of plants and migratory birds—a haven that is now recognized and protected.

Top: Index Stock Photography Inc./Diaphor Agency; left: © V. Sarazin/CDT44; center and right: © Aquasel, Noirmoutier

What is more, these unspoiled shores featuring a traditional activity unchanged by the agitation of modern living attract tourists seeking to get away from the rat race. Not to be overlooked either is the fact that in an age of growing concern about pollution and the quality of the food we eat, a foodstuff that is produced entirely naturally, without any chemical treatment or processing, has a major marketing advantage. Perhaps, after all, in this world of globalization and breakneck competition, there is still place for France's *paludiers*, with their centuries-old profession of harvesting salt.

# SYRIA

## *Echoes of an Interesting Past*

IT STOOD at one of the crossroads of the ancient world—the place where caravan routes that ran from the Mediterranean to China and from Egypt to Anatolia once met. Armies of Akkad, Babylon, Egypt, Persia, Greece, and Rome once tramped its soil. Centuries later, Turks and Crusaders passed through it. In modern times, armies from France and Britain fought to control it.

Today a portion of that region still bears the name by which it was known thousands of years ago—Syria. While the area has seen many changes, the echoes of history still resonate there. It is a land of particular interest to students of the Bible, as Syria played a role in Bible history.

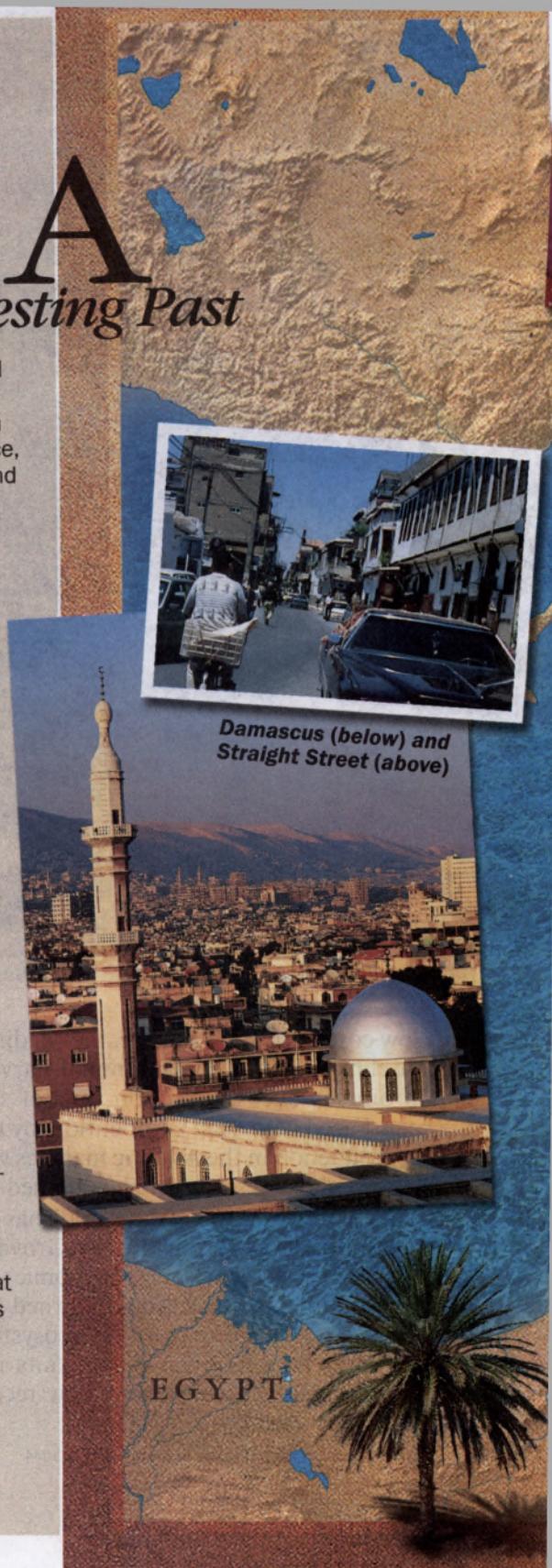
### Damascus—An Ancient City

Take, for example, Damascus, the capital of Syria. It is said to be one of the oldest cities in the world to have been continuously inhabited since its foundation. Situated at the foot of the Anti-Lebanon range, with the Barada River flowing through it, Damascus has served for centuries as a welcome oasis on the edge of the great Syrian Desert. Likely the patriarch Abraham passed by this city on his way south to Canaan. And he took Eliezer, "a man of Damascus," into his household as a servant.—Genesis 15:2.

Nearly a thousand years later, Syrian kings of Zobah fought against Israel's first king, Saul. (1 Samuel 14:47) Israel's second king, David, also engaged in combat with kings of Aram (the Hebrew name for Syria), defeated them, and "put garrisons in Syria of Damascus." (2 Samuel 8:3-8) Israel and Syria thus became long-standing enemies.—1 Kings 11:23-25.

By the first century C.E., enmity between the Syrians and the Jews had apparently calmed down. There were even a number of Jewish synagogues in Damascus at that time. You might recall that Saul (later Paul) of Tarsus was on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus when he was converted to Christianity.—Acts 9:1-8.

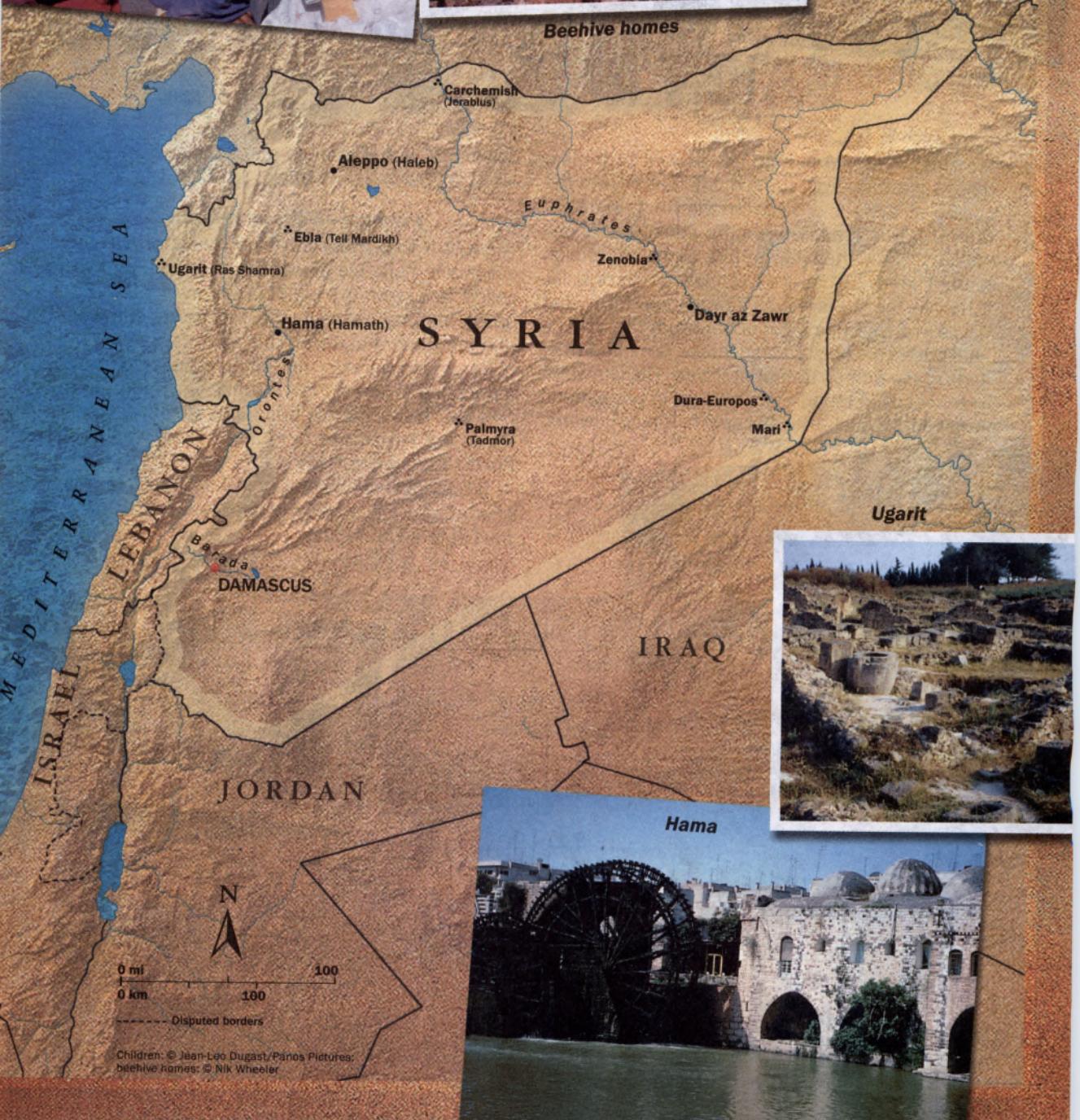
Modern-day Damascus contains no evidence of Abraham's passage or of David's conquest. But there are



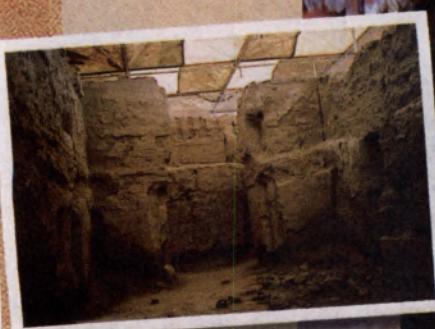
Damascus (below) and  
Straight Street (above)



TURKEY



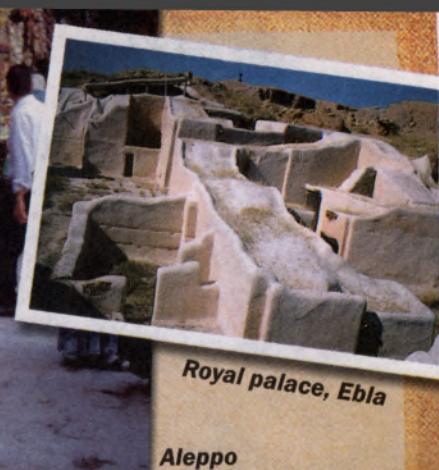
Children: © Jean-Luc Dugast/Panos Pictures;  
beehive homes: © Nik Wheeler



Mari



© Jean-Léo Dugast/Panos Pictures



Royal palace, Ebla

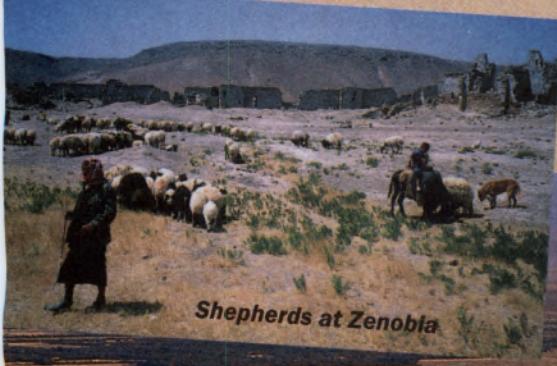
Aleppo

remains of the old Roman city as well as a main thoroughfare through the old city that follows the course of the ancient Roman Via Recta (Straight Street). It was in a house on this street that Ananias found Saul after Saul's miraculous conversion to Christianity just outside Damascus. (Acts 9:10-19) While the street is far different today from what it was in Roman times, it is here that the apostle Paul began his outstanding career. Straight Street ends at the Roman Bab-Sharqi gate. The city walls, with houses perched atop, help us to understand how Paul was able to escape by being lowered

down in a basket through an opening in the wall.  
—Acts 9:23-25; 2 Corinthians 11:32, 33.

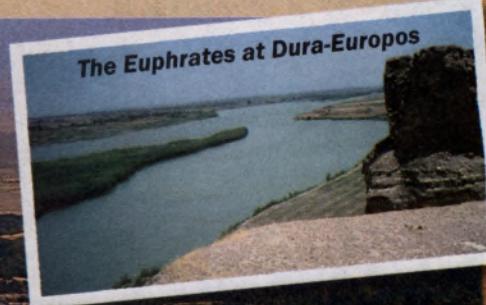
#### Palmyra—A Historic Oasis

About a three-hour drive northeast of Damascus is a remarkable archaeological site: **Palmyra**, called Tadmor in the Bible. (2 Chronicles 8:4) Situated midway between the Mediterranean Sea and the Euphrates River, this oasis is watered by underground springs that emerge here from the mountains to the north. The ancient trade route between Mesopotamia and lands to the west followed the Fertile Crescent and therefore ran far north of Palmyra. However, in the first century B.C.E., political instability in the north made a shorter, more southerly route desirable. Palmyra thus entered its heyday.



Shepherds at Zenobia

Palmyra



The Euphrates at Dura-Europos



Useful to Rome as a buffer on the eastern outskirts of its empire, Palmyra was integrated into the Roman province of Syria, but it was eventually declared a free city. Large temples, monumental arches, baths, and a theater lined a magnificent colonnaded street. The porticoes on each side were paved for pedestrians, but the main central street was left unpaved for the convenience of the camel trains that passed through. Caravans plying the trade route between China and India in the East and the Greco-Roman world in the West made stopovers in Palmyra. There they were forced to pay taxes levied on the silks, spices, and other commodities they transported.

At its zenith, in the third century C.E., Palmyra had a population of about 200,000. It was at this time that its ambitious Queen Zenobia crossed swords with Rome and was finally defeated in 272 C.E. In this way, Zenobia unwittingly fulfilled part of a prophecy recorded by the prophet Daniel some 800 years earlier.\* (Daniel, chapter 11) After Zenobia's defeat, Palmyra survived for a time as a strategic outpost of the Roman Empire, but it never regained its former power and splendor.

### On to the Euphrates

Northeast through the desert after a three-hour drive is the town of **Dayr az Zawr**, where the mighty Euphrates River can be seen. This historic waterway leaves its source in the mountains of eastern Anatolia (Asian Turkey), enters Syria just north of **Carchemish**, and flows southeast through Syria into Iraq. Not far from the Iraqi border lie the remains of two ancient cities of Syria.

Sixty miles to the southeast, at a bend in the Euphrates, lie the ruins of the ancient fortress city of **Dura-Europos**. Another 15 miles to the southeast lies the site of **Mari**. Once a prosperous commercial city, it was destroyed in the 18th century B.C.E. by Babylonian King Hammurabi. The archives of its royal palace have yielded at least 15,000 inscribed clay tablets—documents that have done much to bring history to life.

When Hammurabi's troops demolished the city, they knocked down the upper walls, filling the lower rooms with bricks and earth. This had the effect of protecting its mural paintings, statues, ceram-

\* See the article "The Dark-Haired Mistress of the Syrian Wild," in the January 15, 1999, issue of *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

ics, and countless other artifacts until a French team of archaeologists discovered the site in 1933. These items can be viewed in the museums of Damascus and Aleppo as well as in the Louvre, in Paris.

### Ancient Cities of Northwest Syria

Following the Euphrates northwest brings one to **Aleppo** (Haleb). Aleppo, like Damascus, claims to be one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. Aleppo's souks, or covered bazaars, are among the most picturesque in the Middle East.

Just south of Aleppo is Tell Mardikh, the site of the ancient city-state of **Ebla**. Ebla was a powerful trading city that dominated northern Syria in the latter half of the third millennium B.C.E. Excavations there uncovered the remains of a temple dedicated to the Babylonian goddess Ishtar. Also discovered was a royal palace whose archive rooms yielded some 17,000 clay tablets. Artifacts from Ebla can be seen in the museum of Idlib, a small town 15 miles from the site.

South on the Damascus road is **Hama**, the Biblical Hamath. (Numbers 13:21) The Orontes River winds through Hama, making it one of Syria's most pleasant cities. Then comes Ras Shamra, the site of the ancient city of **Ugarit**. In the third and second millenniums B.C.E., Ugarit was a prosperous trading port steeped in the worship of Baal and Dagon. Since 1929, French archaeologists have unearthed many clay tablets and inscribed bronzes that have revealed much about the degrading nature of Baal worship. This helps us to understand better why God condemned the Baal-worshiping Canaanites to extermination.—Deuteronomy 7:1-4.

Yes, in modern Syria one can still hear the echoes of an interesting past.

## In Our Next Issue

■ **Malnutrition—"The Silent Emergency"**

■ **Displaying Love in Times of Trouble**

■ **Should I Watch Music Videos?**

# Watching the World

## Deteriorating Manners

"The manners and behavior of the Japanese people have worsened." This is how some 90 percent of nearly 2,000 people responded to a recent survey conducted by *The Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper. What did they find annoying? For 68 percent it was "the failure of others to properly dispose of cigarettes, chewing gum and beverage cans." More than half cited the failure of parents to discipline noisy children. Other complaints included the use of cellular telephones in public, the failure to clean up pet droppings, and improper car and bicycle parking. Young people came under the heaviest criticism. "Among respondents in their 20s to 40s, 66 percent expressed concern about the poor manners of middle and high school students."



## "Mobbing" at Work

The principal reason for lost work time in Spain is "psychological harassment," reports the magazine *El País Semanal*. More than two million Spaniards suffer prolonged workplace bullying, known in Europe as mobbing. According to psychologist Iñaki Piñuel, the victims are usually good workers who awaken professional jealousy in others. Workmates may stigmatize a person by withholding his work assignments, excluding

him from conversation, pretending not to see him, constantly criticizing him, or spreading false rumors to undermine his self-esteem. "It is calculated that 1 out of every 5 suicides in Europe is related to this phenomenon," states the report. What can be done? The magazine suggests: "Don't keep it secret. Look for witnesses. Report the situation to company officials. Don't blame yourself. In extreme cases, change departments [or] jobs."

## Mental Problems in Children

"Up to one in five of the world's children suffer mental or behavioural problems that could blight the rest of their lives," states *The Independent* of London. In a joint report, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund warn that rates of depression, suicide, and self-harm have increased "alarmingly" among young people. The worst affected are those living in war zones and in countries undergoing rapid social and economic change. According to *The Independent*, the report said that depressed children "were prone to other illnesses and risky habits that could shorten their lives." It also stated that "about 70 per cent of premature adult deaths were linked to behaviour that developed in adolescence, such as smoking, drinking and drug abuse."

## Marine Highways

"It is the ultimate ocean boulevard," reports *The Sunday Times* of London. "Beneath the waters of the Pacific is a marine motorway stretching from California's golden beaches via Hawaii to the rocky shores of Japan." Jeff Polovina, a marine biologist in Hawaii, has recently discovered and mapped this route by tagging whales, turtles, tuna, dolphins, and sharks. The highway is rich in plankton, which serves as food for crabs, jellyfish, and squid. These, in turn, provide abundant food for the long-distance travelers. Loggerhead turtles, described by the newspaper as "the jet-setters of the reptile world," nest in Japan, develop off the coast of California, and com-

mute between the two. In winter the ocean route shifts about 600 miles southward, running from southern California to the South China Sea.

### Staying Fit

"Physical activity helps control weight, protects against health conditions like diabetes and osteoporosis, improves mood, and contributes to a better night's sleep," points out *Tufts University Health and Nutrition Letter*. But besides all that, "your level of fitness is a powerful determinant of how long you will live." In a 13-year study of more than 6,000 middle-aged men, researchers at Stanford University and the U.S. Veterans Affairs Health Care System found that the amount of exercise a person could engage in without reaching exhaustion was a strong predictor of survival. Though other research indicates that genetics play a role in exercise capacity, even daily "low-intensity" exercise—such as brisk walking—is helpful in staying fit.

### Advertising Alcohol to Youth

"Almost one in 10 young Australians are dependent on alcohol," reports Australia's *Sunday Telegraph*. Professor Ian Webster, president of the Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia, says that a culture has developed among young people in which a good weekend is one spent "drinking to oblivion." *The Sydney Morning Herald* reports that some experts are disturbed by the "growing worldwide industry" of advertising alcohol to young people. Researchers found that most marketers of alcoholic drinks had Web sites that target young people. "These promoted tickets to live music, and included film

reviews and, of course, product information." According to the report, the World Health Organization is concerned that all this promotion "aims to ensure alcohol becomes an integral part of young people's lives."

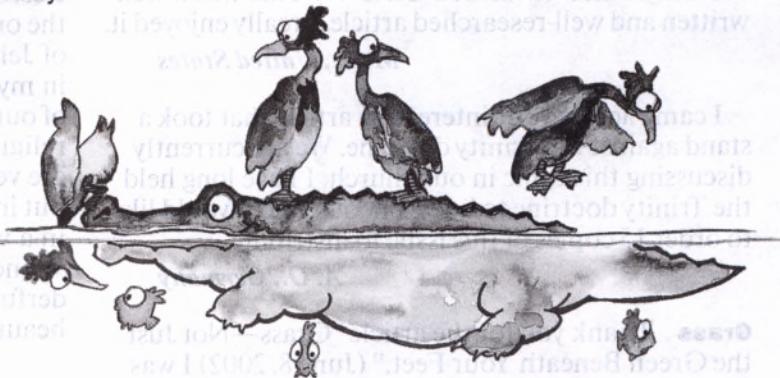
### Withdrawing From Society

In Japan an apparently new phenomenon affecting mainly teens and young adults has emerged. Called *hikikomori* (acute social withdrawal), it came to public attention during investigations into a number of vicious crimes committed by reclusive young people. "Research into the lifestyle of the perpetrators showed that their hermetic way of life—shut

up for months on end in their rooms with little more than a computer or a video game for company—was far from exceptional," reports the medical journal *The Lancet*. Other evidence indicates that *hikikomori* is more often manifested by lethargy than by violence. Still, "there is broad agreement that this illness is a product of the affluence, technology, and convenience of modern Japanese life," states *The Lancet*. "Many *hikikomori* spend most of their waking hours on the internet or playing video games, while snacking on food and drink delivered to their homes." Some estimates place the number of reclusive young people in Japan at one million.

### Decoy Alligators

Cormorants, birds that can apparently eat about two pounds of fish daily, "are often the bane of recreational fishermen's lives," says Canada's *Calgary Herald*. The paper reports that to ward off cormorants and other fish-eating birds, North American farmers and fish-farm managers are using a new tool—plastic alligators. The 13-foot-long alligators "have two large luminous reflectors for eyes, simulating alert gators in the wild," explains the *Herald*. One biologist found that a plastic alligator floating on the surface of the water worked for about a month. After that, the birds began to catch on, and one blue heron actually "was seen perched atop the decoy." But when the decoy was moved to another location, it once again scared the fish-eating birds away.



## From Our Readers

**Slavery** I have no words to express my gratitude for the cover series "When All Kinds of Slavery Will End!" (June 22, 2002) The articles helped me to realize that people can become slaves to a number of things, such as drugs, smoking, and lying. I was a slave to gambling. I knew in my heart that it was wrong, but the urges were very difficult to control. The experience you related about Ricardo moved me to tears. It helped me to see that if a person puts forth effort, he or she can be successful in breaking free of such kinds of enslavement. Thank you for publishing such comforting articles that deal with real-life situations.

*M. W., United States*

**Trinity** Thank you for the article "A Tolerant Kingdom in an Intolerant Age." (June 22, 2002) It was exciting to read about Sigismund, who defended the anti-Trinitarians in their debates, and about how legal recognition was given to the Unitarian Church. I was fascinated by the way Francis Dávid persuasively argued against the Trinity. It reminded me of the boldness of the apostle Paul. Normally, I am not interested in articles with a lot of history, but I'm trying to widen out and build up an appetite for all that "the faithful and discreet slave" provides through our magazines. (Matthew 24:45-47) This was a well-written and well-researched article. I really enjoyed it.

*M. C., United States*

I came across your interesting article that took a stand against the Trinity doctrine. We are currently discussing this topic in our church. I have long held the Trinity doctrine to be erroneous, and I would like to order 15 copies of this issue to distribute.

*A. O., Germany*

**Grass** Thank you for the article "Grass—Not Just the Green Beneath Your Feet." (June 8, 2002) I was

able to deepen my appreciation for the fact that Jehovah God has supported all life on earth by means of grass. It is, as a botanist stated, "like a dam protecting mankind from famine." Jehovah is the Great Artist, and I was made aware of Jehovah's qualities of love, wisdom, justice, and power as they are fully reflected in the grass family.

*K. O., Japan*

**From a Youth** I am nine years old, and I am in the fourth grade. I want to thank you for the beautiful articles that you print in your magazines. One series that was particularly useful to me was entitled "Popular Celebrations—Are There Hidden Dangers?" (October 8, 2001) After I left the magazine with my English teacher, she was able to use the material under the subheading "Religious Rivalry" for class work. She greatly appreciated the accuracy of the contents of the articles. Thank you for all the things you write for our encouragement and protection.

*N. R., Italy*

**Appreciation** I really appreciate the way you publish special-interest articles, such as those on animals. I am the only one in my family who is one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and no one in my family is inclined to read any of our literature that seems to be of a religious nature. But these articles are very interesting to read, and they put in a good word about our Creator in a way that is palatable to non-Witnesses. Thank you for the wonderful work you are doing and the beautiful magazines you produce.

*T. C., United States*

# GET AN ACCURATE PICTURE

Getting an accurate picture on various issues is difficult. Governments and companies tell half-truths. Mass-media channels often promise unbiased reporting yet do not follow through. Doctors do not always thoroughly explain the side-effects of medicine they give us. Is there a way to get information that can be trusted?

The arrival of the Internet was hailed by many as a means of tapping reliable sources of information from around the globe. That is possible, of course, if you know just where to click your mouse. "At its best, the Internet can educate more people faster than any media tool. At its worst, it can make people dumber faster than any media tool," said an editorial in *The New York Times*.

The editorial continued: "Because the Internet has an aura of 'technology' surrounding it, the uneducated believe information from it even more. They don't realize that the Internet, at its ugliest, is just an open sewer: an electronic conduit for untreated, unfiltered information." Unfortunately, as the writer pointed out, there is no software program to delete the trash.

Anyone can put anything on the Internet, in a magazine, or in a book. Thus, we need to use discernment and educate ourselves so that we do not gullibly believe whatever we read. Those of us who want accurate information have to establish that our source is reliable. This can take time. But once we do so and get a more complete picture, we can be sound in our thinking, correct in judgment, and confident when making important decisions.



■ This cover photo was taken in 1995 by a space telescope. The gaseous dust clouds are in the Eagle Nebula. Scientists believe that stars are forming in these clouds, which are termed "Pillars of Creation."

We are in good company when asking, What caused the universe, our planet, and our life on it? And how does this relate to our finding a satisfying meaning in life?

Many people believe in creation—that there is a Creator who cares about us. Does this relate to our finding a satisfying meaning in life?

How do recent discoveries about our brain and our ability to speak relate to this vital issue?

Why are some educated people looking into the Bible, and should what it says about a Creator matter to us and our loved ones?

The 192-page book *Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?* takes up these issues. You will find that its clear answers can help you add meaning to your life and lay the basis for a happier future.



## Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?

"Pillars of Creation": J. Hester and P. Scowen (AZ State Univ.), NASA